



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Thursday 3 August 2023

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

Juliana Addison, Jordan Crugnale, Daniela De Martino, Paul Edbrooke, Wayne Farnham, Paul Hamer, Lauren Kathage, Nathan Lambert, Alison Marchant, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor and Iwan Walters

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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 ¹	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 ²	South Barwon	Ind	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 ⁵	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Famham, Wayne	Narracan	Lib	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Foster, Eden ³	Mulgrave	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
Fowles, Will ⁴	Ringwood	Ind	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Groth, Sam	Nepean	Lib	Theophanous, Kat	Northcote	ALP
Guy, Matthew	Bulleen	Lib	Thomas, Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Halfpenny, Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Tilley, Bill	Benambra	Lib
Hall, Katie	Footscray	ALP	Vallence, Bridget	Evelyn	Lib
Hamer, Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Vulin, Emma	Pakenham	ALP
Haylett, Martha	Ripon	ALP	Walsh, Peter	Murray Plains	Nat
Hibbins, Sam	Prahran	Greens	Walters, Iwan	Greenvale	ALP
Hilakari, Mathew	Point Cook	ALP	Ward, Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Hodgett, David	Croydon	Lib	Wells, Kim	Rowville	Lib
Horne, Melissa	Williamstown	ALP	Werner, Nicole ⁶	Warrandyte	Lib
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

¹ Resigned 27 September 2023

² ALP until 29 April 2024

³ Sworn in 6 February 2024

⁴ ALP until 5 August 2023

⁵ Resigned 7 July 2023

⁶ Sworn in 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 3 August 2023

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

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Eltham can leave the chamber for 1 hour. The member for Clarinda can leave the chamber for 1 hour. And anyone else who might like to leave the chamber for 1 hour can speak now. It is not a good start to the day.

Members for Eltham and Clarinda withdrew from chamber.

Business of the house**Notices of motion**

Notices given.

Documents**Documents**

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Road Safety Camera Commissioner – Report 2021–22.

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER STANDING ORDERS – Under standing orders the Clerk tabled the following documents:

Interim Government responses to the Environment and Planning Standing Committee's Reports on the:

Inquiry into Apartment Design Standards

Inquiry into Environmental Infrastructure for Growing Populations.

Announcements**Office of the Special Investigator**

The SPEAKER (09:35): I advise the house that on 2 August 2023 I administered to Sean Kevin Morrison, the Special Investigator, the affirmation required by section 20 of the Special Investigator Act 2021.

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 15 August 2023.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements**Polwarth electorate roads**

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (09:36): Over the winter break I had the great fortune of having a Polwarth road trip and managed to get round to nearly every community within my electorate. Some of the 3000 kilometres I did over the winter break was from visiting the towns of Derrinallum, Lismore, Camperdown, Cobden, Port Campbell, Timboon, Lavers Hill, Apollo Bay, Wye River, Lorne, Winchelsea, Colac, Aireys Inlet, Anglesea, Jan Juc and Torquay. In every one of those communities, people were pleased to come out and have a talk about the state of Victoria.

Overwhelmingly the community talked to me about the appalling state of the roads they have to deal with. Whether you are out in the Corangamite shire along the Hamilton Highway, where you regularly have to endure 80-kilometre-an-hour or less-kilometre-per-hour roads because the state and condition of the roads is so appalling, or whether you are down in the Surf Coast shire in Jan Juc, Torquay, Aireys Inlet or Anglesea, where you have to continually put up with a shire that is now in such a parlous state with its road network that they are petitioning the state to move all speed limits down to 80 kilometres an hour, this is what country people now have to endure. Not only does our region have to suffer the humiliation of no longer bringing the world to us during the Commonwealth Games, but we cannot even get around our own electorates.

Cr Heather Marcus and Dr John Pasco

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (09:37): I rise to pay tribute to and to celebrate two outstanding representatives of Wyndham, Cr Heather Marcus and Dr John Pasco, who have both greatly contributed to the wellbeing of our local community.

I am pleased that Cr Heather Marcus has been acknowledged in the recent King's Birthday honours and presented with the Medal of the Order of Australia in the general division. The OAM was awarded in recognition of her service to local government and to the community of Wyndham. Heather has been involved in community work for over 40 years, serving on local committees and as an elected councillor for five terms and two terms as mayor. She has been an avid activist who thrives on helping others and promoting Wyndham as a terrific place to live. Heather also runs major local events, such as a dance-off competition and fashion awards. I am thankful that I have not been an active participant, though I have been proud to support these events that raise funds for charities and celebrate local talent.

I also acknowledge Dr John Pasco, who recently retired from his role as director of emergency services at Werribee Mercy Hospital. John served in this position for 16 years and was well known for his kind and generous nature and the care he provided to local residents. I wish John a relaxed retirement. After a fulfilling career looking after others, he will be well missed. I thank both John and Heather for their service and their valuable contributions to Wyndham.

Hattah Desert Race

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:39): I rise today to offer my sincere congratulations to three organisations in the Mildura electorate, beginning with the North West Victorian Motorcycle Club, who are responsible for Australia's most challenging desert race, Hattah. The Hattah Desert Race is growing each year and this year, with over 800 competitors, was a major event for Mildura, attracting riders nationwide. Run by a team of volunteers contributing 34,000 volunteer hours to inject \$6.55 million into the local economy as well as at least 60 grand into other local community groups, the Hattah Desert Race is the jewel in Mildura's crown, thanks to the generous support of the Mildura Rural City Council and support from the state government. But as insurance premiums and costs everywhere go up, let us hope these issues do not affect the race's future. Congratulations to the committee volunteers and competitors on a magnificent Hattah Desert Race. I will keep my promise and ride next year.

Meringur Football Club

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:40): Congratulations also to the Meringur Football Club for breaking a dry spell of 1456 days to beat Werrimull a couple of weeks ago by 16 points. Turns out you did not need Jason Akermanis in the line-up to win after all. Congratulations, Roos. Hopefully this is a turning point for the club.

Mildura Regional Development

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:40): Congratulations to the team at Mildura Regional Development for their incredible work making the finalist list for the TAC Victorian Top Tourism Town Awards. Mildura is a thriving city known for its stunning natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, vibrant arts and cultural scene and warm climate, and the team at MRD do an absolutely fantastic job of telling the nation. They should be congratulated for all that they do, including the new silo art at Walpeup.

Northern Hospital

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:40): While the Parliament was on winter recess I was busy out and about in my local electorate of Mill Park. In early July I visited the Northern Hospital's emergency department and met with ED director Daniel Crompton to discuss the stage 2 upgrades that our Labor government is delivering. Of course it was terrific to hear how the hospital and its staff have stepped up to meet an increasing demand as that community in the outer north continues to grow and people choose it as a great place to build a home and raise a family. It was great to see that the virtual ED is also becoming an excellent way to triage patients more efficiently, meaning that there is more health care that goes to members of the community who seek support from the health services there.

Innovation Youth Centre

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:41): I also dropped in on some of the many community activities that are happening in my local community, including of course a visit to Paul and his team at the Innovation Youth Centre in Bundoora to see the vibrant and active space young people from Mill Park, South Morang and Epping are accessing. The drop-in sessions are something that young people really enjoy, and I very much look forward to our government's investment of \$150,000 into delivering a feasibility study for more youth hubs in the City of Whittlesea.

Whittlesea Multicultural Communities Council

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:42): Of course I also popped in to the Whittlesea Multicultural Communities Council's women's wellbeing forum, alongside Bronwyn Halfpenny, which focuses on clinical, physical and emotional care.

Brighton Art Society

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:42): The Brighton Art Society recently filled Bayside's 26 Advantage gallery for their first annual art exhibition since COVID. The society is a hub that has nurtured budding and talented artists in our community since 1978. One day I will pluck up the courage to be more than just a passive member of the group. Congratulations to president Charmaine Cachia on the wonderful event.

Mayflower Brighton

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:42): How better to spend an evening than at a soiree at Mayflower, a Brighton-based residential aged care home with 150 beds and additional independent living units. Bayside mayor Hanna El Mouallem – another genuine community representative – and I recently joined 100 residents to answer the tough questions. Thank you to the new CEO Stuart Rodney and the Mayflower team for the opportunity.

Elwood College

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:43): Elwood College recently went on an incredible magical journey presenting *Seussical the Musical*, a musical extravaganza based on the work of Dr Seuss. The students played the characters of Horton the Elephant, the Cat in the Hat, JoJo the thinker, Gertrude

McFuzz and Mayzie La Bird incredibly and left the audience cheering throughout the night. Thank you to all involved for the incredible production.

Brighton Primary School

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:43): The Brighton community has spoken strongly in support of Brighton Primary School getting its fair share of school funding. My community knows that 93 per cent of school funding is allocated to Labor seats. A new petition for the school has already been signed by over 600 people. Thank you to the petitioners for saying it is not good enough for the state Labor government to keep ignoring the community and schools of Brighton.

Matt Bray

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (09:43): Last weekend I was delighted to join with the hundreds of players, families, supporters and volunteers at the Carrum Downs Junior Football Club to acknowledge the extraordinary contribution of Matt Bray. Matt has just clocked up 30 years coaching two generations of kids at this wonderful club. Thirty years is an outstanding commitment, and it really says something special about Matt and his belief in and loyalty to the kids, the footy club and his local community. I think it also says something pretty special about the club, and I want to acknowledge club president Rodney Garwood for everything he has done also over many years to help make this club so inclusive, welcoming and supportive. A coaching box on the western side of the ground is now named the Matt Bray Coaches Box in recognition of 30 years coaching, 1994 to 2023.

Patterson River Golf Club

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (09:44): Patterson River Golf Club celebrated its 75th anniversary on 20 July, and I was delighted to join club president Paul Housiaux, vice-president Natalie Batten and board members and club members to help mark this exciting milestone. The Patterson River Golf Club is such a friendly and welcoming club, and I am especially proud to see the club continue to encourage and support women at all levels of golf to participate in and enjoy the wonderful sport of golf. Here's to another 75 years.

Alistair Buchanan

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (09:45): Congratulations to Alistair Buchanan from Seaford Little Athletics Centre for being recognised at the 2022–23 Little Athletics Victoria Awards recently. Alistair Buchanan was presented with the coveted volunteer of the year award and deservedly recognised and acknowledged for his tireless and extraordinary dedication and commitment to Seaford Little Athletics. Al goes above and beyond in every way. Congratulations, Al.

Elder abuse

Tim READ (Brunswick) (09:45): I have recently heard from several people concerned about the end of the trial of an elder abuse prevention program known as the integrated model of care, or IMOC, at five sites across Victoria. The 2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence advocated for specialist elder abuse services, highlighting that there are factors unique to elder abuse such as older people's accumulated assets, children often being the likely perpetrators and the widespread ageism in society. Family violence services are often not equipped to deal with elder abuse, and older people may not even think to go there.

This trial of specialist services was created to ensure that this abuse can no longer fly under the radar. But now the funding for IMOC is not being renewed, and the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers has said that the government will put elder abuse services back into the family violence system despite and contrary to the recommendations of the royal commission. People who have personal experience with IMOC have contacted my office in distress, fearing that the end of IMOC means that there will be no meaningful help for the estimated one in six older Australians who experience elder

abuse. I urge the minister for ageing to reinstate these specialist IMOC elder abuse services in line with the findings of the royal commission and the wishes of the community.

Victoria Police

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (09:46): There has been no winter break in the Ivanhoe electorate – or across the state – where Victoria Police members have been working 24/7 to keep people safe, as they do every day of the year.

Olivia Newton-John Cancer Research Institute

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (09:47): I thank the Minister for Higher Education Ms Tierney in the other place for her visit to the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Research Institute in Heidelberg last month to announce some \$14.3 million from the Higher Education State Investment Fund to improve imaging equipment – a great boost for our medical researchers at Heidelberg.

Hon. Thomas William Roper

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (09:47): I pay my respects to the Honourable Tom Roper and his family. The state funeral at the Immigration Museum was a fitting tribute to acknowledge a life of service to the people of Victoria, particularly during his decade of ministerial leadership as a member and a reformer in the Cain–Kirner Labor governments.

Police station visits

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (09:47): Police station visits – we were out there at Mount Waverley station with the member for Ashwood, the St Kilda station with the member for Albert Park and Camberwell police station with a member for Southern Metropolitan Mr Berger in the other place.

Waterdale Road pocket park

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (09:47): The Waterdale Road pocket park in Ivanhoe shopping village is open thanks to some work here with my colleague the member for Mill Park and Ms Stitt in the other place. We made a \$1.5 million contribution to Waterdale Road pocket park. It is a great open space there in Ivanhoe thanks also to some great work from Banyule council – a great partnership.

Attwood road safety cameras

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (09:48): Attwood road safety cameras are operational, and I want to thank the member for Greenvale – we went out there to check on those – and the community advocacy that we saw from the people of Attwood. It is really a great road safety initiative.

Aboriginal Justice Forum

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (09:48): I want to thank the Aboriginal Justice Forum and the Aboriginal Justice Caucus for their work and leadership. I was with them in Shepparton, and I commend them for their leadership and engagement.

Commonwealth Games

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (09:48): Cancelling the Commonwealth Games was not just the cancellation of the dreams of many athletes, particularly of this generation, who would have had an opportunity to compete on their home turf, but also the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games for those of all abilities. This is one of the only sporting events in the world where people of all abilities

can compete at the same events as our elite sportspeople. It is something that has now been cancelled because this government has no care when it comes to what they did with the Commonwealth Games in Victoria. It is also a cancellation of confidence within our state, a cancellation of contracts for many businesses who were getting ready and prepared for what the financial returns would have been for them if the Commonwealth Games had proceeded. It is a cancellation of confidence in country and regional Victoria – Geelong, Bendigo, Ballarat and down through Gippsland – where you would have had events come in. It is not just about people turning up and the tourism at the time – we all know we love having the F1 grand prix in Melbourne for a reason, and that is because people around the world for four days effectively get an advert of why you should come to Melbourne and what an amazing place it is. The government has missed an opportunity by cancelling an event that would have highlighted places like Bendigo – which, Speaker, you know is a wonderful place to go to – Ballarat, Gippsland and Geelong. The whole world would have seen that so that when they come here to Victoria they do not just go to Melbourne, but get to see the best of our state in regional Victoria.

Principals Day

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (09:49): I rise in recognition of national Principals Day, which will be celebrated tomorrow, Friday 4 August. The outstanding work of principals and assistant principals deserves to be celebrated. They play a pivotal role in achieving the statewide excellence that we have in teaching and learning across our schools. In my electorate of Sydenham I have seen firsthand remarkable and tireless contributions from our government school principals that make a difference to our school communities. A huge thankyou to the principal teams at Deanside Primary, Mackellar Primary, Taylors Hill Primary, Taylors Lakes Primary, Parkwood Green Primary School, Springside Primary School, Sydenham-Hillside Primary, Copperfield College, Taylors Lakes Secondary and Springside West Secondary College. Your contribution and growth for the future planning of our school communities is absolutely valued – leading your teams and supporting them to ensure that students are equipped with the skills they need for the best possible future. I want to make sure that you know that your work does not go unnoticed and that your ongoing leadership is appreciated.

Claire Caddy

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (09:50): Today I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deepest sympathies and condolences to my dear friends Michelle and Vicki-Claire, who are mourning the loss of their mother Claire Caddy, who is being buried this morning. She was an energetic, kind-hearted woman and a strong feminist. Her spirit and tenacity will be remembered by all that were lucky enough to meet her. May she rest in peace.

Commonwealth Games

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (09:51): Olympic cycling gold medallist and world champion Brett Lancaster works alongside Leigh Egan, a world-champion BMX competitor and sporting hall of fame recipient at Leigh's bike store in Shepparton. They both live and breathe cycling and know firsthand the dedication and commitment it takes to get to their elite level of sport. They were both ecstatic to have the Commonwealth Games BMX to be held in Shepparton. Brett said that they had a false sense of hope and have now had the rug pulled from under them following the announcement of the cancellation of the 2026 regional Commonwealth Games. Many in my community are shocked and disappointed. It is unbelievable to think we were told that this was happening and now it is cancelled.

This will have a significant economic impact on our local businesses, who were depending on the economic opportunity the games would bring. The regional games model was born in Shepparton in 2017 and would have given regional Victoria the opportunity to be showcased on the world stage. We have hosted a number of international sporting events and have seen firsthand the incredible opportunity international exposure brings. In fact we had a \$400 million investment following the exposure from an international beach volleyball event. The economic opportunity and exposure is

significant. There was great excitement about hosting the BMX at the Commonwealth Games, which has now been taken away with no warning. Once again regional Victoria is let down.

Western suburbs air quality

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) (09:52): It was a great privilege to join with the Minister for Environment in Altona North recently to deliver on our promise to improve air quality in Melbourne's inner western suburbs by modernising truck fleets and also sealing local roads. The \$20 million package announcement includes making grants available to support a transition to trucks that produce fewer emissions.

It was also really exciting for community members like Leigh and Lauren from Altona East soccer club that have really struggled with some unsealed roads that have interrupted training sessions. The dust that has been produced on Ross Road has actually required that kids with asthma not train, so being able to seal this road through a \$5 million grant will make such a fundamental difference for this soccer club.

We know it is important to work with the community and industry to reduce the environmental impact of heavy vehicles while making roads safer for pedestrians by lowering speed limits and banning trucks on some roads, and that is exactly what we will be doing from 2025 with the introduction of truck bans, which will remove 9000 trucks from roads in the inner west and cut congestion for local communities. This will have a significant impact for our community and ensure that locals in my electorate can get on and enjoy all the amazing offerings of our community and breathe a little more easily.

Gas supply and prices

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (09:54): The Andrews Labor government's decision to ban gas connections in new homes is seemingly one of many desperate distractions put forward by them after their Commonwealth Games debacle. Thankfully, we will now have an inquiry into the games cancellation, which has the support of the entire crossbench in the other place. We all want to know what went wrong behind closed doors. Ironically, forcing new homes onto solely electricity will only initially drive up emissions and the use of coal-fired power, given that coal still accounts for 68 per cent of electricity in Victoria. Further, gas not being used domestically will still be exported and burnt elsewhere, likely less sustainably and with added transport, so global emissions from Victorian gas will not change and may get worse.

The ban will likely also lead to higher gas bills, as limiting the demand for gas will drive up prices for the rest of us on gas, including many struggling Victorians – not to mention the increased costs for new home builds, as builders will have to comply with further regulations about cooktops and water systems, making that new home for first home buyers ever more unattainable. Victorians are angry and want choice on gas.

Natalie Russell

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (09:55): On Sunday last week I attended a memorial for the 30th anniversary of the murder of Natalie Russell, the third of Paul Denyer's victims. Over 100 members of the community attended to remember the lives of Elizabeth Stevens, Debbie Fream and Nat. I call on the Premier to support our bill to stop Denyer – (*Time expired*)

Holy Eucharist Primary School

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (09:55): I rise today on behalf of my community in St Albans to raise an issue that is really important and has caused deep concern and distress. Holy Eucharist Primary School in St Albans is a great primary school, and it has over 550 students. We have invested \$2 million to upgrade their facilities, and it has been fantastic to see the progress of the building works. Over many months my office has been advocating to Brimbank City Council to establish a safe crossing out the front of the

entrance to the primary school. The response continues to be unsatisfactory. This has caused much stress and anxiety for the school community, who have been dealing with council to secure a safe, supervised crossing for the children. We know when there is no safe crossing what the consequences can be, and that is why the students, parents and educators need to feel safe and have peace of mind when crossing to the school at this particular point. This has been deeply disappointing for the children and the school community, as I have indicated. It means that our local kids are still not safe while they are entering and exiting this primary school. I will continue to work to ensure a safe resolution for our kids, staff and parents at Holy Eucharist. I am urging Brimbank City Council to work with the school, the principal and the school community to ensure that the community is safe.

Inverloch VIEW Club

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (09:57): VIEW stands for Voice, Interests and Education of Women. With over 300 clubs around Australia, they are a progressive, inclusive organisation and valued support network that creates social change and empowers women. The Inverloch VIEW Club recently celebrated their silver jubilee, with over 70 magnificent women in attendance, including members from Wonthaggi, Phillip Island, Moe, Warragul and Bairnsdale. Their achievements are exemplary and abound. Over the past 25 years the club has donated approximately \$90,000 to the Smith Family, helping young children to get the most out of their education. From 20 members in 1998 supporting one child, there are now 54 members sponsoring seven learning for life students. In the words of past president Joy Berryman:

Changing the life of one child may not change the world but it can mean the whole world of difference to that one child.

Thank you for sponsoring Inverloch Primary's most improved reader awards. Congratulations and my heartfelt thanks to the amazing office-bearers: president Heather Wright, vice Helen Sutton, secretary Helen Dand, treasurer Leonie Ziolkowski, committee members extraordinaire Jill, Joy, Margi, Rosa, Clare and Trish and all the wonderful, all-heart, community-minded members for their amazingness, energy and passion towards being such a supportive, spirited and joyful collective of women bringing positive social change and kindness to our community. They meet monthly at the Inlet, are never shy of a skit, play, song or themed costume event, have a fabulous array of guest speakers, go on adventures and do so much more. Thank you, Inverloch VIEW members.

National Stroke Week

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (09:58): Stroke awareness and support for stroke victims is something that is very close to my heart and something that I am passionate about. It has touched my life and the life of my family and friends in a very real way. National Stroke Week is next week, 7–13 August, and it is a reminder for everyone to know and recognise the signs of stroke. Educate yourself on FAST – the signs are face, arms, speech and time.

Many of you know that I suffered a significant stroke in 2016 at the age of 36. The stroke left me unable to walk, talk or eat properly. It happened in my sleep. When I woke up in the morning I could not get out of bed. At first I thought I had pins and needles. I fell to the floor. I dragged myself down the stairs, calling out to my children. My nine-year-old at the time called 000, and I went to Casey Hospital and was there for two weeks before moving on to Monash, where they finally diagnosed my deepest fears. After eight months of rehabilitation, of learning to walk and talk and eat and drive again, I just want everyone to know that stroke can happen at any age, so make sure that you are aware of the signs of stroke and look out for one another. I also want to thank the allied health services and the medical staff that supported me during my journey.

Graeme Johnstone

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (10:00): This past Sunday morning we lost a beautiful soul in the Clunes community. Graeme Johnstone was a local legend and an example of how one person can have a ripple effect on the lives of thousands. Graeme moved to Clunes back in 1997, with his much-loved

wife June. Together they transformed the old Duke of Edinburgh Hotel to The Dukes B & B and brought the second coffee machine to town.

Like many small business owners, Graeme was always quick to roll up his sleeves and get involved in the community. He served for more than 12 years on the Clunes Tourism and Development Association and represented the community on the Hepburn regional tourism board. He was instrumental in bringing the annual Words in Winter literary and arts festival to the Hepburn shire and was one of the founding fathers of Creative Clunes and the famous annual Booktown festival established in 2007. Graeme led the push for Clunes to be recognised as an international book town. He helped establish the biennial Clunes Ceramic Award, and he preserved the former free lending library building in town so that it can be home to a brand new Clunes Neighbourhood House today. Graeme's achievements are endless. He was a statesman, with the warmest smile and the biggest heart, who always would be seen on Fraser Street lending a hand to everyone. He gave his all to Clunes and made it a better place for so many as a result.

King's Birthday honours

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (10:01): I rise to acknowledge the wonderful achievements of four women in my electorate who all received OAMs in the 2023 King's Birthday honours: Dr Diana Cousens of Upwey for service to the Buddhist community; Ms Gaye Gadsden of Yellingbo for service to conservation and the environment; Mrs Janet Incoll of Monbulk for service to conservation and the environment; and Ms Jeanette Pritchard, also of Monbulk, for service to youth and secondary education. I offer my thanks to them all for their service and contributions to our community and beyond.

Dr Lewis Bernard Hughes

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (10:02): On another matter. I would like to acknowledge the life of Dr Lewis Bernard Hughes, a long-time resident of Mount Dandenong with a fervent passion for lifelong education. Born in 1939, Lewis had a brilliant mind. In his later years, at just shy of 60, he undertook his masters in professional education and training and completed his doctorate of philosophy at Deakin University at the age of 68, an achievement of which he was very proud.

In later years he was made an honorary fellow, and his memorial was filled with many former colleagues who spoke highly of and with great fondness for him. His intellectual curiosity and passion for lifelong education was highly regarded by his peers. He was dedicated to his wife Libby, who passed away several years ago. During her illness they began considering how their fervent belief in the power of education and desire to make a difference could live beyond them and benefit future generations, and they decided to become bequestors of doctoral and postdoctoral scholarships in lifelong learning within the school of education at Deakin University. With Lewis's passing their legacy will continue through this generous bequest. In an article about the decision to set up the scholarship, he stated:

We believe that the measure of one's life is centred on what you contribute, not about what assets you have.

Vale, Lewis Hughes.

Glenroy post office

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (10:03): I am furious about Australia Post's decision to close the Glenroy post office. It is one of the busiest in the region and has over 200 transactions a day. You can walk in there and there is always a queue. Glenroy has a higher than average number of people over 80 and people with a disability and lower than average internet connections, income and car ownership. So many people rely on walkable access to the post office to transact and pay their bills. It is cruel and thoughtless of Australia Post to take away their access to services. Surrounding services are not easily accessible. Some of them do not have public transport access and one is up a big hill from the station, which would be impossible for someone in a

wheelchair. Their heartless decision will also harm the viability of the whole shopping centre that gives so many of us walkable access to shops and services.

Residents, business owners, Glenroy Lions and the Broadmeadows Progress Association have come together and organised a rally for tomorrow, but it is not just a rally – it is a colourful celebration of walkable access to local services. Local business Viponds Paints are sponsoring world-renowned mural artist Julian Clavijo to paint vinyl shopping jeeps. We have got free face painting and henna art and a sausage sizzle run by the Lions, with snags donated by Al Haj Halal Meats, and live music by the incredible Kylie Auldist and local talent 1649, and perhaps even a guest appearance from actor Ian Smith, aka Harold Bishop from *Neighbours*. A huge thanks to all businesses and residents who have supported the petition, including Twenty One Days Later, the Spade, Dairy Queen, MaryLou's Cafe, Chemist Discount Centre, Direct Chemist Outlet, Five Star Fabric & Garments, and Barry Plant Glenroy.

Sunbury electorate construction projects

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (10:05): I am delighted to be back in the house to continue to get on and get things done as part of this Andrews Labor government. I was absolutely delighted recently to visit the Diggers Rest Recreation Reserve as well as Leo Dineen Reserve in my electorate to have a look at the new facilities that are being delivered in both of those areas. We are also getting on with construction of the brand new Sunbury multideck car park. We are upgrading Sunbury West Primary School, and we recently opened the Sunbury Priority Primary Care Centre. I have also visited the Sunbury Winter Shelter and Sunbury Downs College, and of course we are getting on and we are upgrading Sunbury Road.

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

Josh BULL: There is a lot happening, member for Frankston, both in my electorate and in electorates right across the state, because we know and understand the importance of strong, sound, sustained investment, making sure that we are catering for growth and making sure that we are giving local communities everything that they deserve.

Garry Hollingsworth

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (10:06): Very sadly, I do want to acknowledge the passing of Garry Hollingsworth, a maths teacher for 41 years at Sunbury College. He was known as the running man. Everyone in the community knew Garry. He was a terrific person, and we acknowledge his passing.

Bills

Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Lily D'Ambrosio:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (10:06): Here I am to resume what I began yesterday. Just picking up, I was discussing automatic circuit reclosers, which reduce the likelihood of ignition on bare-wire single-wire earth return powerlines by nearly half under worst-case bushfire risk conditions. The entire Victorian SWER network, which is 30,000 kilometres, is now protected with this new generation technology.

Another measure we have undertaken is rapid earth fault current limiters, REFCLs, which are life-saving smart technology. They act as a giant safety switch when powerlines come into contact with vegetation, which reduces the risk of bushfires igniting and keeps communities safe. I actually watched a YouTube video of it, and you can see the difference between the new technology – the second it contacts the ground no ignition occurs – and the old technology, which is instant fire. The difference that this makes with established technology is huge when it comes to safety. The technology has been

reducing the risk of bushfires starting from multiwire powerlines across more than 31,000 kilometres, or half the network in Victoria. They are 10 times more effective in reducing bushfire risk than the previous best practice safety infrastructure, so we now have robust safety practices and requirements across the traditional supply grid. The work in this regard is to be commended. The challenge today for us all, which this bill addresses, is to create legislation which addresses new technologies and energy generation taking off around the state as we work towards net zero emissions by 2045.

It is exciting that Victoria is leading the charge – pun intended – not only across our nation but also in the world when it comes to fast energy transition. You could say we are powering ahead when it comes to household solar energy production from nearly 250,000 homes and the installation of the Victorian Big Battery – Queensland can keep its Big Pineapple – the largest battery south of the equator. We will be producing 9 gigawatts of offshore wind by 2040, and because we are charging ahead in this space, we are the leaders in our nation when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions reductions. That is something of which we should all be incredibly proud – what an achievement.

Net zero by 2045, brought forward by five years, is a terrific target, which we are well on the path to achieving. Good news stories abound in Victoria when it comes to energy and the progress we are making, but it is imperative that legislation keeps up with these changes and ensures that safety remains paramount across the industry no matter how new or otherwise or the type of energy production. We need to give the regulator, Energy Safe Victoria, new tools to ensure safety across new energy technologies, and that is precisely what this bill aims to achieve. We have seen recent examples, which a number of my colleagues in this place have discussed, where the 2018 Terang and Garvoc fires, as mentioned by so many, were found to be caused by the clashing of high-voltage powerlines. Six thousand hectares of land and property were destroyed, and this was found to be caused by Powercor.

It has been raised here, but I think it is important to reiterate, that the fine imposed by the court of a mere \$130,000 was unacceptably low, and yet it was all that the court could impose as per the legislation. Understandably the community – those who were watching, those who were affected – considered it completely insufficient. In our current regime the penalties simply do not align with the potential implications to life, to property and to the environment, which may result from a failure in fulfilling safety obligations. It is currently 1500 penalty units. Such relatively low penalties do undermine the intent of the legislation. This bill will significantly increase them to 9000 penalty units for body corporates. That is a significant increase. In addition to increasing penalties, the bill will also address the limitations Energy Safe Victoria has in regulating new energy generation and infrastructure.

In 2021 there were two significant fires which occurred at the Victorian Big Battery and the Cohuna solar farm. Energy Safe Victoria was unable to proactively regulate these sites and could only intervene once the fires had occurred. I think it is fairly safe to say, and I do not think anyone would challenge this, that prevention is far better than cure. The bill will empower Energy Safe Victoria to do just that. They will be able to get out there, ascertain risks and have the power to compel companies to actually take safety seriously, and that is precisely what we expect and what Victorians expect. We know that energy production is vital. We all need it – everyone needs to turn on the lights, heat the hot water and cook the food – but we want to ensure that it is within the safest parameters possible.

There have been significant changes with the energy sector, as we are well aware. It is moving away from having a small number of large-scale facilities, which in the past have been owned and operated by a small number of companies, towards a much more decentralised and widely distributed electricity generation industry. This is exciting and it is promising. It is the way of the future, and given our goal towards net zero, it means that will become a reality. The exponential growth in these new technologies, though, has exposed critical gaps with the current energy safety framework, and that is what this bill is going to address.

By giving Energy Safe Victoria the capacity to deal with the modern challenges emerging and new styles and types of electricity safety management plans, I can then assure my community of Monbulk that, as far as is reasonable, current and future networks, no matter what their scale, no matter what

their configuration, will have mitigated safety risks which will be regularly reviewed and updated. These measures and the other amendments proposed in this bill, which update legislation which is nearly a quarter of a century old, bring bushfire planning more to the fore. It also requires nominated owners and operators to update their plans on a five-year cycle, all to the satisfaction of Energy Safe Victoria.

As I said yesterday, we can appreciate that electricity generated by nature in the form of lightning is well beyond our control. We can only respond to that when it strikes. But with the energy that we generate, be it through electricity or be it through gas, it is completely incumbent upon us to mitigate those risks and those hazards as much as is practically possible. The technologies emerging also allow for greater safety enhancement. But it is up to us, it is incumbent upon us as a government, to ensure that the regulations are there which compel those who are generating power to do so in the safest manner possible – to not cut corners, to not cut costs in the pursuit of profits, but to exercise their obligations to ensure that we do not have bushfires that start because the technology has not been employed to prevent them from occurring. As I say, as the member for Monbulk, we are all very alive to the fact that bushfires can – and they will – come again, as they have in the past. So I commend this bill in its entirety to the house, and I thank the Minister for Energy and Resources for bringing it to us all.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (10:14): It is a pleasure to rise to speak on the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023 and to follow my colleague over there the member for Monbulk and hear her talk so passionately about the importance of safety in her community and talk with real, lived experience about what that is like, whether it is bushfires or thunderstorms and major storms, which we know due to climate change we will potentially be facing in the future. I think the member for Monbulk put it really well in saying that when it comes to companies who really have a monopoly in this state when it comes to the supply of electricity and gas, we need to reduce their ability to cut costs and increase profits at the expense of community and community safety. That is a very important reason why bills like the one coming before the house today are so very important.

I know through lived experience how important it is to have regulation in this space, having spent most of my working life working for distribution and transmission network service providers in this state and across this country. It is important that legislation and regulation keep up with changing technology but also that we increasingly have an awareness of safety in those communities and the impacts of climate change that they face year upon year. It is important that our laws and regulations are able to hold those sorts of monopoly businesses to account. I do not think there would be anyone in this house that would argue that those companies really have in the past had a tendency to put profit before people. It is very, very important that we ensure that the public is safe from dangerous things happening when it comes to electricity and even the lack of electricity supply in this state.

The purpose of the bill that we are debating today and yesterday is to give our government greater control over enforcing energy safety, especially when it comes to new technologies. Time and time again I have stood in this place and talked about the need to control energy safety when it comes to new technologies, because this is a government that has been really intent on recognising legislative gaps in this state and bringing forward bills to close those gaps but also to keep up with technology and keep up with community expectations. I think that is a sign of a truly great government but also a minister who is constantly looking for ways to improve energy, the supply of energy and even the safety around energy supply here in this state. Importantly, this bill provides much-needed improvements to the enforcement and compliance powers of Energy Safe Victoria, who is indeed the key regulator in this space that is responsible for ensuring that major electricity, gas and pipeline companies operate and continue to operate in a manner that is safe and that minimises risk to the public and their property.

We do know that Victoria is at the forefront of developments when it comes to renewable energy and renewable technology. As a member who is standing here in their fifth year since being elected to Parliament and elected to government in 2018, the amount of bills that have come before this house

relating to energy has just been absolutely incredible. I think about my ability to say that, having worked in the industry for such a long time. There has been such a need for legislative and policy reform in this space. It is outstanding that it feels like every other sitting week we are standing here talking about energy, and we are able to reiterate the things that we have done but also the pathway we are still on to amend legislation and improve policy around energy, energy supply and public safety here in this state. It is a true testament to the minister, and I can wholeheartedly stand here and congratulate her.

Of course these changes only help to cement Victoria as a national leader in renewable energy regulation and investment. In fact I am here again standing and saying that we are leading one of the fastest energy transitions in the world. That is something everyone in this state and everyone in this house – I know that they do on this side of the chamber – can feel incredibly proud about. Last week's announcement about phasing out gas in newly built homes from next year is an example of how far we have come in setting up a renewable energy grid that is strong enough to withstand new technologies and new and emerging challenges like the challenges we are facing around climate change. We are setting up a renewable electricity grid that is strong enough to withstand those challenges now and into the future.

In the last eight years we have more than tripled the share of renewable technology in generating power, and we have installed the largest big battery in the Southern Hemisphere. That is a real achievement. But I have to say, as the previous member for Tarneit, I feel particularly proud that Tarneit was able to get their own neighbourhood battery. I saw some photos on the new member for Tarneit's Facebook page recently, and I was pleased as punch to see that that neighbourhood battery in the heart of the electorate of Tarneit is not just a freestanding battery, with no beautiful artistic mural display as I have seen in other parts of this state, but that the battery has a beautiful mural attached to it, which I know that community would really welcome. It is the small touches like that on those smaller projects, but still very impactful, that help bring the community together to celebrate things like neighbourhood batteries. I also say we should be celebrating that we have installed the largest big battery in the Southern Hemisphere. That is a real achievement.

It is energising, and I feel particularly energised just standing here talking about it. Not only did we smash our 2020 renewable energy target of 25 per cent, but we have now put ourselves in a position to achieve more ambitious targets. We know we can do it. We meet them early on, and we know we can achieve more. That is going to be with a renewable energy target, including 95 per cent by 2035. That is huge – nation-leading. As we talked about during the election, every week here in this place and most certainly in my community – if I am not reminding them, they are reminding me – the biggest driver towards meeting this 95 per cent target of course is bringing back the SEC.

One of the benefits of investing in renewable technologies is that we can learn and, most importantly, be able to develop new ways to harness technology to generate energy. For example, in October last year the Minister for Energy and Resources agreed, as part of a national accord to amendments in the National Gas Law, to include new sources such as hydrogen gas and biomethane, which is a new biofuel. This is just one example of the way in which our laws have been updated to reflect these changes. We also have the potential to experiment with things such as tidal and wave energy from our shores, geothermal in the ground and even forms of hydro-electricity. I remember a time working at the Australian Energy Regulator when we were talking with engineers about the future horizon of renewable energy and what solar panels would look like – 'Imagine if every home had a solar panel on the roof and what that would do to the grid and what that would do for climate change'. Now that is kind of second nature. It is expected, right? You have solar panels, and they are on the roof of your home not only lowering your electricity bill, but you are actually doing really great things for the environment.

When we think about things like tidal and wave energy from our shores, that geothermal in the ground I talked about and even forms of hydro-electricity, sometimes I think it is so far on the horizon, in the future, but really we will see that future come to fruition if we continue to invest in industries, update

our regulations in law and make sure that there is energy supply but also community public safety. We always want the public to come along on that journey and invest and celebrate renewable technology as we continue to tackle climate change and the rising prices of utility bills and electricity bills.

This is a really important bill – I mean, I could talk about this all day. But in the 20 seconds that I do have left, I want to congratulate the minister for putting forward, again, a really great bill before this house. The work that the minister does is absolutely remarkable as one of our hardest working ministers and as part of this very hardworking Andrews Labor government. I commend the bill to the house.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (10:24): I want to acknowledge all the previous contributions made by members on this side in regard to this bill, and of course I rise to contribute to the incredible work done by Minister D'Ambrosio and her team on the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023. As I say, I acknowledge all the contributions that have already been made. It is a highly technical and complex bill that brings together several large pieces of existing legislation and brings them firmly into the 21st century. It is also a critical piece of legislation that will shape the future of energy safety here in Victoria, and it certainly builds upon other energy bills that have been passed here in this house, as the member for Laverton alluded to, and I thank her for doing that.

Of course at the election last year we committed to a comprehensive review of energy safety for the long term, but these proposed reforms are a good first step in that, representing a range of quick wins. The bill will also ensure safety for workers and communities as we continue with our journey and transition to a renewable energy future. In regard to the safety of workers, I will come to an example a bit later in my contribution, and hopefully I can get to it. It does date back over 100 years, but it just goes to show the work that has had to be done over many, many decades in regard to worker safety.

We have helped nearly a quarter of a million Victorian households install solar panels on their roofs, reducing bills and giving them control over their energy. We have installed the Victorian Big Battery, and it is a great achievement. It is the largest one in the Southern Hemisphere. Through these actions we have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by more than any other state in Australia since 2014. We have comfortably surpassed our 2020 renewable energy target of 20 per cent, and we increased our 2030 renewable energy target from 50 per cent to 65 per cent. We have set a 2035 target of 95 per cent. Of course we have brought forward our net zero emissions target from 2050 to 2045, which will require the transition of our entire energy system, and we can see the great work that is being done there, including in transport and industry, but our energy safety legislation has not kept pace with that. We have seen the take-up of EV cars and things like that and the change in the attitude of our society. This creates many more jobs within our communities. It creates cheaper energy and cleaner air, and that is exactly what we are trying to do.

We are leading one of the fastest energy transitions in the world, and as we embrace renewable energy, it is imperative that we prioritise the safety of our communities and our workers. The bill aims to amend the Electricity Safety Act 1998, the Gas Safety Act 1997 and the Pipelines Act 2005 with the primary goal of strengthening our energy safety compliance framework. Through this we are addressing the energy safety legislation framework to improve community safety and regulation of new and emerging safety risks, particularly as they relate to emerging technologies like solar farms, batteries and wind farms. We see many, many wind farms in particular in my area out in the west popping up everywhere. They are a great thing, and they are quite a majestic thing to look at as you drive along the highway, even though some people do complain about them.

One significant aspect of the legislation is the introduction of obligations for certain electricity installations, ensuring that they pay levies to Energy Safe Victoria and implement enhanced safety measures. These obligations will be comparable to those already imposed on major distribution and transmission companies. We are increasing civil penalties up to sixfold to better reflect the potential consequences of safety failures, such as the devastating St Patrick's Day fires around Terang and Garvoc, and I know that has been alluded to by previous speakers. Those fires were caused by high-

voltage powerlines clashing, resulting in a big investigation that showed negligence and deliberate safety protocols being ignored. The fires were devastating for a lot of people and their livelihoods. Of course there was a great penalty that came out of the investigation, and I will allude to that a bit later. ESV plays a pivotal role in ensuring the safety of our energy landscape. It is Victoria's energy safety regulator, and it develops and maintains a robust energy safety framework for our state.

Of course traditionally the focus was major electricity and gas pipeline companies. We are seeing that landscape change dramatically and rapidly. ESV ensures that those organisations and corporations that fall within their scope and regulatory jurisdiction conduct their businesses safely, and that is what we need to do. We need a regulator that will actually regulate rather than just go by name. They will manage their assets responsibly, these companies, and minimise the risk to the public and to property to the best of their abilities and extent of their reach.

One crucial responsibility that ESV has got is to license electrical workers and to ensure the competence and knowledge of these workers. They have recently introduced a continuing professional development program that equips all electrical workers with up-to-date knowledge of new legislation, standards and technologies, which will be integral as our energy system continues to expand, develop and change over years to come.

There is a tenacious effort to educate the community about energy safety and holding duty holders accountable. The ESV has achieved some pretty good results in that area. This year we have witnessed a significant reduction in serious injury related to energy incidents and a notable decrease in ground fires from energy assets, and that is exactly what we want, particularly if we are going into such a dangerous fire period this year, probably, with what we have seen in the Northern Hemisphere. That heat has got to go somewhere. It could be quite frightening if it might come this way. There is a lot of undergrowth out there at the moment, and it will not take long to dry up, so we should be very cautious about what happens going into this summer season.

It is important to say to the house that ESV will continue to play a vital role in ensuring the safety of our energy landscape. This is especially crucial when we embark on achieving our ambitious renewable energy and climate targets. With their diligence and dedication, we can confidently pursue our renewable energy goals while keeping all Victorians safe. We acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of ESV. I want to make special mention of their commitment to safety, to education and to accountability, which has made a significant positive impact on our energy sector.

The legislation, while it does empower ESV with stronger investigation powers, enables them to seize items for a longer duration to conduct more thorough investigations into faulty or dangerous products, and it rectifies any loopholes in the current framework. We will keep building upon the strength of what this legislation provides for.

This bill represents a fundamental step in safeguarding our communities and our workers as we navigate this technology transformation. It is a dedication to us delivering cleaner air, more jobs and cheaper energy. But of course none of this can be done without prioritising the safety of communities and of workers, and that should be at the forefront of all of this development and evolution in the energy industry. As a result of the accelerated rate of the rollout of new and emerging technologies, the appetite of the public to embrace these changes, the rapid adoption of new technologies and the exponential growth of these technologies, updating legislation is absolutely necessary.

I know, with very little time left on the clock, I am not going to get my story about worker safety. It was quite an interesting story dating back to the First World War, when young women called the 'radium girls' were poisoned by radium while painting the faces of watches for soldiers. These young women were contaminated with radium. I think 11 of them died. They were young; they were in their 20s. We do not want to see that continue. I do commend this bill to the house.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (10:34): I move:

That the debate be adjourned so that the house can proceed forthwith to debate motion 37 on the notice paper standing in my name.

Motion 37 on the notice paper is a very important one, and it should take priority over continuing to debate the bill currently before the house. Motion 37 reads as follows:

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

Robert Redlich is 'one of Victoria's most eminent and well-respected jurists'. Who said so? None other than the Labor government themselves when they appointed him as IBAC Commissioner. That is a direct quote from the press release of the then Special Minister of State the Honourable Gavin Jennings on 15 November 2017.

In my nearly 17 years in this place I have seen a lot of robust exchanges, I have seen a lot of robust quizzing at committees, I have seen a lot of back and forth, but never have I witnessed an attempt to smear such a respected and eminent Victorian as I witnessed at Monday's Integrity and Oversight Committee hearing. There was absolutely appalling conduct. The former IBAC Commissioner was brought before the committee to discuss matters that went to the integrity of IBAC and the integrity of the IOC itself, and what happened was in fact members of the IOC proved Mr Redlich's points. They proved his points. I do not think that the members concerned actually had the wit to draft the questions themselves. I think they were cat's paws and minions and sock puppets of the Premier's office. That is what they were.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just before the minister speaks, I am going to pre-empt this debate. The debate here is about the importance of the adjournment that you are raising, not about the motion itself. I am going to try and do my best to keep us to the point. Is there a further point of order, Minister?

Mary-Anne Thomas: Yes, there is. On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this procedural motion is not an opportunity for the member for Malvern to disparage or impugn members on this side of the house, which is what he is attempting to do.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. I would also add that imputations on members are disorderly. Let us all try and remain within the rules.

Michael O'BRIEN: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Of course imputations are disorderly, other than by substantive motion, which is what I am proposing we debate, because yes, there are imputations contained in this motion, and they are deserved imputations. But let me return to the question of why it is so important that this matter be dealt with today.

Victoria is currently entering its eighth month without a permanent IBAC Commissioner. Mr Redlich's term expired at the end of December last year. Victoria is now into August. We do not have a permanent IBAC Commissioner, we have an acting commissioner. Why can't the government get it right? Why can't the government make an appointment of an eminent Victorian in eight months? You have to ask: what sort of eminent Victorian would put themselves up for such an important role when they saw the way Mr Redlich was treated by those Labor members of the IOC on Monday? What eminent Victorian would put themselves forward to be traduced and attacked and smeared in such a way? We need to resolve this now, because this house needs to send a message to any potential candidates for the position of IBAC Commissioner that this house will not stand for the appalling treatment that was meted out to Mr Redlich on Monday. We need to do it now because there could be some very eminent, respected, independent people who would do an outstanding job as Victoria's IBAC Commissioner who will not put themselves forward after seeing the way Labor members behaved on Monday.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member is defying your ruling in that he is drifting off the procedural motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The member was coming back to the importance of his adjournment.

Michael O'BRIEN: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. This is why it is important that this house immediately proceed to motion 37, because prospective IBAC commissioners need to know if they are going to be traduced the way Mr Redlich was on Monday, or if this house is going to take a stand now and say, 'We will respect people in the role of IBAC Commissioner. We will not try and smear them as bullies. We will not try and smear them as having participated in secret payouts. We will respect them for their role, which is to uncover corruption.' Goodness knows, there is a lot of corruption in this Andrews Labor government that needs to be uncovered, and it should be happening now.

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (10:40): I rise to oppose the procedural motion put forward by the member for Malvern, who, along with most of his colleagues, has failed to engage this week with important legislation before this house for the consideration of all members and on behalf of all Victorians. We have seen with the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023 a failure by those opposite to proceed to engage with and debate these important matters of reform of our resources policies as well as our energy policies. It is a bill that seeks to improve risk management for minerals and quarry operations in the regulatory framework in our state. Those opposite have failed to engage in policy debate on these matters. They seek to avoid engagement on policy matters and legislation in this house.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on relevance in relation to the procedural motion, the minister is referring to a bill that the government has chosen not to even bring on yet. I hope that assists the minister in his contribution.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am not quite sure what the point of order was there, but if it is on relevance, if we could all stay to the matter of the adjournment procedure ahead of us, that would be appreciated.

Anthony CARBINES: There is a range of bills before the house this week on the government business program, and those opposite seek to interrupt debate on legislation in this place with their procedural motions instead of debating legislation that is part of the government business program outlined in the house for this week. Those opposite continue to choose to disrupt and refuse to engage in debate on these bills. The energy bill as well – we have seen in the current debate on the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023 those opposite refusing to engage on that bill and refusing to put forward speakers on that legislation. It has been adopted into the government business program this week, and those opposite refuse to engage on those matters. They are almost on strike.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on relevance, this is not an opportunity for the minister to embarrass the Premier for not making a contribution on any bill in this term. It is not an opportunity for him to do that.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am going to take it that was on relevance. Points of order are not an opportunity to have your own debate. I bring the minister back to the adjournment procedure before the house.

Anthony CARBINES: The procedural motion put by the member for Malvern is not supported by the government. It is not supported by very many members in this place. It is again an effort to smear the government, to smear members of this place, to refuse to engage in the government business program that has been adopted by this house this week. He has refused to engage in those matters. He seeks constantly to smear members of this place, members of this house. We have taken points of order that have been upheld in relation to those matters already in relation to the procedural debate that we have had so far.

I would encourage all members to get back to debating matters that relate to the government business program that has been adopted for this week. We are currently in the midst of a debate on the Energy

Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill. It is an important and critical bill for the people of Victoria. It is a bill that should continue to be debated in this place, and we would encourage those opposite to put forward some speakers to engage in the debate and to demonstrate their support for energy safety and the protection of people here in Victoria. They have failed to do that. They have sought to wipe away and lack engagement in relation to this energy safety bill. It is a critical matter for all Victorians. Those opposite have not chosen to speak on these matters. They have failed and they have sought to disrupt legislation and debate on these matters that have been adopted in the government business program this week.

We also know that if a debate and discussion on other matters is wanted, there are appropriate forms of the house with which to do it. This is not one of them. The member for Malvern has been in this place long enough to know that is the case, and he is choosing to again disrupt the government business program. They are serial pests when it comes to choosing to do this. They go about this path each and every time because they fail to engage in matters that are of importance to Victorians.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on relevance, this is not an opportunity for the minister to embarrass the Leader of the House for spending more time on motions this week than the government bills. It is not an opportunity to do that.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Again, I take it that is on relevance, and the minister will continue on the adjournment.

Anthony CARBINES: There seems to be a failure to understand that it is the government business program that gets debated in this place, it is the government business program that has been adopted for this week and it is the government business program that will continue to prevail in the house, not only today but for the remainder of this week. That includes returning to the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill, and I commend that bill to the house. I reject the procedural motion from the member for Malvern. We look forward to getting back to the government business program and debating energy safety matters for all Victorians.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (10:45): The minister that has just spoken is misguided on so many levels it is hard to know where to start. We have a procedural motion before us, and that is why the debate should be adjourned. We have been debating the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023, and we have put up quite a number of speakers on that. But strangely this is day three, and it is unusual –

A member: How many? You don't even know how many.

Cindy McLEISH: I can tell you, it's eight. This is unusual because we have done it on Tuesday, we have done it on Wednesday and we have done it on Thursday. The minister referred to the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023, which the government have not even brought on yet, and we are very keen to speak to that. However, the reason this debate should be adjourned is because there is a matter that should take precedence, a matter of high priority, and that is item 37 on the notice paper, put forward by the member for Malvern. He moved:

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

The behaviour in that committee was absolutely appalling, and it should be condemned. We should have the opportunity to debate that motion and to finish debating the energy legislation, because we have been on that for three days – it is the third day. What we have here is a pattern of behaviour of this government, who want to smear and want to protect their own backs because they have made so many errors of judgement here.

Now, Robert Redlich himself, the former IBAC Commissioner, came with an impeccable reputation as an eminent Victorian. What is really important here is the future of IBAC, the future of the

Parliament and what that is going to look like because, as has already been said by the member for Malvern, we know that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. We need to appoint a permanent IBAC Commissioner.

Belinda Wilson interjected.

Cindy McLEISH: We have had an IBAC Commissioner of such reputation smeared by the member for Narre Warren North over there – who continues to interject – and her behaviour was nothing short of appalling. She is continuing to behave like that. We have –

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, once again I ask that you remind those on the other side of the house that this is a narrow procedural debate and is not an opportunity to smear the reputations of those on this side of the house.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. I would encourage the member for Eildon to come back to the arguments for the adjournment of debate, not debate the motion.

Cindy McLEISH: Absolutely, because what is important when we debate this procedural motion is to park the energy legislation – the reasons why we need to park that legislation and the reasons we need to move on to this motion. What we have also seen in this Parliament is a shift from debating bills to debating motions. Every week we are debating a number of motions, and so whilst we have engaged in the debating of the motions, we think it is only reasonable that when we have a motion of such importance on the paper, it too should be debated. That is why I think it is so important that we adjourn the energy legislation debate – which we have done on Tuesday and Wednesday and again today – and we move on to a matter of higher priority.

I know that the energy legislation is based on the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission recommendations about energy safety, which the government actually failed to implement, which we put in when we were in government, and now this government has finally started to realise. I am quite interested that it is all of the city members that have been debating it. If they have got all their city members debating it, either bring on all of the country and regional members to do so or park it and go on to this very important motion that we have put on.

Now, what is also important about why we should come to item 37 on the notice paper is that the reputation of IBAC is at stake here. To encourage somebody to put their hand up to take on that important role, we need to make sure they are protected.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (10:50): How can I follow that, member for Point Cook? I am happy to rise to speak on this procedural motion, because this is about those opposite, who have run out of steam. They have run out of anything to say about the bill at hand.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, although it pains me to interject immediately with a point of order, the member has in his first sentence misunderstood why he is rising to speak.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member had just commenced and is expected to debate the adjournment motion.

Paul EDBROOKE: Why do you have to helicopter-parent Parliament? Honestly. This is a smear campaign. It is very obvious. The committee in question had an independent chair who did not rule any questions out of order. In fact it was a Liberal deputy chair who did not rule any questions out of order. We should not be deviating from the government business program at all. The government business program is democratically voted on.

We also heard the previous speaker talking about priorities, about how the bill that we are speaking on at the moment is not a priority. Well, to the 173 people who died on Black Saturday and their families, I would say, it is a priority. Energy safety is a priority. Bringing renewables into the future and making sure they are safe and having legislation that is catching up with that is actually a priority

for members on this side of the house. I am sure that there are some people over on that side of the house wondering at the moment why they are trying to initiate a stunt instead of talking about really, really important legislation that affects Victorians.

This legislation we are talking about, which those opposite want to deviate from debating at the moment for a stunt, is actually unbelievably important. We have seen the results when private energy providers do not prioritise safety, and that is what this bill is about. There are plenty of people on this side of the house that still wish to speak on this very important bill. If the people on the other side of the house have, like I said, chosen not to speak on this, they need to talk to their constituents about that and they need to face their constituents about that.

Like I said, motion 37 is more about smearing members of this Parliament, and to me that is not a priority. Our priority is being in here today and legislating for Victorians, not smearing members of Parliament in this house. I would like to see members on the opposite side actually get up and speak on this bill and have a read of it – read the second-reading speech, in fact, and know what it is about. I certainly know what motion 37 is about, and I do not believe that is a priority today. I think we should be sticking to the government business program.

As I said, there are plenty of people on this side of the house that would like to speak on this very, very important priority. We have seen the tragic results of a lack of safety in the energy industry. Now we are rolling out the largest renewable energy portfolio in the nation, and you could say it is recognised internationally as well. We need to keep up with that. If we do not keep up with that, we might well have another tragedy that is not just about a worker or one person in the community; it could be about a whole community. It could be about a whole town. It is very important that we speak on that and remain on this bill.

As I said, people on this side of the house are very keen – regional members and metro members – to speak on this bill and not participate in stunts that are being brought on by those opposite. Motion 37 might be important to them – calling out members from this side of the house and trying to make things personal – but it is important that we stick to the government business program, which was voted on in this house. It was voted on in this house, and we should stick to that. There is no reason at all to deviate from the government business program.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (10:54): The house has a decision to make as to whether to support the motion from the member for Malvern to interrupt debate on the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023. I appreciate the importance of voluntary electricity safety management schemes for operators of complex electrical installations. However, when we weigh that up against the importance of holding committee members to account and having committee members answerable to this place for their choice of questions and their use of time before an expert witness to a committee inquiry in a public hearing, I do not think the decision before the house is that difficult. I believe that all of us should support this motion from the opposition to go into the conduct of the public hearing and question whether we handled it appropriately. I believe, as part of the committee, that we should be answerable to the house. I believe that we should respond to what is discussed in this motion and we should not run away from it. As important as the energy legislation amendment bill is, I believe that this matter is more important. It has been the subject of broad reporting in all of the main media outlets, and it is important for the government to read the room in the way that the opposition has, on this occasion, accurately done. I think therefore that the member for Malvern's motion deserves support.

This is not just for the Integrity and Oversight Committee but any committee: when a committee is hearing from an expert witness it is important that we allow the witness to contribute the information that they are able to contribute without attempts to deflect and distract. If that has happened, then it is important that this house examine that. That is why I think it is appropriate that we should be doing this more often. We should be discussing committee business more often in this place. It happens very rarely. Rather than using the house's time with legislation that is technical and that every party agrees with – no MP will be opposing this legislation as far as I know; it does not require a lengthy debate

and will sail through the house on the voices – and rather than listening to the sounds of our own voices droning on about volts and amps, I think it is more appropriate that we all hold ourselves answerable to this chamber for our choice of how we use our time in front of expert witnesses who have a lot to contribute to this state in terms of critique on our integrity infrastructure. I think it is appropriate therefore to support this motion, and the Greens will be supporting this motion.

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (10:58): I am very pleased to be rising today to contribute to the procedural motion, a motion that is seeking to disrupt the important work of this place and our legislative agenda and seeking to undermine the government business program that was put to a vote on Tuesday. We as the government put forward what was to be discussed this week. It was put to a vote, and we decided, as elected representatives of this place, what the government business program was. That is what we have been working through today. I must admit I was very surprised by the contribution by the member for Brunswick, standing up to support a Liberal motion – but then again, am I really surprised by him doing this? He is only a member of this place because he got up on Greens preferences. The Labor candidate for Brunswick Mike Williams –

Members interjecting.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member has strayed somewhat from the debate. It is a tight procedural debate, and I would ask you to ask the member to come back to the question.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, it is very hard indeed to hear what the member for Wendouree is saying because of the endless shrieking from those on the other side of the house.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. I was about to say, following the member for Brighton's point of order, that that may be the case, but it is very difficult to hear with the noise from both sides of the chamber. I would appreciate enough silence to hear the member continue on the adjournment procedure.

Juliana ADDISON: I will continue saying that the member for Brunswick is only here because he is here on Liberal preferences, and clearly we know where his bread is buttered.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: On the adjournment debate!

Juliana ADDISON: I want to be really, really clear, on the chair of the committee that is being discussed today, that it is actually the role of the chair of that committee –

Matthew Guy interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bulleen!

Juliana ADDISON: to determine what questions are being asked. And if there are any questions that are deemed to be out of order, it is the role of the chair –

Matthew Guy interjected.

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

Matthew Guy interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Make it an hour.

Member for Bulleen withdrew from chamber.

Juliana ADDISON: Referring to the procedural matter put forward by the member for Malvern, perhaps he is actually reflecting on the poor chairing of that committee and reflecting on the chair of that committee rather than individual –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this is not an opportunity for another attack from the government on another member. On relevance, frankly this is an appalling attack from another member of the government.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Thank you, member for Brighton. The member was getting close to imputations on members, which are disorderly. The member to continue on the reasons for the adjournment procedure.

Juliana ADDISON: Absolutely. As my father used to always say, double standards are better than no standards. Let me continue. What we are about today –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Has the member concluded?

Juliana ADDISON: No, definitely not.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Then I would remind the member that reflections on the Chair are also disorderly.

Juliana ADDISON: No, the chair of that committee, not the Chair –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Continue on the procedural debate – on thin ice.

Juliana ADDISON: Thank you very much for the opportunity, Deputy Speaker, and I apologise if there was any confusion that I was reflecting on your role, which I am very respectful of. I was merely talking about the chair of the committee that this motion is regarding. When we are talking about things –

Members interjecting.

Juliana ADDISON: Yes, I am very, very proud of my 48.5 per cent primary vote and the Liberal vote of 29 per cent in the seat of Wendouree – 29 per cent was your primary.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Brighton on a point of order, and I think I know where we are going.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I would say to you that it is very difficult for the house to remain in order with the ongoing behaviour of the member. I would ask you to bring the member back to the question before the Chair.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. I uphold the point of order. The member to continue in the 15 seconds left on the reasons for the procedural debate.

Juliana ADDISON: I would really like to add, with my last moments, the importance of the government business program, the importance of the energy legislation and the importance of the minerals thing and say that we should not be smearing good members of this government.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (11:03): I seek, by leave, the opportunity to contribute on this, because the Nationals have not had the opportunity.

Leave refused.

Assembly divided on Michael O'Brien's motion:

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

Noes (50): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale,

Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Motion defeated.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (11:09): I am very pleased to speak on the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023. At its core –

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Speaker, I do not think you were in the chamber listening before. During the last debate the last few minutes got quite raucous and there was an occasion when the Deputy Speaker had to stand on his feet, and during that time the member for Kororoit I noticed continued to wander around the chamber and not take her seat. So I thought this would be a good opportunity for you as the Speaker to perhaps counsel and remind many of the new members what it means and the significance of when the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker are on their feet. I notice that it has happened a few times in question time, and I thought this might be a good opportunity for you to provide some counsel to the newer members.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Eildon. Not just the new members – many of our ongoing members also seem to have forgotten the very significant ruling that when the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker are on their feet the house will be silent and members will resume their allocated seats.

Nina TAYLOR: At its core the bill will modernise Victoria's energy safety legislative framework to improve community and worker safety, and on that note I just wanted to explore the drivers of this change. There are actually really positive drivers. There are some negatives that have to be overcome and hence legislative reform, but I did want to first speak to the positive drivers for reform in this space – namely, Victoria is leading one of the fastest energy transitions in the world, which is absolutely fantastic, but it is really, really necessary. We have more than tripled the share of renewables in power generation in just eight years. We have helped nearly a quarter of a million Victorian households install solar panels on their roofs, reducing bills and giving them control over their energy – that is, giving power back to the people. We held the Victorian renewable energy target auction, the country's largest reverse auction for renewables, and we have installed the Victorian Big Battery, the largest – yes, the largest – in the Southern Hemisphere, and made Victoria the home of big batteries. We are really proud of that, but that is as a collective. When I am saying we are proud, we are proud as a state obviously, and through these actions we have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by more than any other state in Australia since 2014. We are only just warming up, and that is also extremely dynamic and exciting.

Coming back to the point, when we are looking at the catalyst for these reforms we can see that with this transformation, this fundamental transformation of our energy market, it follows that technology has to keep up, and it is nothing short of the most fundamental technological transformation of our lifetime. It follows – so there is a further limb to that – that legislation and the regulatory framework have to keep up as well. That is certainly challenging but nothing that we shy away from in any way, shape or form. What I did want to speak to is that it does mean, when we are looking at the technological transformation and we think of the Labor Party, very much the core of our values is about looking at this transformation not only in terms of reducing emissions, because we have to obviously protect our climate and mitigate the impact of climate change, but also we are looking at cost, and we know that renewables certainly provide one of the cheapest forms of energy delivery on the planet but also cleaner air. Jobs, cheaper energy and cleaner air – it is a win-win-win. Tick, tick, tick.

We can see that the legislation is not where it needs to be, and hence we have got the reforms coming through. We are punching through these reforms in a very considered and diligent way here and now as we speak, even though I did hear in a previous debate that a member of the Greens political party did not think we should be talking about volts and other things. I was a little bit surprised because they sort of pick and choose when it suits them to care about the planet and these kinds of reforms, so that was a little bit interesting. Anyway, we will continue to deliver. We will continue to make the necessary legislative reforms and to roll out the necessary transformation of our energy sector. That is what we do. But to ensure that the safety of workers and community is maintained, our energy safety rules must keep pace with technology, and I think that is at the heart of these changes here.

My learned colleagues have already spoken to a number of the very serious incidents that have occurred. That is what I was referring to from the outset in terms of some of the negative incidents that have been a catalyst for and perhaps given a sense of urgency – it is real urgency – to these amendments. There will be progressive reform in this space, but of course we have to address the most acute and urgent amendments which need to be made. Two serious fires in 2021, at the Victorian Big Battery and the Cohuna solar farm, highlighted the limitations. Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) must regulate facilities such as solar farms and battery installations. I mean, it is just common sense. I do not think there is anything that is not perfectly understandable in this space. It is pragmatic. These amendments will align the energy safety obligations of renewable energy companies with those of traditional companies and strengthen the investigative and enforcement powers of the independent safety regulator, Energy Safe Victoria. That is certainly a net positive for our state.

I should say when we are looking at the progressive and proactive work of our government in recognising the need to ensure our energy safety rules are fit for purpose, the then Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change initiated an independent review of Victoria's electricity and gas network safety framework back in 2017. This has been fully at the front of the mind of our government for some time. We know that we have to keep on. We have to work hard and keep progressing these reforms. It is necessary because technology is advancing at such a rapid pace.

Known as the Grimes review, it was established to consider the design and adequacy of the safety regulatory obligations, incentives and other arrangements. You can see the due diligence and care that has been taken by our government to make sure that these reforms are truly necessary but also reflect what is required and what the community expects. I think, again, there is that holistic approach of taking community with us but making sure that we act with due diligence. In 2018 the government supported in principle 42 of the 43 recommendations in the *Independent Review of Victoria's Electricity and Gas Network Safety Framework*, the Grimes review, as I referred to earlier.

I did want to just speak to one of the interesting elements of this. When we are talking about oversight in particular, the bill will provide ESV with greater oversight and control over any changes to a facility's safety management plan – again we can see that is absolutely pragmatic and critical in this space – and the ability to conduct full revisions of these plans every five years. I think that is perfectly acceptable and reasonable. It is right and proper, and it is certainly timely.

The amendments enhance the requirement for energy companies to preserve incident sites, because any delay in that regard in terms of the capacity of Energy Safe Victoria to intervene, prior to these reforms, certainly could compromise evidence. I am not making any allegations with that. We are just saying technically that would be one of the vulnerabilities prior to this very important and critical legislative reform. Energy companies will now have to preserve the site of a serious electrical or gas incident until ESV directs otherwise. The bill will also greatly strengthen ESV's investigation powers, including the preservation of serious electrical or gas incident sites, and align the period for which ESV can retain seized items. We can see that it is a very commonsense reform, and it is really about offering better protection for all Victorians and making sure that we truly keep pace, in terms of legislative reform, with technological advancements in this state.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (11:19): I am really pleased this morning to have the opportunity to contribute to debate on the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023 and to follow on from the very fine contribution from the member for Albert Park, a local member who is incredibly passionate in this space and is somebody within the government who each and every day, for her constituency and her community, gets on and gets things done. We know of course that legislation within this space that goes to tackling our energy needs, the needs of a growing Victoria, a growing community, is fundamentally important. A creative, dynamic and innovative series of policies and initiatives that go to providing energy in the most effective and most efficient way is something that this government will continue to deliver. It builds upon a very strong suite of reforms, of projects, of policies and of initiatives that we have had ever since we have had the opportunity to be on the government benches. Since November 2014 we have continued to bring those through the Parliament and deliver at each and every budget and within local communities, making sure that we are working with households, we are working with businesses and we are working with all of those within our community to drive down the cost of energy, to ensure that we are supporting households to meet those growing demands but also to create what is a safe network.

This bill modernises Victoria's energy safety legislative framework to improve community and worker safety and creates more effective and more targeted regulation of new and emerging safety risks that are posed by emerging technologies as we undertake a rapid transition to renewable energy. Other members have spoken in their contributions, and I certainly have spoken on previous bills about this government's sustained investment, our targeted approach, to ensure that we are investing in renewables. We know of course that Victoria is leading one of the fastest energy transitions in the world, we know that we have more than tripled the share of renewables in power generation in just eight years, and we know that this has assisted or helped nearly 250,000 Victorian households to install solar panels on their roofs, reducing bills and giving control over energy needs. We know that the Victorian renewable energy auction, the country's largest reverse auction for renewables, is incredibly important, as is the installation of the Big Battery, the largest in the Southern Hemisphere – and made in Victoria – in ensuring that we are continuing to put more supply into the market but, most importantly, supply that is renewable. These actions and a whole range of other actions have reduced our greenhouse gas emissions by more than any other state in Australia since 2014.

This work needs to be sustained, it needs to be consistent, and that is why both through this piece of legislation and also through those massive investments that make such a difference to investing in renewables we have surpassed our 2020 renewable energy target of 20 per cent, have increased our 2030 renewable energy target from 50 per cent to 65 per cent and have set a 2035 target of 95 per cent. This is backed by separate targets for offshore wind and energy storage. We know that we will have at least 2 gigawatts of offshore wind by 2032, 4 gigawatts by 2035 and 9 gigawatts by 2040. This is about making sure that we are driving down the cost of providing energy to local communities, to those households and businesses that I mentioned earlier but also, critically, doing what is important for the planet. I want to take the opportunity to thank and acknowledge all of those that work within the sector – all of those who each and every day work hard not just to support our communities with energy supply, energy needs, but to ensure that they are playing a vital role, a pivotal role, in investing in technology and making sure that we are meeting those targets if not bettering those targets. This is where we as a state do our best – when we are nation leading, when we are delivering those reforms and those initiatives that make such a difference.

We know that thus far, recognising the need to ensure that our energy safety rules were fit for purpose, the minister initiated the independent review of Victoria's electricity and gas network safety framework in 2017, the Grimes review, established to consider the design and adequacy of the safety regulatory obligations, incentives and other arrangements. Moving to 2018, the government supported in principle 42 of the 43 recommendations made by the independent review of Victoria's electricity and gas network safety framework. Of these 42 recommendations half have been implemented, three will be acquitted by this bill and the rest of course are on track for completion.

This is, as I mentioned earlier, another piece of legislation that goes to safety and that goes to certainty but provides for a framework that enables our terrific state of Victoria to continue to be nation leading when it comes to investment in renewables but also to support the more than 1 million people per decade that are projected to move into our great state over coming years. We know right now we have both pressures on supply and pressures on demand. We are a growing state, but what we are doing is an outstanding suite of reforms. I do, as other members have done this morning, want to acknowledge the terrific investment and work ethic, passion, drive and determination of the minister and of course her office and her department, who have led a critical suite of reforms to ensure that we are, as I mentioned earlier, nation leading in this space.

In the time that I have got remaining I just want to go to a couple of the amendments. The bill will amend the Electricity Safety Act 1998, the Gas Safety Act 1997 and the Pipelines Act 2005 and bolster the energy safety compliance framework. The bill makes amendments to allow the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Minister for Energy and Resources, to declare certain electricity installations to be of a class to which certain duties and other obligations apply. These obligations would include needing to pay levies to Energy Safe Victoria and ensuring that these are enhanced and that those safety measures are in place. There are of course a whole range of amendments that go to, as I mentioned earlier, providing for that framework that allows the energy supply needs of our state to be certain, to be safe and to be delivering on those innovative technological advancements that we know are fundamentally important as we move forward to what is the biggest investment in renewables anywhere in our state.

Acting Speaker Crugnale, when we move around our local community, and I am sure that you do often, we know and understand that Victorians appreciate the size and scale of the technological advancements that have been made within renewables. We know that there is passion around solar panels on roofs. We know that there is passion for electric hot water. We know that there is a real sense of responsibility within our local community to provide for a consistent, reliable but most importantly cost-effective suite of reforms that supports renewable energy generation in our state. One of the great things is to speak to members within the local community about how passionate they are – member for Footscray, I certainly know about your patch; you have spoken in the house about this before – to ensure that local communities are supported, both from a cost-of-living point of view and in doing what is the responsible and right thing for not just our generation but generations to come. So this is yet another important piece of legislation brought to the house by our government, the Andrews Labor government, who will continue to invest in those things that matter most – and we will do that each and every day.

Katie HALL (Footscray) (11:29): I am very pleased to make a contribution to this debate. I would like to start at the outset by just reflecting on the scale of the reform that the Andrews Labor government is delivering in renewable energy and of course climate action, which is an issue that people in my community are very passionate about. I think one of the most popular things in the most recent state election campaign for me to talk about was bringing back the SEC, which many people remember fondly. Being able to transform the energy market and to do it with renewables is something that people were really positive about. I know the member for Sunbury is very keen on the SEC, and it was absolutely something that people loved talking to me about during the election campaign. I have been excited to see how much progress already the Minister for the State Electricity Commission has made with that fantastic reform.

One of the other changes that was announced at the election was the community batteries. In the City of Maribyrnong there will be a community battery, and that is something that I am really looking forward to working on with the City of Maribyrnong and my community, who are very excited about our local transition to a greener, cleaner power supply.

I might focus a bit on issues that have been raised in this debate on previous days. This bill is a very important update to our nation-leading energy safety agenda. On this side of the house we are unapologetic about this safety regime for every project, every powerline and every solar panel. Those

opposite simply do not care and cannot be trusted with our energy system. I have a whole range of examples where they have spoken out against renewable energy targets. They let the private energy companies run rampant. I spoke before about the SEC. What happened after the energy sector was privatised was they then failed to invest in renewable energy or support Victorians to take up solar, and Victorians paid the price with increased power bills. I know, like probably every member in this house, that the power saving bonus – which I would like to remind my community will finish for this winter in August – has been enormously popular. My office has helped thousands of people apply for the power saving bonus. Part of our reform agenda is about driving costs down, and renewables can lead to significant costs savings. When they were last in government the retail electricity prices increased by 34.1 per cent. That was under the previous Liberal government, 2010 versus 2014, a 34 per cent price increase. That really reflects why it is so important that we bring back government-owned energy in Victoria.

At every stage the opposition have opposed any bills relating to energy targets or climate action. Since 2014 the Liberals have voted against or tried to amend or drastically change the following energy bills in the Parliament: the Climate Change Bill 2016, the Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Bill 2017, the Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Amendment Bill 2019, the Energy Legislation Amendment (Licence Conditions) Bill 2020 and the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Fairness) Bill 2021. Every step of the way when the Labor government and this minister – she is amazing, she is a real reformer – have tried to change the energy system, to set renewable energy targets, the opposition have risked thousands of jobs but also shown how chaotic they are internally in terms of their climate denying. At the 2018 state election the then Leader of the Opposition Matthew Guy refused to support the government's net zero emissions target and promised to build a new power station to be powered by what they assessed to be the cheapest alternative out of coal, gas and renewables as a way of indirectly promising a new coal-fired power station. So we know on this side of the house that –

Roma Britnell: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, this is not an opportunity to take out of context what the opposition has said. It is not a time to bash up the opposition or to mislead the house. That is actually incorrect, and that is not what happened at all. I think the member should correct that.

Danny Pearson: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, this has been a wideranging debate, and I think the member is perfectly entitled to talk about the trajectory that we have been on as a state in relation to greenhouse gas abatement. The member is entirely within her rights to point out the policies that this government has brought forward and compare and contrast them to those pursued by those opposite.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Jordan Crugnale): There is no point of order; it is a point of debate, and the member is able to bring it up in her contribution.

Katie HALL: I think it is entirely relevant in this debate that we speak about the alternative government and their position on renewable energy, and I remember very clearly a pretty disastrous – I think it was a Sky News – interview.

Members interjecting.

Katie HALL: Yes, that's right, in Frankston. Thank you. I wish I had the transcript because it is a ripper. I would read both sides.

Dylan Wight interjected.

Katie HALL: Yes, the market would decide. That was the Liberal Party's position. It was to have a new coal-fired power station, so I think it is entirely relevant to be speaking about our commitment to renewable energy and climate action and the complete chaos of those opposite. The reality is it is because there is a lot of climate denial that goes on over there and they are hopelessly divided. In fact, the member for Caulfield in 2017 tweeted that the Liberal Party would scrap Daniel Andrews's

‘unrealistic renewable energy target so we don’t have to pay even more for power’. So only four years later, suddenly there has been a change of heart and the opposition would support renewables and emission targets, but as I have pointed out in this debate there has been a very long history of inaction and of trying to block the government every step of the way.

In what have really been landmark reforms, we are one of the leading jurisdictions in the world when it comes to energy transition. We have more than tripled the share of renewables in power generation in just eight years, and we have helped nearly a quarter of a million Victorian households install solar panels on the roof, reducing their bills and giving them control over their energy. We of course held the Victorian renewable energy target auction, and we have installed the Victorian Big Battery, which I know in my community is something that was really well received, because our action on tackling emissions, creating a greener and cleaner power supply that is also more affordable for Victorians is something Labor can be relied on to do but the opposition cannot be.

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (11:39): It is a great pleasure to rise and speak on and debate the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023. Before going into the nitty-gritty of it all, I would just like to outline the overall objectives of this bill. The bill will address current issues associated with the energy safety legislation framework and improve community safety through more efficient and targeted regulation of new and emerging technologies and safety risks, including those posed by emerging technologies. These reforms will also bolster the safety compliance framework by increasing the obligations for electricity and gas companies, including owners and operators.

Here in Victoria there is no doubt that we are going through a massive energy transition, and it is really about building upon the strong targets that Victoria have set themselves. It is very much supported by our communities and my community in Bellarine, who are very much focused on making sure we have a clean, green environment in the Bellarine but also have a safe transition to those renewables.

This bill is obviously to modernise our legislative framework and to make sure that we improve community and worker safety issues. The bill will ensure that new technologies like batteries, wind farms and solar farms are held to the same standards as existing generation networks and technologies. We know that safety is really important when we have these changes in technology. It is paramount, especially for our workers in this field and for our communities. As we transition, we must make sure we keep pace with that regulation and enhance that enforcement.

As I have indicated, we really are leading the nation in this space. We are having that fast transition to a cleaner and greener energy system. We have more than tripled the amount of renewables in power generation in the last eight years alone. We know that renewables are backed by our communities. Millions have put solar on their roofs. They are installing heat pumps, they are installing batteries, and they know that it is not only good for the environment but it is good for their energy security. They also know it is cheaper, and it is a long-term investment to have cheaper energy for their own households.

Just outside Geelong we installed the Victorian Big Battery, the largest in the Southern Hemisphere. It is absolutely incredible for our region to host that big battery because not only is it reducing electricity prices but it is also just allowing us to store our energy, which is from wind and solar, and that is actually the cheapest form of energy that we can now produce. Victoria will store enough energy in that big battery to power over 1 million homes in an incident for about half an hour. We saw an incident at that Big Battery, and it highlighted the limitations that Energy Safe Victoria had. We must be able to regulate those solar farms and big battery installations, and this bill talks to that, and it shows the urgency of making these amendments. It is also very critical to safeguard our consumers by making sure we have that safe delivery as those new technologies are developed. But we need to continue, and we will build upon those ambitious targets that we have set, but they have to be in line with community expectations. We need to, as this bill will do, increase penalties so operators fulfil those safety obligations.

Now, as I have indicated, we do have that clear path. We have set ambitious targets and this state is leading. We have officially set an emissions reduction target of a 75 to 80 per cent reduction by 2035

and net zero by 2045. We smashed our other targets. Our 2020 emissions targets were absolutely smashed, and I am confident that we will do the same here. We do not waste any time. The minister is ambitious in her own objectives in what she needs to achieve for the state, and I am confident that we will meet and smash those targets because we do not waste time. We are getting on with it. We also have ambitious renewable targets of 95 per cent renewable by 2035, and what comes along with the transition is jobs. Thousands and thousands of jobs will now be part of this transition. We have ambitious targets for offshore wind. We know that this will also create further jobs, and just in the time since we have been elected over 5000 jobs have come in that large-scale renewable energy system.

Of course many members on this side of the house have talked about the excitement of bringing back the SEC, putting energy back in the hands of Victorians but also making sure that customers and Victorians come first, not companies who are there to make large profits for themselves. We need to have fit-for-purpose rules and energy regulations to do this, and this was initiated a few years ago when there was an independent review of Victoria's energy and gas framework, which was known as the Grimes review. I thought that I would have a quick look at that review, and at the time of the final report and the government's response Paul Fearon, who was the director of energy and safety at the time, said that this provided a further springboard for Energy Safe Victoria:

to build its capacity and capability to hold energy network businesses accountable for designing, operating and maintaining their infrastructure safely.

The in-principle support for changes to legislation by the Government will also ensure Victoria's regulatory frameworks are fit for purpose to meet emerging energy safety challenges into the future.

We have got on with that since that report. Of the 42 recommendations, we have implemented over half; three will be done through this bill, and we are on track to complete the rest. This really is going to allow Energy Safe Victoria to have that greater oversight and control of any changes to the safety management plans and the ability to conduct those full revisions of these plans every five years. This is really important, and community expectation is there. As the changes are rapidly occurring, we need to make sure that the right regulations are in place for Energy Safe Victoria to oversee the compliance of these new systems and technology. This bill is also going to provide Energy Safe Victoria with that enhanced enforcement toolkit to make sure that they can effectively regulate.

There is no doubt that Victoria is in a real energy transition here, which we are leading. I think this is probably one of the most fundamental technology transformations that we have seen across this state and that maybe I will see in my lifetime. Leading with renewables, emissions reductions and a commitment to bringing back the SEC, this is nothing short of an incredible reform driven by the Andrews Labor government and a minister with attention to our needs not only now but into the future, setting up our future generations. This legislation is nothing but common sense for Victoria's energy safety legislation, having the safety obligations of the renewable energy companies aligned with the traditional energy companies we have seen in this state. It is going to strengthen our investigation and enforcement powers, but importantly this is here to protect and safeguard our communities, our workforce and our energy future. I thank the minister for all the work that has gone into this bill. It is incredibly supportive, as I have talked about for my community, of making sure we see that cleaner, greener transition to renewables for our energy safety and our energy future.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I would ask you to refer a matter to the Speaker. Following a motion earlier, a number of incidents occurred behind the chamber. A number of government members, from both this place and the other place, harassed a member of this place. It was deeply distressing to members, both involved and witnessing. It was in the corridor just behind the chamber. There was shouting, there was clear harassment of the member, and it was, as I said, deeply distressing. We all want to work in a safe workplace.

I would say that the behaviour we saw not only did not fit a safe workplace, it was distressing. It was distressing to those involved and those in the corridor at the time. The public are often in that corridor. It was deeply distressing. So I would ask that you refer the matter to the Speaker for investigation. We

must have a safe workplace. The behaviour that occurred only minutes ago just outside the chamber does require immediate – immediate – investigation, and it does need to be reported back to the house.

Danny Pearson: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I take on face value what the member has said. I was not in that vicinity, so I can only take on face value what the member has said. What I would say is that there are probably established procedures for these matters being dealt with, and I think that referring the matter on to the Speaker is appropriate. As to why there was a requirement, though, to disrupt the proceedings of the house in order to make this point, I am unclear as to why the member has chosen to do this in this way. But if something has happened, then it is appropriate that that matter be referred on to the Speaker.

James Newbury: Further on the point of order, Acting Speaker, safe workplaces require immediate action, and –

The ACTING SPEAKER (Jordan Crugnale): You can only speak one time on that matter. I will refer the matter to the Speaker. The member for Barwon South.

Darren CHEESEMAM (South Barwon) (11:51): South Barwon, I think.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Jordan Crugnale): South Barwon.

Darren CHEESEMAM: I would never want to correct anyone sitting in that seat. It is of course with some pleasure that I rise late this morning to make my contribution on the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023. I must say I do so being a fierce advocate, as I know so many of my colleagues are, for taking the necessary steps to decarbonise the Victorian economy. I must say the Andrews Labor government has a very, very strong and reforming agenda when it comes to building a fit-for-purpose new energy environment that decarbonises our economy. As people would very much be aware, for those who have participated in this debate for a very, very long time, the realities are that historically the Victorian energy system has been built where our generators are almost exclusively in the eastern side of the state and our networks then distribute that energy from the east effectively across Victoria to consumers. That has been the reality for a very, very long time.

For most of Victoria's history of energy generation and transmission, energy has been largely generated, delivered and distributed by the Victorian public sector and by entities such as the State Electricity Commission. However, in the 1990s we had the Kennett government, and the Kennett government took an axe to the Victorian public sector generating that electricity and indeed sold off most of our energy networks and most of the generators to foreign entities that were largely listed on the stock exchanges of other jurisdictions outside of Australia.

Of course after our election in 2014 the Andrews Labor government sought to shift the generation capacity away from the brown coal fired power stations and take the Victorian economy on a massive transformational journey to generate energy largely by renewable energy. Over that time we have set increasingly ambitious targets and we have gone about achieving those targets to generate that energy in clean forms principally through renewable energy.

What that means in a really practical context is that we have a significant number of wind farms today that did not exist in 2014. We have many hundreds of thousands of solar panels on people's roofs, putting power back into the hands of those households and reducing their daily cost-of-living pressures through the provision of those solar panels. We have batteries partnering with solar panels at the household level, again providing the capacity for households to generate electricity through the day and to store it in batteries and to utilise that energy at night, and we have heat pumps heating people's hot water and the like.

The next reformist chapter in the very ambitious Andrews Labor government's energy journey that we are taking our state on is offshore wind. Quite a bit has been said in the last six months, and certainly there is a lot more work to do as we become Australia's first generation to indeed invest, to partner and to build offshore wind energy. I think what we will see in the years to come are ambitious projects

like Star of the Sea off the Bass Coast built and generating electricity for the Victorian economy and projects in our other offshore renewable energy zones, particularly along the Warrnambool–Portland areas of our coast, further contributing to the energy needs of this state.

Given all of that work that we are doing, it is critically important that we make sure, as is the Labor way, that we have a really strong set of occupational health and safety arrangements in place. Those occupational health and safety arrangements that need to be in place are really important for those workers who are working with renewable energy. It is really important that we have a strong set of regulations in place to protect them and to protect those communities and households – to make sure that in delivering this massive transformation we are protecting the lives of workers, making sure that we are protecting the lives of communities and indeed households.

I do want to just take a moment also to acknowledge and thank the Electrical Trades Union for the work that they do in this space. They have been a champion in so many ways of the occupational health and safety of their members. They have been champions of the need to protect Victorians from electricity risks, and they of course are committed to the renewable energy journey that we need to go on. They understand the science; they understand why we need to go on this particular journey. Our reform agenda is not only about building these new energy networks, the new generation capacity, it is also about making sure that the regulation that is in place is fit for purpose to protect those that come into contact with those systems – to make sure that people can do it safely.

I do note that the Liberal Party very much take every opportunity to deny the realities of climate change. I do note that from time to time we see very much a Trumpesque agenda coming from the Liberal Party, and indeed I do note that there are members of the Liberal Party, particularly Bev McArthur from the other chamber, who want to see nuclear energy. She wants to see nuclear energy as a part of Victoria's energy mix, and I know that because I have heard her say it. She wants to see that nuclear energy generated from Portland. I have not heard the member for South-West Coast come out and defend that community from Bev McArthur's agenda. She ought do that, because of course Victorians do not want to see nuclear energy as a part of Victoria's energy mix. That is what they want. In the moments I have left I just want to say a big thankyou to the Electrical Trades Union and a big thankyou to the minister for her reformist zeal. This is important legislation, and I very much commend it to this place.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (12:01): What a glorious day it is, and it is wonderful to see you in the chair on this fine winter's day, Acting Speaker Crugnale. I am delighted to make a brief contribution on the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023, because I think this provides the right regulatory framework in which we can ensure that we can encourage more investment in our state in relation to dealing with some of our baseload challenges.

You might recall that one of the reasons why we have got a statewide grid, an interconnecting grid, is because of market failure. There was a determination made in the early 20th century that we needed to make sure that there was a consistent level of security of supply right across the state, which is why a number of those private energy companies or those energy companies which were owned by local government as retailers were brought into that mix of having overarching public ownership. Indeed it was Sir John Monash who was tasked with the role of being the first commissioner of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria to ensure that we had that consistent approach.

Where we currently find ourselves is in a really exciting time. There is an opportunity for us to lead the nation, and indeed lead the world, when it comes to the great, wonderful asset that we have in the Bass Strait, being wind. I think that where we find ourselves is that there is an opportunity through the establishment of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria to provide that capital, to start to attract private investment to build on that, so that we can have that first-mover advantage and have large-scale wind, offshore wind, being developed here.

The great thing about offshore wind is that the frequency with which it occurs, the force with which wind is funnelled through the Bass Strait, does present the opportunity to have that real baseload capacity to supplement and to replace brown coal-fired power stations at Yallourn, Loy Yang A and Loy Yang B. It also will ensure that it is cleaner technology. If you think about the stack of energy supplies, by having that baseload wind energy, coupled with solar, coupled with batteries, coupled with a stronger grid to be able to take the variabilities and the fluctuations in relation to power generation and supply, we will be in a really strong position to start to meet these challenges head-on. We absolutely need to take these necessary steps to try and reduce our carbon footprint but make sure that we have got consistent security of supply.

I note that this is hard work. This requires extensive thought and consideration. It is a requirement to come up with a package of reforms, a series of legislative reforms, to ensure that we have got the right policy settings in place so that we can encourage that level of investment in a safe way and we can make sure that electricity is transmitted across the state in a safe, efficient and effective way. These are really important initiatives and something that we need to do. This is hard work that you have got to come up with, and you have got to bring it towards this place.

Where are the Greens political party? I am not sure if these people have spoken on this bill or not – lazy dilettantes that they are, who have got no interest in the serious work, right? They think they can tackle climate change through 140 characters in a tweet. They think that they can reduce our carbon emissions by just doing selfies, right? Did any of you comment on the ridiculous selfie the member for Melbourne posted when the decision about native logging was announced and how she was crying with glee looking at the camera and not thinking about the fact that the impact that had on those communities at that time, not thinking about the amount of policy work that you have got to go into to come to that position and not thinking about how you support those communities through what is a difficult time? This is serious work, and on this side of the house we are in the serious business of governing and being a reformist government and doing the hard work and the necessary work that is required to create a fairer, safer and greener Victoria. They are nowhere to be seen, and you can guarantee they are not going to be here after question time today. They will schlep outside, have their soy lattes, chew on some tofu and think about how wonderful the world could be if only they were in charge.

A member: They will be on an RDO tomorrow.

Danny PEARSON: We know they will not be working on Fridays because they do not work on Fridays. This is serious work that has been brought before the house, and again it is about making sure that we have got the right settings in place. It is about making sure that we deal with some of the challenges in terms of security of supply. We also need to make sure that where you have got powerlines in heavily forested areas there are splitters between the lines to prevent the lines coming together in the height of summer, which can spark and cause fires, which is what we saw during the course of Ash Wednesday. So I commend the minister for the bill that she has brought to this house. It is a good, solid Labor bill, and I commend the bill to the house.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (12:07): I rise to speak in support of the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023, and in doing so I would like to begin by acknowledging the work of the Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources and Minister for the State Electricity Commission for her and her teams' amazing efforts in bringing this bill to the chamber. This is a bill that forms an important part of supporting the Victorian Labor government's overall and ambitious strategy to protect our environment by combating climate change, decarbonising our economy and transitioning Victoria towards a clean and renewable energy power grid.

However, fundamental to achieving these aspirations will be safety: safety for the workers who will be undertaking the work to construct, assemble and maintain our future renewable energy infrastructure; safety for the communities where such new large- or smaller scale clean energy infrastructure will be situated or transmitted through; and safety for the energy consumers, whether it be businesses, households or community groups. The fact is that the provision of an essential service

like energy cannot occur without appropriate regard to safety frameworks. Safety is central to the proper delivery of energy and is crucial to safeguarding consumer protection and community confidence. It is safety, particularly safety for working people, that is at the heart and mission of the labour movement.

Over the past two decades, driven by a range of policies at state and federal levels the electricity sector has been replacing carbon-intensive generation with zero-carbon technologies. At the same time the energy sector has been moving away from a small number of large-scale facilities owned and operated by a handful of companies towards smaller scale and more widely distributed electricity production. Essentially, the Electricity Safety Act 1998 was designed when only a small number of large coal- and gas-generating plants supplied electricity to the entire state. With Victoria's transition to renewable energy, there are now dozens of wind and solar farms generating electricity and a growing number of utility-scale battery installations. These new installations bring with them rapidly changing technological diversity, and the amendments contained in this bill will ensure safety at these facilities is treated the same way as at distribution and transmission companies. This exponential growth in new energy technologies, particularly in renewable energy and storage, has exposed critical gaps and other weaknesses in the energy safety legislative framework.

These weaknesses are real, with two serious incidents in 2021 having underscored the inability of Energy Safe Victoria, ESV, to regulate these facilities before incidents occurred. Two serious fires in 2021 at the Victorian Big Battery and the Cohuna solar farm highlighted the limitations ESV has to regulate such facilities. Other incidents have also included fires at renewable energy installations as well as non-compliant electricity and gas asset management practices. These incidents were respectively and thoroughly reviewed and highlighted the need for updated legislation that keeps pace with the rapid transformation of the energy sector and new technologies to ensure similar incidents cannot occur again.

This bill therefore seeks to amend the Electricity Safety Act 1998, the Gas Safety Act 1997 and the Pipelines Act 2005 to strengthen the energy safety compliance framework. The amendments to the Electricity Safety Act 1998 will allow the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Minister for Energy and Resources, to declare a certain electricity installation to be of a class to which certain duties and obligations apply. These obligations would include needing to pay levies to ESV and to ensure there are enhanced safety measures in place. These obligations would be comparable to those currently imposed already on major distribution and transmission companies. The amendments to the Electricity Safety Act as well as the Gas Safety Act and Pipelines Act seek to increase civil penalties up to sixfold from their previous amounts and will provide ESV with greater control over any changes to safety management plans as well as the ability to conduct full revisions of these plans after five years. The bill will also greatly strengthen ESV's investigation powers, including through the preservation of serious electrical or gas incident sites, and align the period ESV can retain seized items. These are all commonsense amendments to Victoria's energy legislation that will protect lives and communities.

The measures contained in this bill create more effective and targeted regulation that will mitigate the risks associated with the increasing rollout of new energy generation technology, and this is critical because Victoria is leading one of the fastest transitions in the world. We have more than tripled our share of renewables in power generation in just eight years. We have helped nearly a quarter of a million Victorian households install solar panels on their roofs, reducing their bills and giving them control over their energy. In my community of Merri-bek, for example, we have supported 3015 solar installations on local roofs, and we have received a further over 3150 applications for even more to be delivered in due course. We have also installed the Victorian Big Battery, the largest in the Southern Hemisphere, and made Victoria the home of big batteries, and in that regard I should acknowledge Labor's commitment at a state level to deliver a new community battery in the City of Merri-bek and the federal Albanese Labor government's commitment to deliver two new community batteries in Brunswick and Coburg over the course of this federal Labor government's term.

Through these actions we have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by more than any other state in Australia since 2014, and we are continuing to do more. We have set a 65 per cent target of renewable energy by 2030 and a 95 per cent renewable energy target by 2035, and we have brought forward our zero-emissions target from 2050 to 2045. Achieving these targets will be a must if we are to play our part as a state to combat the worst impacts of climate change and will require us to fundamentally transform our state's electricity generation and distribution network, which traditionally has been the major source of carbon emissions in this state, and it is this transformation of our energy network through the construction, installation and operation of more solar, wind and renewable technologies that will create a new wave of jobs – jobs for workers, for whom we must do what we can to keep safe.

But along with the legislative and regulatory frameworks and reforms that are included in this bill we also need to support the training and skills of workers in the emerging and growing clean energy industries. The Victorian Labor government's commitment to bringing back the SEC will create 59,000 jobs by 2035, and it will be a catalyst in driving our state's future clean energy jobs boom. To train these new workers the Labor government has committed to establishing an SEC centre of training excellence to coordinate and accredit courses in clean energy, connecting with our TAFEs, registered training organisations, unions and the industry, as well as adding clean energy to our new VCE vocational major. The government has allocated \$5 million in funding to develop a business case with respect to the SEC centre of training excellence, with the centre to eventually coordinate and work with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority to accredit courses in renewable energy.

Across government schools the SEC will be at career nights recruiting the workers of the future, and an investment of \$116 million will open six new cutting-edge tech schools, giving students a head start in a hands-on profession. To make sure the workers we are training are guaranteed a long-term pipeline of work, we will also institute local content requirements on state-owned and supported renewable energy projects, worth at least \$5 billion by 2035. In this respect I am very pleased to note that on 31 May 2023 the minister for the SEC hosted the State Electricity Commission jobs and skills forum, which brought together more than 200 experts and stakeholders to help shape Victoria's renewable workforce planning via the Labor government's first-of-its-kind Victorian energy jobs plan. This plan will ensure Victoria's future workforce meets the needs of our energy transition and investments. The plan will prioritise practical actions to address gaps and workforce shortfalls and position Victoria as a renewable energy workforce leader. Of course I very much welcome the opportunity for the people of Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West to be engaged as part of the development of the Victorian energy jobs plan as well as the proposed SEC centre of training excellence.

As a community that is situated in the heart of Melbourne's north, with a very strong environmental conscience as well as a very strong skills base, we are very well placed to help provide the workers, skills and expertise that can help make bringing back the SEC a reality. The members for Northcote, Preston, Broadmeadows, Greenvale and I all support moving towards greater engagement with the SEC for our region. Currently across the Merri-bek community we have people with skills across a number of complementary industries, including 10,900 people employed in professional scientific and technical services, who make up 11 per cent of our local workforce; 6500 people employed in construction – 7 per cent of our workforce; 4500 people employed in manufacturing – that is almost 5 per cent of our workforce; and 890 people employed in the electricity, gas, water and waste sectors. Of these, 9700, or 10.5 per cent, are employed as technicians or as tradespeople across Merri-bek. While many of these workers are currently working to help us deliver the various government initiatives, including the rollout of the Solar Homes program as well as the Big Build program, it is the opportunities associated with the future SEC workforce that I am particularly excited about for the workers of my community today and tomorrow.

In this regard state Labor's investments into upgrading local secondary schools can certainly be leveraged to encourage more young people to pursue a future path with the SEC and the growing clean energy and renewable energy sector via the \$17.8 million invested to construct a new double-storey technology building at Coburg High – we just appointed the architects a couple of weeks ago for that

project; the over \$21 million invested to deliver a new three-storey specialist science, chemistry and technology building at Strathmore Secondary, which the member for Essendon and I visited a few months ago; and the over \$14 million to build the new technology centre at Pascoe Vale Girls College, which is currently under construction.

The Minister for Education, the member for Broadmeadows and I have recently released the *Merri-bek North Education Plan* community engagement report, which outlines the views of local parents, students, teachers and carers on how we can work to continue improving local secondary education to support new skills and career pathways. The key pieces of feedback received from locals included that people want to see a more diverse and high-quality range of subject offerings and learning opportunities at our local schools and more hands-on and real-life learning opportunities. I genuinely believe that we can achieve that by aligning local secondary schools further with the future pathway of jobs and skills through the SEC and a jobs plan for our community.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (12:17): It gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak on the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023. We all know that renewable energy and the transition to renewable energy is so incredibly important for the state of Victoria. It is also fundamentally and overwhelmingly supported by the vast majority of Victorians, as shown by the result of the 2022 state election.

Under the previous federal government we saw an absolute lack of any cogent, comprehensive energy policy and a lack of leadership over a 10-year period in this space. What that meant is that state governments around Australia had to pick up the slack. State governments around Australia had to show leadership on emission reductions and also renewable energy. No state did that over that period of time more than Victoria and, particularly since 2014, none more than the Andrews Labor government. When it comes to the renewables transition, the Andrews Labor government has been leading the way, more than tripling its share of renewables in power generation over the last eight years. This technical transformation is nothing short of fundamentally important. It will mean more jobs, cheaper energy and of course cleaner air. Underpinning those three points is this government's decision to bring back the SEC. For my electorate – the communities of Tarneit and Hoppers Crossing – that is so incredibly important and so incredibly popular for two different reasons. Before those opposite and their friends privatised Victoria's energy system back in 1994 – before they privatised the SEC – there was an SEC depot in Werribee, very close to my communities of Tarneit and Hoppers Crossing. There are still so many constituents – and I remember them coming through pre-poll and coming through election booths on election day – talking to me about their memories of the SEC. They either worked there themselves or their parents worked there or a family member worked there, and they were so incredibly excited by the notion of state-owned energy coming back to Victoria.

Of course the other incredibly important part of this announcement is the 59,000 jobs that will come with it. In my maiden speech I spoke about the fact that the SEC is all about jobs – good, well-paid jobs of the future, 59,000 of them – which is so incredibly important to my communities of Tarneit and Hoppers Crossing. What it will also do is turbocharge our transition to a renewable energy future, and it has significantly increased our renewable energy targets as a result of that fantastic announcement just last year.

While we undertake this fantastic and incredibly important change, we must also ensure that the safety of workers and communities is maintained but is also paramount in our mind. Whether they be communities and residents that are living or working near some of these projects or whether they be the workers themselves – linespeople, electrical fitters et cetera – we must make sure that their safety is paramount in our minds all the time. Of course that is the purpose of today's bill. Very quickly, these amendments will create a more effective regulation of safety risks posed by emerging renewable technologies. The reforms will strengthen the safety compliance framework by increasing obligations for electricity and gas companies. It also gives Energy Safe Victoria legislative power to compel owners and operators of complex installations to reduce safety risks prior to energisation.

I spoke earlier about the Andrews Labor government's leadership on renewable energy and emissions reductions, essentially because of a complete lack of leadership by the former federal coalition government.

A member interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: Absolutely, shame. So we are leading the way as one of the fastest energy transitions not just in Australia but in the world, and the SEC, as I said, will turbocharge that. Not only have we tripled our share of renewables involved in our power generation but we have also held the Victorian renewable energy target auction, the country's largest reverse auction for renewable energy projects. We have installed the Victorian Big Battery, the largest in the Southern Hemisphere. What I would also like to speak about is the role that my electorate of Tarneit has played in that and will continue to play in that. We consider ourselves as a community so incredibly lucky to have one of the very first neighbourhood batteries installed in Tarneit, not too far from where I reside, in fact. I was absolutely ecstatic to go to the opening of our new neighbourhood battery with the Minister for the State Electricity Commission, which was absolutely amazing. Powercor were there; they played a large role in the construction of the battery.

What we have also done in my electorate of Tarneit is help approximately 7500 households take advantage of our government's solar home rebates to make the switch to solar. The suburb of Tarneit – and I saw the stats earlier in the year – I think has the largest uptake of that solar panel rebate program and is contributing so fantastically to reducing not just our emissions in Victoria but also the cost of living for those households in Tarneit. This amendment, this bill, is so incredibly important for Victoria's future, and I commend it to the house.

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (12:25): I will only speak for a few moments because I think the debate on this bill has been very comprehensive and most of the issues have been canvassed. But it really is such an important piece of legislation that I want to put on the record my very strong support for the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023.

Safety, particularly in areas like power and electricity generation, is of paramount importance to both the public and to workers who are working in this industry. The regulation as it is now is all about the old ways, which is power generation through the big coal-fired power generation stations. We are now going into a much more decentralised system where we have got new clean energy and businesses that are really dotted around the countryside. There are big solar panel farms, as they are known, and wind farms and of course they require legislation to make sure that they also act in a safe way and are accountable to the regulator, Energy Safe Victoria. This legislation ensures that both the big power generators and the more decentralised clean energy generators are held to the same account. This has been unfortunately highlighted because of the actions of some of the energy companies in the clean energy area where there have been deficiencies and they have not been able to be held to account even though there have been situations such as fires occurring.

In the City of Whittlesea, which the electorate of Thomastown is in, a good example of the way we are moving on is the budget commitment in the last budget from the Andrews Labor government to have a community battery. While the site has not yet been determined, this is a great initiative that I know locals will welcome, just as they have welcomed the power saving bonus. More than 20,000 households have applied for that power saving bonus in the last round, and I take this opportunity to remind residents that the cut-off for applications is August. We are in August now, so they really need to get a hurry on if they want to take advantage of this and help to combat the rises in the cost of living that we have at the moment.

Switching to clean energy – having solar panels, for example – and using the state government's initiatives to provide subsidies to put solar panels on your roof is one way of reducing costs. I give an example of my mother, who was using a gas heater. That broke down so she has moved to electricity. She already had solar panels and she has saved, just in two months, some \$350 from the switch from

gas heating to electric heating with the solar panels on her roof. There really is a great saving and this will assist people to put more money into all of our pockets if we go to solar, so that we can spend that money on things such as mortgage repayments with the high interest rates.

A big shout-out to the Electrical Trades Union, because of course Energy Safe Victoria is a body that also regulates and licenses electricians. This was a big issue in the electrical industry and the Electrical Trades Union, representing workers, pushed very hard for this licensing scheme, which I think has worked well for everybody in the public being safer and more comfortable in knowing that there are good training programs and professionalism in the industry and that workers that are working on their homes or businesses have the highest skills and are making sure that everything is safe.

In conclusion, I just want to indicate my great support for this legislation and the effect it will have on the industry as well as protecting the community.

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Suburban Development) (12:29): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Lily D'Ambrosio:

That this bill be now read a second time.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:30): It is a privilege to rise today to make a contribution as the lead speaker on the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023. I do that on behalf of our Shadow Minister for Energy and Resources the member for Croydon, who unfortunately has taken ill. I want to, firstly, commend him on the work that he has done certainly in talking to stakeholders around this bill, ensuring that we are properly briefed. I do acknowledge the work that he has done. I had a good chat to him just before, and there is a substantial bit of work that has been done on this. I thank the Minister for Energy and Resources' office for providing a briefing to the shadow minister on this as well. On certainly all of the information that we have and all of the briefings that we have been provided, the opposition will not be opposing this bill.

I do want to start by discussing the purpose of this bill. Then what I would like to do is raise the importance of mining in the state, because it is a huge contributor to our state economically, in terms of what some of the mining and resources do for the broader state and its benefits, and the potential opportunities around it, which I will raise a little bit later as well. There are some concerns that stakeholders have raised, so I do just want to discuss those and put them on record, and that should just about see us out. The purpose of the bill – the bill amends the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990 to change the title of the act and remove requirements relating to work plans and to make consequential amendments to the Melbourne Strategic Assessment (Environment Mitigation Levy) Act 2020. The main purposes of the bill are to amend the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act to remove the requirement for holders and applicants of certain licences and extractive industry work authorities to lodge work plans for the licence or authority – and we will talk a little bit about that shortly; to create a duty requiring a person to eliminate or minimise the risk of harm to the environment, public, land, property and infrastructure of particular work or rehabilitation carried out by the person – again, a really important part, and can I stress the words 'harm to the environment', because I know there have been a lot of questions raised around all of this and I think what needs to be front and centre in terms of anything that we do is to ensure that we protect the land on which we mine and certainly, beyond the mining, when it comes to the rehabilitation, that we are able to hand the land back over to something that is sustainable and that we can all share and

utilise beyond the actual project itself, so that is really important; to provide for a system of risk levels for authorities that determines the obligations with which an authority holder must comply in relation to the duty to eliminate or minimise risk – again, a very important word, ‘risk’; to remove the requirement to lodge work plans, while retaining the requirements relating to rehabilitation plans. That is really key in all of this, when we are talking about plans. One of the things that we will raise and talk about today is regulation – red tape – which really buries businesses, buries anyone that is trying to actually create jobs and can, effectively, be a deterrent to job creation.

What we do need to do is remove red tape and ensure that there are protections in place. In this particular instance when it comes to mining, we do need to get rehabilitation plans because they are key. We cannot have somebody walk away after all of the project has been done without a specific plan for how they rehabilitate going forward. The bill also changes the title of the act to the Mineral Resources and Extractive Industries Act 1990 – pretty straightforward – and amends the Melbourne Strategic Assessment (Environment Mitigation Levy) Act 2020 to reflect the removal of the requirement to lodge work plans.

One of the key issues on which we are normally very critical of government is in terms of not doing enough work, and certainly the Andrews Labor government have not done enough work in terms of consultation in general. So when we are here or in the community – I mean, we have just had the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games – you hear so many times that the government do not consult, they do not talk to the community. That would be fair, and I think most of my colleagues would agree with that – that the government run roughshod over people and they do not consult.

In this particular instance I do give some credit, because the government have actually worked with industry in getting a lot of this bill up, and that is how it should work, quite frankly. That is what we should expect, not at selective times but across the board. I think most Victorians expect a government, when they elect them, to actually do the work: work for the community, listen to community and ensure with any of the work that is being done here when we put bills before the Parliament that there is proper due diligence and consultation. The same when they are launching a project like the Suburban Rail Loop, as an example. Instead of doing stuff on the back of an envelope, you do it with consultation. The same with the Comm Games. Instead of dreaming up a \$2.6 billion figure that becomes \$7 billion, you actually do the work. That is what we would expect.

In this particular instance the stakeholders – and I would like to thank the contributions from the stakeholders – the Minerals Council of Australia; Cement, Concrete and Aggregates Australia, the CCAA; and the Construction Material Processors Association Inc (CMPA). For a period I had the shadow minister for resources portfolio, and those stakeholders were certainly stakeholders that I spent a lot of time talking to, in fact going out and visiting a number of properties, seeing what is done and seeing what they contribute. I wanted to specifically put on record Dr Elizabeth Gibson, who I know the shadow minister, the member for Croydon, has had considerable conversations with, and I am going to refer to her paper shortly in terms of some the questions that she had. Overall, there was good consultation in terms of this bill – so a tick there.

There are some issues, which I will raise. I think what this ultimately does and the purpose of this bill is to ensure that we streamline things – that we make it easier for businesses to actually get up and go and provide the valuable materials that we get from mining – but also that we have protection in terms of the framework, because that is really important and fundamental. You have got to have the protections. You cannot have cowboys coming in and out of the industry, so you have got to have that, but you have got to ensure that you do not have projects that take years and years and years.

I mean, even when building a house, in terms of looking at cement and aggregates and other things that are being used, we have a housing shortage here in Victoria. We had people on the steps of Parliament yesterday talking about a housing shortage. We know there is a housing crisis. We know the costs to build a house are through the roof, and people forget that those materials do not magically appear. Cement and concrete do not magically appear, and our roads do not magically appear. All of

those things require materials – in fact raw materials. Where do those materials come from? Not from the sky but from the ground, and that is why we do need to ensure that we have those materials, we have them in a cost-effective manner, and we do that in such a way that we promote industry to actually deliver that. That is why removing red tape ensures we streamline.

A lot of this talks about some of the plans. If you look at the flow chart that was put together previous to what we are proposing here, you would literally have to jump through so many hoops to even get to looking at extracting, so that most people would give up after five or six years, let alone 10-plus years to get a project up and running. The time to actually get to market on a lot of this takes so long. You need a huge chequebook. You need lots of time. Forget it if you think you can do that in a reasonable time frame under the current framework. In fact, ironically, from recollection, I think I had this portfolio in about 2016, and we were in fact talking about this stuff then. Probably one of the biggest criticisms I had when I was shadow minister then was that we should have got on with this a long time ago.

Roma Britnell: Well, they should have.

David SOUTHWICK: The Andrews government should have got on with this a long time ago, because every year gone has been a missed opportunity of, unfortunately, the economic benefit. While we are on the economic benefit of mining, I think it is fair to say that according to the figures from the Minerals Council of Australia the economic benefit of mining in Victoria is \$1 billion. It is a total economic contribution to the Victorian economy of \$1 billion, and that is from an MCA economic contribution survey from 2020–21. That is a big number, a substantial number, and an industry that has 1700 local businesses involved, \$310 million in industry purchases, \$510 million in direct spending, \$151 million in wages and salaries, \$218 million in exploration and 58 per cent in spend. That is huge. Think about that: all those jobs, thousands and thousands of jobs, and all those businesses for \$1 billion.

Now, what else could we spend a billion dollars on? Or more importantly, what could that billion dollars of economic benefit have been used for in recent times? Unfortunately it is the Commonwealth Games. Because the billion dollars of this economic benefit from mining, the whole industry of mining, could be the cancellation fee to pay out for the Commonwealth Games. I was gobsmacked when I was doing the research on this; I could not believe it. In Parliament we throw numbers out. People will look at numbers and they will say ‘billions’ or ‘millions’. Quite often people get confused when the numbers are billions and millions of dollars – even treasurers. All kinds of people get confused about using those numbers. But when you think about a whole industry –

A member interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: Well, the Deputy Premier gets confused a lot and needs a calculator when it comes to numbers and thinks that money grows on trees. But in fact what does the Premier say? ‘It costs what it costs.’ So the Premier certainly clearly does not care about numbers or money. But in this particular instance \$1 billion, thousands of thousands of jobs, 1700 local businesses in Victoria and the whole industry of mining in Victoria, a year’s worth of that economic benefit, could go straight to pay for the cancellation fees of the Commonwealth Games – just the cancellation fees of the Commonwealth Games; forget about other costs. Writing out a cheque to the Commonwealth Games Federation to say ‘I’m sorry, we’re not going ahead. Here is the compensation’, is just like the east–west link – ‘\$1 billion, as we’re not going ahead with the east–west link’.

Nina Taylor: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I would like to proffer that we are meant to be speaking to the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023 and here we are straying on all sorts of flurries and fancies. I think it is better we come back to the bill.

David SOUTHWICK: On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, I am certainly talking about the money specifically to do with mining. As the lead speaker – I do understand that the lead speaker gets

a fair bit of leeway to be able to talk about it and frame the importance up, so therefore I would ask you if I could continue on the bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the member for his assistance. I do think you are straying a little bit, so let us talk on the bill.

David SOUTHWICK: Thank you very much. As I was saying, \$1 billion is a lot of money that could be spent – it is a huge benefit. I thank all those people that work in the mining industry for their contributions to Victoria. If we do not have contributions like those from those industries, unfortunately that money has to come from somewhere. Money does not grow on trees. In this particular instance money has effectively come from hard work in the ground, and it is very, very disappointing that that money could be really blown up against a wall on the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games.

Let me continue in terms of what the economic benefit actually does, because the other element in terms of mining, which we need to be mindful of, is that there are some unique benefits to Victoria. There are some very, very unique benefits to Victoria when we talk about mining. Mineral sands – very, very unique benefits. I know that certainly when it comes to renewables there was quite a time, when the minister for energy used to be – I am not sure. Who has got resources here?

Roma Britnell: It would be Lily, wouldn't it?

David SOUTHWICK: Lily? I will back you in; great. I just had to be sure because I have not heard the minister for resources talking much about – I know for a time it was the Treasurer and then it was handed back to the minister for energy.

There is actually a lot of important correlation between the two. When you are looking at renewables in terms of what the mining does, when you are looking at things like solar panels, for which a lot of materials will come from minerals, when you are looking at electric cars, the batteries in electric cars are very, very important with the lithium and also for the grids that we use. Then you look at smartphones and tablets and computers – all of them – in terms of lithium. One of the first lithium exploration projects is taking place in the Dorchap region of the electorate of Benambra. That shows that we have got exploration happening on our doorstep in Benambra. I thought the member for Benambra was in here today, but he is not. That shows that we have got exploration – an important part – and it leads to value adding into electric cars, smartphones, tablets, solar panels and grid batteries for renewable storage. What I would say in terms of that – and I am going to go into some others as well – is we probably do not do enough in terms of value adding with some of the materials that we mine. That is probably our big opportunity going forward – a missed opportunity here in Victoria that we should absolutely be doing more with. I will come back to that in a minute.

Antimony is another important resource in Victoria – 3551 tonnes in 2020–21. Not only can it be used in flame retardants to protect firefighters and emergency services workers but it can also be used as a firming agent for the glass in solar panels. Again, solar panels – renewables – are very, very important. Copper, lead and zinc are used for electronics and our energy network, public transport grid and batteries. When the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure the Deputy Premier is going looking at some of the transport projects that have completely blown out one of the things that the minister could be looking at doing is using local materials and ensuring they are value added. That would ensure that Victorians get value for money, not budget blowouts – \$30 billion worth of budget blowouts under the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure the Deputy Premier, including the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games. Again, when we have got important products like copper, lead and zinc which are used in public transport, it would be fair for the minister, when she is thinking about going out there – like she was I think today out in the West Gate Tunnel – to have a look at that, and while she is at it she should make sure that that project does not continue to blow out by billions of dollars as it has done under her watch.

Gold – 722 kilo ounces. According to the Minerals Council of Australia there is over \$200 billion of gold still underground in Victoria. We look at this wonderful building. We take people on tours here. An eight-year-old boy came on a tour last night. I asked him, ‘What do you want to see in Parliament?’ He said, ‘I want to see all of the gold.’ It is here. This building was built, amazingly, largely by hand, due to the gold rush, due to the wealth back then. Unfortunately this Parliament was never finished, because the government ran out of money. They ran out of money and they could not finish the building. Do you know what? It is like *Back to the Future*, isn’t it, because the Andrews Labor government are broke. They have run out of money and they cannot finish their projects either. If you see the Deputy Premier scurrying through in the middle of the night with the Treasurer and the Premier scraping off the gold, maybe they are paying for all of the projects that have blown out – the public transport projects, the infrastructure, the tunnel – \$30 billion.

Do you reckon there would be \$30 billion worth of gold in this building? I am not sure. There is a lot still under the ground that we could be mining to pay for the \$30 billion worth of blowouts. We have not got onto roads and we have not got onto all of the hospitals and schools and everything else. But \$30 billion? There is \$1 billion of economic value from mining throughout Victoria. I am not sure whether I mentioned that – that is not for one year; that is each and every year. We have got \$30 billion. We need 30 industries, 30 versions of the mining industry, to pay for the blowouts alone – just the blowouts. I tell you what, unfortunately we are going to have to go back to the mining industry and say you are going to have to work harder. We need more economic value from mining because the state is broke. Under the Andrews Labor government the state is broke, and we have got to turn back to the ground, we have got to dig it out and we have got to pay for all of the blowouts the Deputy Premier, the Premier and the Andrews Labor government have wasted, completely wasted. It is beyond belief.

Let me continue. We have tin and tungsten, along with cobalt and neodymium – let me get that right. They make our touch screens work and our phones vibrate. There you go. All three elements are used in the small but heavy mass that is spun by the motor inside our phones to create those vibrations. Some would say that we should not be doing any of this, and then you will have a phone that does not vibrate. There you go. You would not have a phone, mind you, but we could always give those people that do not think we should be doing this –

Jade Benham: You wouldn’t have electric cars either.

David SOUTHWICK: Or electric cars. We could give them the string and the two little cups, and they could do that. Or the pigeons – we could do that as well. There are studies showing how tungsten could be pioneering a new, innovative type of glass which could be used for touch screens and even as a precursor to energy-efficient smart windows. Now, that is really important. I went out to Swinburne University a few years back. They were looking at some of this stuff, and part of this was actually looking at using those windows for solar paint. Instead of having solar panels, you could actually paint the windows, and they become solar panels. This is a great homegrown innovation. Do you think anything has happened with that in the last few years? There is no investment from this lot over here, the Andrews government. They are too busy wasting money and blowing out projects.

Roma Britnell: Not innovating.

David SOUTHWICK: Not innovating. This is a golden opportunity – a missed opportunity. They should be knocking on the doors of these people, these inventors, these innovators here in Melbourne – homegrown in Victoria – and saying, ‘Good on you. Let’s invest. Let’s build these great opportunities’. These are missed opportunities by the Andrews Labor government. What the Andrews Labor government will turn around and say is, ‘No, you shouldn’t do that. We’ll do it ourselves. We’ll just create the SEC and do it all ourselves because we don’t believe that innovation could happen anywhere else but under a government.’ That is kind of a bit odd, but anyway. There is lithium, which I have spoken about, so I will not continue. That kind of all adds up, in terms of many of those mining opportunities, to the billion dollars. Did I mention smartphones? I do not think I mentioned

smartphones. I did talk about the vibration, but leaving the vibrations alone, I thought I might also add that they contain –

Ros Spence: You started strong, but it's going south.

David SOUTHWICK: Oh, right. The minister at the table said I started strong. That was probably when I was talking about the fact that the government has blown a billion dollars on a cancelled contract that is going to take up the whole industry. Maybe I will go back to talking about the waste and mismanagement of the Andrews Labor government – a billion dollars to cancel a contract for the Commonwealth Games. That is appalling. But let me get back to smartphones.

Ros Spence interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: I have got plenty here, do not worry. It is the vibe. Let me get back to smartphones.

Ros Spence interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: I am talking smartphones, Minister.

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

David SOUTHWICK: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Smartphones contain about 60 different elements, including not only gold but copper and silver too. There are three good conductors of electricity in circuits. Usually we see a thin covering of gold, because it does not corrode and so ensures durable connections. That is why we need it.

Let us get back onto some of what people are saying about all of this. Firstly, the issue about work plans. I do know what this bill is all about; I just want you to know. We are streamlining work plans. Secondly, what we are doing is ensuring, as part of that, that there is a duty requiring a person to create a duty in terms of minimising risk, and those duties form part of a licence, and there are different forms of licensing depending on risk. I think that is a really important part of this bill, because there is not a one size fits all when it comes to risk. Those that are minimum risk should pay a lesser licence fee, and there should be lower hurdles when they are very, very basic licences for very, very basic work, going right up to things that are more complex. They have actually broken down the risk accordingly to make it easier as part of all of that. That is part of a new duty-based framework which replaces the existing framework.

As part of all of this, in terms of the process and in terms of protections, we do have councils that have some involvement in this, although less than they had before. But councils are involved in some of the tick-offs of the work approvals. One of the things that Dr Elizabeth Gibson had to say about this was that there was still a concern that the LGAs are a little bit preoccupied with local interests and not looking at the overall benefit to the state. You can end up fighting too much of an ideological war as opposed to ensuring there are protections – that is where it should start – and that the whole thing is in a balanced manner.

There were seven main issues that Dr Gibson from the CMPA raised. One was the one about local councils. Also once the extractive area has been identified, the proponent and the local government authority must protect the area from incompatible strategic or statutory development from the first day of becoming aware of the proposal. This would need to be limited by time during which the applicant would need to prove a geological resource. A longer period would be appropriate to finalise the approval. It is about not holding things up, because that is what we are trying to get away from with this bill. There must be documentary evidence of what the LGA must actually direct and manage. It would be difficult to accept that it would be within the LGA's responsibility and that they would be properly resourced to manage all the activities. Again, the government has been talking around a lot of things in changing the planning framework overall in the state. We would also need to make sure it is consistent with this, and there are some concerns in that.

Where the LGA resolves not to make a decision or rejects a planning permit application, the application must immediately go to a major case list of VCAT. All advertising ceases. The LGA must not request the Minister for Planning to call in the application, continue funding any campaign against the application, take the applicant to the Supreme Court or promulgate strategic planning changes in responding to these types of cases. The timing sequence, number 5, for the decision by an LGA should be shortened from 12 months. If Earth Resources Regulation becomes a determining authority, then the assessment to the application without the work plan will be problematic. Finally, clear and concise benefits have not been clearly articulated with the resource development. They are all very, very important points and I wanted to raise them.

The bill certainly modernises the regulatory approval process for the exploration and quarrying industries in Victoria. As I said, you have got to get cement, you have got to get concrete and you have got to get mineral sands. You have got to get them from somewhere. We have a shortage at the moment. We have a cost-of-living crisis, and that is why we do need to deal with all of this. There is also recognition that there is a four-year process, and while there will be a comprehensive implementation process we need to ensure the government delivers on its stated commitment to early, ongoing, meaningful engagement with industry and other stakeholders on the regulations and guidance material that sits in these amendments.

There is nervousness within the industry that the devil is in the detail. There are still concerns from the industry in terms of some of that. Overall, they are positive. The framework is fine. Let us get the detail. While there are several points of clarification and issues that have been raised, stakeholders would rather see the legislation go through as a step forward, so they are positive. As I said before, the Minerals Council of Australia, the CCAA and the CMPA have been in direct contact with the minister and raised all of these points.

In conclusion, we have got to get on with it. We have got to ensure that there is certainty in these industries and that there are proper protections, particularly when we talk about the environment. We must ensure that there are protections, we must ensure that the land is left the way it was found or improved in that matter and that there are parks, water facilities – a whole range of things that we can have as part of all these things going forward. Therefore we are not opposing the bill, but please, government, do not waste money. A billion dollars is a lot of money, as we have seen from the industry I have just spoken about.

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

Business interrupted under standing orders.

Rulings from the Chair

Questions without notice and ministers statements

The SPEAKER (14:01): Before I call the Acting Premier, members, there have been some points of order this week about the nexus between substantive and supplementary questions, and I thought it was worth reminding the house of the requirements. Sessional order 6 provides for the asking member to direct a supplementary question to the responding minister to elucidate or clarify the answer. The sessional order goes on to state:

Supplementary questions must actually and accurately relate to the original question, must relate to or arise from the answer and must not be a separate question on the same topic.

Members coming into the chamber with a preprepared supplementary question run the risk of not complying with sessional order 6.

*Members***Premier***Absence*

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:02): I rise to inform the house that today I will answer questions on behalf of the Premier.

*Questions without notice and ministers statements***Inclusive education**

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (14:02): My question is to the Minister for Education. Due to the government's broken promise, thousands of vulnerable children like 13-year-old Louis, who suffers from acute physical disabilities, will be left without one-on-one classroom support, with the sacking of frontline staff from the visiting teacher service. Minister, why did you authorise this cruel and callous cut?

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (14:03): I thank the member for his question, and I welcome the opportunity to talk about disability reform in schools across our state, including \$1.6 billion worth of investment by this government to make sure that our mainstream school system is well supported. We are extremely proud of how this program has been running out. It is now fully in place across 850 schools and will continue to roll out, and what the school gets – this is an absolute game changer, this program – is an application for all of the teachers to be educated in how disability should be handled in the classroom and how kids can (a) get assessed through their school system and (b) get a great education plan put in place and to wrap around their parents support with those teachers that are in the classrooms. We are not just putting one teacher that visits the school –

Tim Bull: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance. The question was very specific in relation to the service provided by the visiting teacher service and why that is being cut, and I think that those families that are impacted deserve an answer in relation to that specific service.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Speaker, the minister was being entirely relevant to the question. It was about disability education and our government's investments. It gives the minister an opportunity to talk about our government's record investments in inclusive education for children with disabilities.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have repeatedly said that as Speaker I cannot direct the ministers on their feet how to answer a question. The minister was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Natalie HUTCHINS: The visiting teacher program was brought into place in 1974. Since then we have made a tonne of investments and changes to policies under this government that is leading this nation in this space. What the new program of disability inclusion provides is 82 coaches to go out into schools to educate our schoolteachers and our school leaders, to make absolute change in those places. Perhaps you might want to talk to some parents at one of those schools that have had disability inclusion rolled out in their school, because we are getting some really positive feedback on this program. Now, there will be 32 teachers based in our regional offices that will continue to go out and support those students with visual and hearing disabilities that need that one-on-one attention. That will continue. But the game changer that this government has made for kids with disabilities in our education system is to roll out a disability inclusion program to the tune of \$1.6 billion to overhaul all of our specialist schools. Every one of our specialist schools is getting an upgrade, a major upgrade, and we are also –

Tim Bull: On a point of order, Speaker, relating to relevance, the minister referred to those students that have hearing difficulties receiving support. My question related to 13-year-old Louis who has

acute physical disabilities, and I would ask you to bring the minister back to answering that specific element of that question relating to students with physical disabilities.

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

Natalie HUTCHINS: Perhaps the opposition do not understand that our new disability inclusion program is specifically designed to deliver better supports for exactly the student that those opposites are raising. We also have the *Diverse Learners Hub* and the Inclusion Outreach Coaching initiative, the master of inclusive education and the graduate certificate initiatives that we are rolling out across our school system for all teachers.

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (14:07): The visiting teacher service assists approximately 4000 children with disabilities, some who suffer from life-threatening illnesses like cancer. Will the minister now understand the error of her decision and reverse today the slated sackings of these frontline workers and issue an apology to the 4000 families who were receiving this frontline one-on-one service in the classroom?

The SPEAKER: Order! I believe there were two questions in that supplementary question, but I will ask the minister to respond.

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (14:08): We are all still waiting on this side for an apology for the \$1 billion you slashed out of education when you were in government.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would encourage members on their feet not to refer to ‘you’. It is disrespectful to the Chair.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this is an important question. These are important questions about services that are available to some of the most needy children in our schools, and I would ask you to bring the minister back to that important question.

Mary-Anne Thomas: 10 seconds she has been on her feet – 10 seconds.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister will come back to answering the question.

Natalie HUTCHINS: Importantly, with the savings and efficiency targets that have been set on all government departments and that the Department of Education is delivering on, no school-based staff are being impacted. We will work with those that are currently in the roles of visiting teachers to transition their positions where they want to into schools on a permanent basis. This is about expanding the support to those kids with disabilities by making sure the whole school is responsive and that their teachers are well trained in order to work with them to get the best abilities out of our students.

Ministers statements: energy policy

Lily D’AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:10): I rise to update the house on the Andrews Labor government’s household renewables revolution. Through our \$1.3 billion Solar Homes program we have already seen more than 250,000 Victorians enjoy the benefit of solar on their roofs and batteries in their homes, and now even more Victorians are turning to our rebates for electric hot water systems. These heat pumps are flying off the shelves – 5900 of them are out the door and saving people money. These are bill-saving systems that are going to homes in Greater Geelong, Werribee, Sunbury, Castlemaine, Tarnet, Frankston, Coburg, Reservoir, Berwick, Mornington and Rowville. These are the types of suburbs that are enjoying these rebates, and there are more. Victorians want this because they know it saves them money every year and it is good for the environment. That is why we have made it easier for them to make the switch from gas to electric, and the bill savings are

immediate. By moving off expensive gas hot water, a household saves \$400 a year on their bills just simply by having that hot water system.

We will be delivering even more through our new residential electrification grants programs, partnering with industry to bundle our Solar Homes rebates: \$1000 for hot water, \$1400 for solar rebates and 1400 no-interest loans on top of that for new-build homes. By installing these during construction through this bundling arrangement we will remove the double handling, saving households an extra \$800 on construction costs. The total savings through this program are \$4600 before you even move in. We know what they say. Once you have moved, it is \$1000 off your bills each and every year – all electric. If you have got solar, it is \$2200. It is great for jobs, it is great for people's hip pockets and it is great for the environment.

Rail infrastructure

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:12): My question is to the Deputy Premier. After the election the Deputy Premier said:

Victorians voted for airport rail ... They voted for new electrified train lines to Melton and Wyndham Vale.

Reports now confirm in government documents that the Deputy Premier has broken an election commitment. Why did the Deputy Premier mislead the house yesterday when she said these reports were 'wrong'?

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Caulfield, are you directing your question to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure or the Acting Premier?

David SOUTHWICK: Acting Premier.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:13): Only the Andrews Labor government is focused on making investment in rail projects that support our growing city and state. I will repeat what I said yesterday to the member for Caulfield, and I have repeated this earlier today as well. It might come as a bitter surprise to the member for Caulfield, but the –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I think once a question has been asked it would be appropriate to listen to the answer.

Jacinta ALLAN: As I said yesterday, the reports in the *Age* yesterday were wrong. Member for Caulfield, the repeated reports in the *Age* today are also wrong. The documents that are referred to do not reflect final government decisions. What does reflect final government decisions is our ongoing investment in rail infrastructure across Victoria. I was referring to this yesterday when I was talking about the Metro Tunnel. The reason why we can continue to invest in rail services is because we are unlocking the bottleneck at the heart of Victoria's train network by building the Metro Tunnel. We are seeing test trains running through the Metro Tunnel – they are running through the Metro Tunnel as we get on and deliver that project a full year ahead of schedule.

We have delivered the Ballarat line upgrade. We are working on the Melton –

Steve McGhie interjected.

Jacinta ALLAN: I know the member for Melton was waiting for his moment. We are delivering to the Melton community, making the Melton community level crossing free. On the Wyndham Vale corridor, we are building improvements into the Wyndham Vale corridor and putting longer trains on that corridor, because what we know from those communities is that they want more services and more seats now. As we work towards progressive improvements across Victoria's rail network and as we progressively improve the rail network in the western suburbs, we are providing more services. Whether it is the extra 200 weekly services in and out of Melton, the longer train services on Wyndham

Vale or making the Werribee corridor and the Sunbury corridor level crossing free, it is only the Andrews Labor government that will continue to invest in these vital rail services.

David Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this is not a ministers statement.

Mary-Anne Thomas interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the House will come to order. I would like to hear the point of order.

David Southwick: The question specifically related to the broken promise around electrified train lines to Melton and Wyndham Vale, and I ask the minister to come back to answering that question.

The SPEAKER: The Acting Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked. I ask members not to repeat questions in their points of order. The Acting Premier has concluded her answer.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:16): Currently commuters in Melbourne's west need to wait 20 minutes for a train in peak hour. The government promised train lines every 4 minutes for peak-hour commuters in Melton, Ardeer, Deer Park and Caroline Springs. Why has the Deputy Premier broken an evolving commitment?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:17): Central to being able to deliver more train services to Victoria's train network is the Metro Tunnel – the Metro Tunnel that is a full year ahead of schedule, the Metro Tunnel that has been opposed, with attempts to block and stop the Metro Tunnel that were taken by those opposite every single step of the way.

Members interjecting.

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

Jacinta ALLAN: The member for Caulfield mentioned Melton. We have talked a lot about Melton this week, and we cannot talk enough about Melton, because we are making Melton level crossing free. We are building the Melton line upgrade to provide longer trains and more seats. But the member for Caulfield also mentioned Deer Park, and I had the great opportunity a couple of months ago to visit Deer Park with the member for Kororoit. She knows a thing or two about the train network, I can tell that to the member for Caulfield.

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Frankston!

David Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance again, none of what the minister is saying will deliver 4-minute trains to Melbourne's west, and I ask you to bring the minister back to the question.

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! This is your second warning, member for Frankston.

Jacinta ALLAN: On the point of order, the member for Caulfield just said that none of what I have been referring to will add extra trains. Metro Tunnel is exactly what will deliver more train services to places like Footscray and to places like Sunshine. The member for Caulfield needs a lesson in the rail network.

The SPEAKER: That is not on the point of order, Acting Premier. Has the Acting Premier concluded her supplementary answer?

Jacinta ALLAN: Yes.

Ministers statements: regional rail network

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Industry and Innovation, Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, Minister for Employment, Minister for Public Transport) (14:19): I am actually speaking today on the evolving rail renaissance happening under the Andrews Labor government. A very special birthday is happening this month. We will celebrate 40 years of V/Line, that great purple symbol that is supporting a regional rail renaissance – not a revival, but a renaissance – under the Andrews Labor government. I want to thank those 3000 hardworking members of our staff –

John Pesutto interjected.

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

Ben CARROLL: that get up every day and work so hard to deliver a regional rail revival program of over \$4 billion, upgrading every regional rail line in this great state.

Add to that, the real birthday present has been our regional fare cap. That has seen more than 9 million trips taken since it was introduced. That is a saving of over \$15 million back in the hands of regional Victorians but also metropolitan Victorians who are getting out and seeing everything our great state has to offer. I want to give a special shout-out to the member for Wendouree, to you, Speaker, and to the member for Geelong, who just recently had me in their electorates talking to local commuters about what the regional fare cap means to them. Do not take my word for it: \$15 million back in the hands of regional Victorians to put back into regional economies, to invest in local towns and local communities. Because whether you live in postcode 3000 or Hawthorn or your postcode, Speaker, 3550, that is what you do: you ensure you have price equity and transport equity. That is what our government is all – *(Time expired)*

The SPEAKER: Order! I realise it is Thursday afternoon and you are all keen to go home, but I would ask you to show some respect in the house to those on their feet.

WorkCover premiums

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:21): My question is to the Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC. Horsham Sports & Community Club were recently notified that their WorkCover premium will increase from \$19,000 to over \$35,000 for the coming year. This represents an 80 per cent increase in WorkCover premiums. Why has the government broken its promise to keep the cost of doing business in Victoria down?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:22): I thank the member for her question. My understanding is that the most premiums can increase by is 75 per cent. If it has gone beyond that –

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Polwarth withdrew from chamber.

Danny PEARSON: What I would say is I am happy to get that information for the member. But in relation to the issue here at the moment, the reality is that the WorkCover scheme is fundamentally broken, and we need to make sure that we have got a viable workers compensation scheme in this state. We know that this is a very difficult time, and it is challenging. But what we would say is that in relation to businesses, there are discounts and payment options available in relation to those premiums being paid. The other point I would make is that, yes, we have said that on average the premiums can increase by around 42 per cent, but it also depends on the business that you are in, the industry you are in, and it is also based upon payroll and remuneration. What this is about, though, is making sure that we can put injured workers first, because you have got to make sure that you have got a viable workers compensation

scheme, and that is exactly what we are focused on. It is important that we make sure that we have got a viable workers compensation scheme to stand up and be available for the 21st century.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition! The Acting Premier will come to order.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:24): Earlier this year –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for South Barwon!

Emma KEALY: Earlier this year Horsham Sports & Community Club donated \$127,000 to volunteer-led community organisations in the Wimmera. Over the past 31 years they have donated in excess of \$3 million to the local community. Why is the government making it harder for not-for-profit businesses to support the community by making them pay for the government's mismanagement of WorkSafe?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:25): Look, as I have indicated I am very happy to follow up the matter that the member has raised. What I would say is that premiums have not increased while this government has been in power, and in fact I do not think there has been a premium increase. In terms of the premium rate, the premium rate has not increased in probably the best part of 20 years. We need to ensure that we have got a financially viable and sustainable workers compensation scheme to be able to provide the protection that injured workers need when they need it, and that is why we have got a focus on redesigning this scheme, making sure that we increase the financial viability of the scheme. We make sure that we put workers first by having a focus on return to work and by ensuring that we have a –

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition!

Danny PEARSON: So it is important that we make sure that we have got a financially stable scheme to provide protections for injured workers when and where they need it. We need to make sure that we have got a return-to-work scheme in place to ensure that that is available for injured workers.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister's time has expired. The member for Lowan had asked her question. I would ask her not to interject in the answer.

Ministers statements: employment

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:26): The Andrews Labor government knows that there are challenges facing Victorians in dealing with the inflation that is peaking right across the globe and making it harder for families to meet the rising cost of living. We also know that the best protection that Victorians can have against those buffeting winds of uncertainty is a well-paid job, and we are going about delivering that in very tangible terms. Some of my colleagues here may well remember the member for Kew's inaugural speech, when she said that it is business that creates jobs, not government. Well, she was half right. Those opposite showed us during their last term in office that coalition governments do in fact not create jobs. But as we have seen since the 2014 election, Labor governments can and do create jobs. Since September 2020 this government has overseen the creation of almost 400 –

A member interjected.

Tim PALLAS: I digress for a moment, Speaker, to draw to the house's attention a modern-day medical miracle: a dead man talking.

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

Member for Lara withdrew from chamber.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, not only was that nasty but talking about someone in those terms is outrageous.

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer to come back to his ministers statement. That was not a point of order. I ask the Treasurer to come back to his statement, and I also remind members: if they are offended, they are able to ask for a withdrawal at the time.

Tim PALLAS: So unemployment is now just 3.7 per cent, a full three percentage points lower than the rate we inherited in 2014. The regional unemployment rate is lower still – just 2.8 per cent, the lowest ever on record. For this reason the government is making real efforts to ensure that we continue to invest in jobs and training. We have expanded the eligibility for free TAFE, we have introduced the lowest payroll tax rate in the nation in regional Victoria and we have passed groundbreaking –

A member interjected.

Tim PALLAS: He is still going. Somebody call a priest – it's a second rising.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer's time has expired.

Planning policy

Tim READ (Brunswick) (14:29): A paper published in *Nature Medicine* last month calculated that 61,000 people died in last year's brutal heatwave in Europe. Sorry, my question, Speaker, is to the Minister for Planning, and I will start again. So 61,000 people died in last year's brutal heatwave in Europe. Now there are heatwaves and fires in the Northern Hemisphere again. Wisely in July last year 24 councils representing around half our population submitted an amendment to elevate environmentally sustainable development in Victoria's planning scheme. The ESD targets in this amendment will cut building emissions and power bills and better protect Victorians from extreme heat. These councils have done a lot of work so that local governments can meet their sustainability targets, but the amendment has been sitting on the minister's desk for over a year. Why won't the minister approve their amendment when the world has just had its hottest July ever?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Assistant Treasurer is warned.

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (14:30): I thank the member for his question. First of all, the commitment by CASBE and MAV to support local planning schemes' ESD is to be acknowledged. My first priority is finalising implementation of the ESD road map. As you know, it is the Andrews Labor government that is continuing to work so very hard with our incredible Minister for Climate Action on decarbonising Victoria's economy, including through the implementation of the gas substitution road map. Of course I was delighted to join with the minister last Friday in our announcement that from 1 January 2024 no new homes, no new subdivisions, requiring a planning permit from 1 January 2024 will be connected to the gas reticulation system.

This is a significant step. It is a significant step in our ESD road map, in our gas substitution road map, in reducing emissions and continuing the incredible work of the Andrews Labor government in aiming for our reduction targets – eventually, of course, net zero by 2045. But it is also important to remember that the work we are doing with emissions reduction goes to cost of living. We are talking about reducing energy prices that are being borne by Victorian consumers, by Victorian households. Moving and transitioning Victorians across to electricity means that we are reducing the cost to them of heating and cooling their homes.

We are taking real action on this side to reduce our emissions. We are taking real action on climate change. We are taking real action to support Victorians and their cost of living, and of course we continue to champion the next stage of the National Construction Code 2025. In May next year we

will be implementing the new energy standards – that is, the 7-star energy standards that will be required for all new builds as well as the livable standards that are going to ensure that people with mobility issues have housing choice.

We are continuing to work on the next stages of our ESD road map and, as I said, that will be my priority for the best part of this year. I continue to work with our minister for climate action and energy to ensure that we are working towards reducing emissions but at the same time ensuring that we are supporting Victorians with their cost of living and of course growing jobs, ensuring that we have got jobs in this new emerging market and industry.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (14:33): First of all, I commend the government and the minister for the move to prevent new gas connections beyond 1 January, which I believe was part of this amendment. I think it is absolutely a no-brainer to do this. I go further –

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Frankston withdrew from chamber.

Tim READ: and thank the minister for referring to the cost-of-living crisis which is accompanying the climate crisis. Adopting this amendment will shrink people's energy bills while at the same time reducing their carbon emissions. Given that the government has really done the hard work of announcing an end to new gas connections, this amendment seems to be the next logical step, so it would be great to get a time line from the minister about when this amendment might be approved.

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (14:34): Again, I thank the member for his supplementary question. As I said, my priority now is on working towards the implementation of the ESD road map here in Victoria. That will be my priority for the better part of this year. I absolutely acknowledge and commend CASBE and MAV for their work that they have done and for their commitment also in seeking to reduce the cost of living and of course reduce our emissions. I am going to continue to work with all of the stakeholders and with my colleague the minister for climate action and for energy as we work towards the implementation of the ESD road map, which is going to bring about significant changes to Victoria. It is going to support cost-of-living measures. It is going to help us achieve our energy emissions reduction as we lead the nation in this. *(Time expired)*

Ministers statements: priority primary care centres

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (14:35): We know that Victorians are struggling with the cost of living right now. That is why I rise to update the house on the Andrews Labor government's priority primary care (PPC) centres. It has never been harder to see a GP, let alone one that bulk-bills. It should not be this way, but the former federal Liberal–Nationals government absolutely broke primary care. Access to fast, free and local GPs keeps people well and out of hospital. However, this is not how the system is working. When you can get an appointment, too many families are hit with really high out-of-pocket costs.

A member: What are you doing about it?

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I will tell you what I am doing about it. What we know from the impact of the federal Liberal–National parties government in Canberra is that families cannot access the care that they need, and that is why we have established our priority primary care centres. I am thrilled to inform the house that we now have 27 operating across the state, and since their establishment they have seen 100,000 patients. This is delivering the care that our families need.

Take Milla, for example, a young woman who recently took a knock to the head while playing footy in the north-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Her mother was reluctant to go to emergency, unsure where

to go. She went to a PPC centre. Milla got all the care that she needed so she could get back to playing the game that she loves. Milla's mum described the experience as 'bloody brilliant'. Bloody brilliant indeed, and only the Andrews Labor government can be trusted to deliver affordable health care for all Victorians, no matter where they live.

The SPEAKER: Order! I probably should remind the minister about parliamentary language, even if it is a quote.

Commonwealth Games

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:38): My question is to the Acting Premier. This morning the Attorney-General recommended that the Deputy Premier should not appear before the select committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games. Does the Acting Premier agree with the Attorney-General?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:38): As I think I referred to this matter yesterday in this place, how the Legislative Council goes about its business, the committees it sets up and the way it conducts its inquiries is entirely a matter for the Legislative Council. It would be disrespectful to cut across the dealings of the Legislative Council, and I am sure they would agree that it would be disrespectful to cut across our dealings here in the Legislative Assembly. So in that regard, let us wait and see. Let the committee be established and members sit down and work out their forward work plan. At the same time that that goes on, the government will continue with its ongoing legacy investment of \$2 billion –

Sam Groth interjected.

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

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Make it 1 hour.

Member for Nepean withdrew from the chamber.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Acting Premier was asked whether the Acting Premier agreed with the Attorney-General's comments.

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

Jacinta ALLAN: As I was saying – because clearly the member for Brighton is not interested in hearing about the \$2 billion of investment that we are making in regional housing – there is \$1 billion in regional housing, on top of the \$5.23 billion in the Big Housing Build, investing in new community sporting infrastructure and investing in tourism and major events in regional Victoria. These are the priorities that we know regional Victorians care about. These are the reasons why we agreed to the games in the first place, and we are going straight to get on and deliver those legacy benefits.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for South-West Coast is warned.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:40): The Deputy Premier has previously stated:

... I'm not one to cut and run when challenges get hard ...

Why has the Deputy Premier chosen to cut and run by refusing to confirm that she will appear before the select committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, you have asked a question. Assistant Treasurer!

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:41): Looking at the faces of those opposite, there are a few who would wish someone else would cut and run, in a big hurry!

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, in the same way that I –

Members interjecting.

James Newbury: This is not an opportunity for the Acting Premier to be nasty. I would ask you to bring the Deputy Premier back to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Acting Premier to come back to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: Speaker, I have answered the member's question. I have answered the member's question in the substantive question that he asked. I have got nothing further to add to that question, other than where have the two Brads been this week, Speaker? Where are the two Brads?

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Deputy Premier is defying your ruling and is continuing to show how nasty she can be.

The SPEAKER: The Acting Premier has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: transport infrastructure

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:42): At the heart of the Andrews Labor government's Big Build is transport equity and providing affordable public transport connections to support more people to access schools and TAFE, health services and of course jobs. This is why the Andrews Labor government is investing in the biggest transport infrastructure program in our state's history, the Metro Tunnel –

Members interjecting.

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

Member for South Barwon withdrew from chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN: across the suburbs, the Cranbourne line, the Hurstbridge line, extending the Mernda line, level crossings in Pakenham, the Melton line – I cannot not mention Melton – the Sunbury line works and of course upgrading every regional rail line. They help also with the cost of living by making it quicker and easier for where people get to go. A big project is also going to support that: the Suburban Rail Loop, where Cheltenham to Box Hill will connect seven existing train lines. It will connect Monash and Deakin universities, Box Hill TAFE, Box Hill Hospital, Monash hospital, the heart hospital and Box Hill and Southland and Glen Waverley shopping and employment precincts. Every single day this project will cut the cost of getting to work, getting to hospitals and support jobs. It will save Victorians time and money. But there are some who do not support this, who do not want this time. Let me share this quote:

... the project that must be cancelled is Suburban Rail Loop.

A rail line that will run from Cheltenham to Box Hill, from nowhere to nowhere ...

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. The member for Eltham! I would ask the house to come to order.

Jacinta ALLAN: Imagine saying Clayton, Box Hill, Cheltenham are nowhere to nowhere. That comment from Liberal luminary Jeff Kennett sums up the Liberal opposition's view on the suburbs and on the Suburban Rail Loop. Only the Andrews Labor government will get on and deliver it.

*Rulings from the Chair***Constituency questions**

The SPEAKER (14:44): Following a point of order from the member for Bentleigh I have reviewed all constituency questions asked yesterday. The member for Point Cook did not ask for information but asked a minister to take action, and I rule this question inadmissible. The members for Rowville and Narracan asked questions that did not relate to their constituencies, and I rule these questions inadmissible. Constituency questions need to be about constituency matters, not simply matters of broad public policy of interest to members' constituents. I encourage members to refer to the section on constituency questions in the Procedure Guide on the members' intranet or check their proposed wording with the clerks or me in advance.

*Constituency questions***Polwarth electorate**

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (14:46): (250) My constituency question this afternoon is for the Minister for Community Sport. Now that the Commonwealth Games have been cancelled in the Geelong–Surf Coast region, we are due our fair share of largesse from this government. My question to the minister is: will she provide funds to top up the Surf Coast aquatic centre in Torquay? This centre is well known to the government. It is still short of many millions of dollars to provide the facility that the community clearly needs. Only last week the former Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery Minister Allan made it clear to the Surf Coast community that indeed the region could not expect any funds for projects or completed projects until well after 2026. The Surf Coast shire of course is planning to get this pool underway. It needs some more funds, and I call on the minister to give us an answer on that, please.

Laverton electorate

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (14:47): (251) My question is for the Deputy Premier as Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. In this year's budget \$650 million was allocated to fund the Melton line upgrade. This funding continues our government's record of making significant investments in public transport in Melbourne's west, including the Ballarat line upgrade that added an extra 135 services a week through this corridor. We know that in the future both the Melton and Wyndham Vale lines will need to benefit from longer, higher capacity trains. As the minister knows, the Melton line intersects with my electorate of Laverton through Ardeer station, which is on this line, providing train connections to the Ardeer and Sunshine West communities. My question for the minister is this: how will the Melton line upgrade improve public transport services for commuters in my electorate living in Ardeer and Sunshine West?

Lowan electorate

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:48): (252) My constituency question is for the minister for Aboriginal affairs, and the information I seek is the financial modelling for the agreement that the Labor government made in the lead-up to the 2022 state election with Barengi Gadjin Land Council around water and land assets and even the naming of places, including streets and towns in my electorate of Lowan. As there has been no public consultation or disclosure of the details around this secret deal, locals are concerned about the impact of this agreement and particularly about the costs they may bear either directly or indirectly through increased charges to council. This is something that has gone ahead as what appears to be a treaty settlement before the treaty negotiation process has been finalised. I therefore ask the minister for the financial modelling indicating the total estimated cost of this agreement, how this cost will be applied and who will pay.

Ringwood electorate

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (14:49): (253) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. Minister, when can my constituents expect the Dublin Road level

crossing to be gone for good, and how will the Lilydale line benefit from being level crossing free? The Andrews Labor government is hard at work removing 110 dangerous and congested level crossings right across Victoria, including two in the heart of my electorate at Bedford Road, Ringwood and Dublin Road, Ringwood East. I recently had the pleasure of visiting the works at Dublin Road, where the team are working hard digging a trench to remove the last level crossing on the Lilydale line and to build a brand new Ringwood East station, all by 2025. With boom gates down for up to 23 minutes during the morning peak, getting rid of this crossing will unblock the Dublin Road bottleneck and free up congestion, meaning not only faster commutes but also the ability to run more trains more often. It is community-shaping work, and I am proud to be part of a government that is laying down the tracks – quite literally – for generations to come.

Sandringham electorate

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:50): (254) My constituency question is addressed to the Minister for Police, and I ask: will the Andrews Labor government commit to providing more police resources to address the increasing instances of crime in Mentone and across the Bayside and Kingston local government areas? Both traders and residents have contacted me sharing their personal accounts, including witnessing violence and assault by a group of young offenders, attempted home invasion and drug deals, as well as the theft and damage of private property. Many have shared with me that they no longer feel safe walking near the shopping precinct for fear of being attacked. It is evident that more local police resources are needed and should be dedicated to fighting this crime given that criminal incidents in our local community have increased by almost 18 per cent this past year. Given this recent rise in criminal activity, especially amongst young offenders, I urge the minister to address these concerns raised by my local community and commit to allocating extra police resources as a matter of urgency.

Albert Park electorate

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (14:51): (255) My question is to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, and I ask: how will the Metro Tunnel directly benefit community members in the electorate of Albert Park? I had the pleasure of joining the Premier, the minister and a colleague for Southern Metropolitan Region in the other place for one of the first drives through the Metro Tunnel. Two weeks ago the first test train successfully entered the Metro Tunnel, travelling from South Yarra to Anzac Station under St Kilda Road. The testing program is to make sure the Metro Tunnel is safe and ready to open to passengers in 2025 – a year ahead of schedule. We know that this will change the way Victorians travel across our city, and I am looking forward to hearing how these changes will directly benefit constituents in Albert Park.

Brighton electorate

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:51): (256) My constituency question is to the Premier, and I ask: will the state Labor government confirm an intention to roll out defibrillators on Victoria's public transport system? A Brighton constituent recently went through the worst day of her life when her husband had a heart attack while travelling home on a train. The constituent called an ambulance and was told that no ambulance was available, so her husband was forced to lie on a concrete train station in my electorate for 45 minutes waiting for an ambulance to arrive. Fortunately, there were two nurses on the train – two wonderful people who thrust themselves forward. But despite the potential need for a defibrillator, over that long 45-minute wait there were none on the train system or at the train station. Without being political, it is incredibly frustrating to know that up to \$2 billion will be spent on not hosting the Commonwealth Games but the government has not yet invested in providing vital health services like defibrillators on the public transport system to protect our community. The broader community and I look forward to the Premier's response.

Bellarine electorate

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (14:52): (257) My question is to the Minister for Planning. Acknowledging the overwhelming support from the Bellarine community regarding the implementation of the Bellarine distinctive area and landscape, could the minister please provide an update on the progress of this policy? My predecessor the Honourable Lisa Neville worked tirelessly alongside the Bellarine community to safeguard the unique aspects of our region, and thanks to her work we now have a comprehensive 50-year policy in place for the Bellarine, one that not only prioritises our environment preservation but also protects our valuable and historic centres. The Bellarine community shares my profound passion for preserving and enhancing our beloved community for generations to come. It is our collective goal to ensure that the integrity of our community remains protected and looked after rather than degraded. Together we are committed to securing a sustainable and vibrant future for the Bellarine community.

Gippsland East electorate

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (14:53): (258) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the information I seek is what follow-up work is going to be done after the roadside clearing on the Great Alpine Road between Bairnsdale and Bruthen. There was a lot of advocacy to get this work done. What they have done – I think it was VicRoads with the support of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action – is they have cut down all these trees and cleared the roadside, which needed to be done after the fires, but they pushed them up against the fence lines of adjoining properties. We have moved our fire risk from being a vertical one to a horizontal one. The information I seek is what the minister is going to do, with another summer approaching, to ensure that those fuel loads that are now pushed up against private boundary fences are removed.

Eureka electorate

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (14:54): (259) My question is for the Minister for Education. The Victorian Premiers' Reading Challenge is an excellent opportunity for Victorian students to encourage reading and explore their imaginations. I recently had the pleasure of visiting several schools in my region, including Warrenheip Primary School, Buninyong Primary School and St Bernard's Parish Primary School, to deliver books and read some stories to the little ones. It is an absolute delight to watch their faces light up when we open a book. And I can tell you that *Bluey* is just as big a hit in book form as it is on TV. Minister, can you please provide further information on the number of schools participating in my region and the positive literacy outcomes we expect to see for these schools participating in the Premiers' Reading Challenge?

John Mullahy: On a point of order, Speaker, there was a constituency question there that referred to a ministerial portfolio that does not exist. I would like that question reviewed. It was the member for Lowan's contribution, and it was to the title of Aboriginal affairs, which does not exist anymore. The new title is Treaty and First Peoples, and that recognises the change in the relationship between government and First Nations people, so I would like you to review that question.

The SPEAKER: I will follow that matter up. Thank you for raising that point of order.

Bills**Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023***Second reading***Debate resumed.**

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (14:56): I rise to speak in support of the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023. Just before lunch those of us who were here heard that the member for Croydon was unwell, and I think we all wish him a speedy recovery. It was a bit

of a pity that he was not here, because the member for Caulfield had to very valiantly try to fill his half-hour contribution.

A member: And he did brilliantly.

Nathan LAMBERT: He did all right. I am not sure he even got some basic facts about the size of the industry's gross value added right, but we hope that when the member for Croydon returns in good health, he can fill him in. As we know, this bill amends the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990 quite substantially. Amongst other things, it does rename the act. It does seem slightly odd to me that we are going to rename the act, but it will be called the Mineral Resources and Extractive Industries Act 1990. I kind of feel it should say 2023, but anyway, 1990 was a great year, and I am very happy to speak in favour of the creation of this new or revised act.

A member interjected.

Nathan LAMBERT: The minister remembers the 1990s, I am sure. As the team in the department know, this bill has had a long gestation period, and there are a lot of minor amendments in there which will update things that need updating, but there are three key changes in the bill. Firstly, it removes work plans, as we have heard, and replaces them with a general duty to minimise harm. There is a three-tiered risk system that the bill introduces to accompany that assessment of risk. Secondly, there is a new interim system for minor variations to work plans. And then finally, there are the transitional arrangements to bring rehabilitation plans and bonds across into the new regime.

I believe those second two components are largely uncontroversial. They both continue long-running regulatory trends in the area. We all think that genuinely inconsequential variations should not have to go through the whole assessment process. Similarly, I think there is broad agreement that rehabilitation has been an area in which we have needed to see strong regulation, and we have had to make sure that mines and quarries continually update and invest in their rehabilitation plans. But the key thrust of the bill is the removal of the work plans and the introduction of the new duty-based system in which proponents have a duty to minimise or avoid risk wherever practicable. This has, as we all know, been a common theme of recent regulatory efforts, based as it is on the general environment duty in the Environment Protection Act 2017.

I might just make an observation that this kind of thing of replacing fixed guidelines with a general duty always sounds good, but we do need to be conscious of what it actually means in the real world. Just to give one example, when a lot of us probably drove into work here, we would have driven down Macarthur Street. It does currently have a 40-kilometre-per-hour speed limit. Now, in theory you could replace the 40-kilometre-per-hour speed limit and have a general duty on drivers to minimise risk wherever practicable. But I think we all recognise that were you to do that, ultimately you would have to issue some guidelines for what sort of speed people would drive at, because the practicable bit is important. People have different tolerances for risk and they have different understandings of what is practicable, so there is always a need to give some guidance as to what that means.

I say all that because I think we will find, and it is indeed the minister's intention, that as we come to dealing with quarries and mines, which have many areas of risk that need to be managed – they have buffer zones, noise levels, the gradients of their roads and all that sort of thing – I imagine we will see a similar sort of thing whereby over time the subordinate legislation will provide guidance as to exactly what that interpretation of 'practicable' is going to be so that we end up, if you like, with a general duty but no doubt also a lot of guidance to operators. In a lot of respects we will end up with a system that is not dramatically different from what we have at the moment.

However, two things will very much change as a result of this bill. Firstly, the new system will consolidate a whole range of matters that are currently scattered across thousands – certainly over a thousand – of work plans. We have hundreds of mines and quarries, and currently all those different work plans are effectively a whole lot of different subordinate instruments. The reality is that most of those mines and quarries face fairly similar challenges with respect to the environment and safety and

so forth. A lot of those work plans already contain standardised controls – they already have risk management plans – and all of those things will transfer across to the subordinate legislation. As it stands, those work plans are not particularly transparent. They are inconsistent in their application. They are hard to update. They are hard to enforce. As a result of this bill we will have subordinate instruments that are the exact opposite. They will be transparent, they will be more consistent, they will be easier to update and they will be easier to enforce.

The second big change is that the bill will allow for that technical assessment of mines and quarries to happen in parallel with the planning process. Whether it is a conventional planning process or whether it is an environment effects statement (EES) process, either way it will now happen in parallel rather than the current statutory endorsement system, whereby basically you have this kind of period where the proponent goes back and forth with the department and the department gives preapproval to a work plan in a process that can take up to three years behind closed doors. It is not good for industry, it is not good for the community and it is not good for the environment. Then we finally get to the planning process and often I think operators have to go through the same thing again. Much more sensibly, now the regulator will just be a referral authority. The proponent will still of course have to send in their plans and go through an approval process, but essentially the preapproval and the approval will be rolled in together, turning three steps into two to the benefit of all of us.

It is very important to be clear what the changes in this bill do not do. There will be no change to that EES process. There will be no change to consultation requirements; I think that is very important to point out. In fact the consultation will get better under this bill, because communities and other interested stakeholders will have the chance right from the start of the planning process to have their say. I should draw your attention to this. I did get an email – some other members might have got an email – from Environmental Justice Australia on this bill. They did claim that the bill would reduce government oversight of the mining industry, scrap transparency requirements for mining operators and let operators self-assess the risks of their mining projects. Now, with the fullest of respect to the people at EJA, I do not think that is in any way a fair representation of what will happen with this bill. Projects that would have been rejected under the current regime will be rejected under this new system. There is no change to the regulatory standard that we are applying. Information that people need that is available under the current system will be available under the new system. There is no change to that either. I think certainly the expectation – certainly what will happen – is that with the very complex sites, which are often the ones where there is some debate in the community, there will be conditions attached to their operation which in all practical senses will be very similar to work plans anyway. I just want to say I appreciate the sentiment of the EJA. Certainly none of us wants to see a repeat of what happened with Rio Tinto's Brockman 4 mine with the Juukan caves, obviously. There have been plenty of other examples, unfortunately, of mining projects that have not gone well around this country. To this day some of our communities are still dealing with mercury problems and arsenic problems caused by the original gold rush. But my strong feeling is that this bill will in no way worsen those problems. In fact it will strengthen our ability to deal with them.

It is important to reiterate that we do need a good mining industry and a good quarrying industry in order to support so many aspects of our life. We were at the Royal Children's Hospital the other week – our family had cause to be. You do not normally think of mines and quarries when you are in a hospital, but as we know the concrete in a hospital, the glass in a hospital and the stainless steel, all of it, is ultimately a product of our extractive and mining industries. We need to support them. We need to make sure they can do the right thing to support our livelihoods whilst at the same time ensuring that those negative events I just referred to do not happen.

I should note on that particular issue that the bill does increase penalties significantly and introduces imprisonment for really serious breaches of the duty. To come back to the Environmental Justice Australia email, in that respect it furthers and supports the cause that they are seeking to advance rather than in any way hindering it. I should say I have tried to get in touch with that particular organisation and we have missed each other. Anyone in the government, I am sure, would be very happy to chat

further with them about it, but as I said, this bill will really strengthen our ability to tackle bad actors, not weaken it. It is a good bill. It is a detailed bill. I do want to just briefly shout out to the team behind it. Firstly, Minister D'Ambrosio and her fantastic team. I want to recognise the efforts of Linda Bibby over a long period and shout out to Anna Cronin, who started some of this work back in 2017, Jane Burton, Dr Paul Smith, Anthony Hurst and John Krbaleski, all fine public servants that have contributed to the long gestation of this well-designed bill. Some of them have since moved on from those roles, but they have all made strong contributions. There is a lot of expertise embedded in this bill, and I commend it to the house.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (15:06): I rise to make a contribution today on the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023. I have got a lot to say about this bill. I am not going to fit it all in in my 10 minutes, but I will do my best.

Among other things, this bill will amend the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990 to change the title. Other things it does include removing the requirements relating to work plans, and I will comment on this a little bit further. What often happens when you change one thing in one bill is it requires you to make a bunch of consequential amendments. The bill, as I said, changes the name of the principal act to the Mineral Resources and Extractive Industries Act 1990. This is in order to reflect the broader regulatory framework encompassed by the act. If we think about extractive industries, it does expand on the typical mineral resources that we might think of generally, and extractive industries are particularly relevant in my electorate with the number of quarries. It seems that there are not enough quarries and not enough product in the state at the moment to cope with the demand.

Another key component of this is removing the requirement for holders and applicants of certain licences and extractive industry work authorities to lodge a work plan for the licence or the authority. Now, the work plans are exceptionally complex depending on what it is that you need to do. MinterEllison a few years ago prepared a work plan variation for mining in Victoria for the Minerals Council of Australia in the form of a flow chart. It is quite complex, and I know that for those within the industries having that change will make a difference to them. The bill also reforms how mining and quarrying works are to be approved and regulated. What it does here is it introduces a general duty to eliminate or minimise risk of harm to the environment, public land, property and infrastructure, and that is what is going to replace the current work plans, which, as I said, are really quite complex and burdensome. It is going to be similar to the general duty model in the environmental and OH&S legislation.

Another key component is the introduction of risk tiers of high, moderate and low to determine obligations under the duty. Too often we see a one-size-fits-all approach and the smaller player in the industry or in the field has to jump over loads of hurdles. They do not always have the actual resources on hand or can absorb those costs easily, so I am pleased to see something like this to really determine the different levels of risk and then obligations.

The coalition has come to this bill having conducted quite extensive consultation, and I am pleased with the extent to which we have gone and with the cooperation we have received from a number of the key players, being the Minerals Council of Australia—Victoria; Cement, Concrete and Aggregates Australia; and the Construction Material Processors Association, as well as drawing on that review published in June 2023 by MinterEllison. In fact the workflow thing was probably more recent than I alluded to.

Firstly, I am just going to touch on the minerals council. They supported the framework, subject to the regulations clarifying issues identified with the legislation. This is something that is really important, because too often we see: 'This will be picked up in the regulations. Please trust us and we'll get it right'. For me that is quite scary, because you do not know exactly what it is that will be in the regulations because it is not listed in the legislation. Hearing about the extent of the regulations does not give me a huge deal of comfort, and equally that could be said about the minerals council, because

of some of their concerns. They really would like to see the regulations beforehand. Most mining projects are likely to go through the environment effects statement, and the process there is really quite onerous. I have seen a number of projects that have had to do that. If they do that, that means there is another reason why their planning permit works approval process can be bypassed and changed, because the EES process in itself is exceptionally complex, and it perhaps requires reform, according to the minerals council.

With Cement, Concrete and Aggregates Australia, they support the bill, as it enables a duty-based regime, which is a modern regulatory framework that aligns with safety and environmental legislation. They raise a really, really critical issue about the shortage that we are facing with quarry materials and supply and affordability, because the less that we have these materials available, the slower projects are, and the further they are from Melbourne, the longer it takes to bring them to where the growth is happening, and it adds additional cost. I know in my area that even where there are quarries there are shortages, and certainly with the program that the government has got going and the housing stimulus, this is creating an unprecedented demand for quarry material, so we need to be able to have systems and processes in place that can release these sorts of things quickly so it can be streamlined. There are significant issues with the current prescriptive work plans – this is Cement, Concrete and Aggregates Australia. As we have said, it is a significant current prescriptive work plan based approvals process in a time when we really need to get these things moving quite quickly. There are risks obviously, and the devil is always in the detail, and I have mentioned that without us seeing the regulations and having to trust what is going on. Even if there is a four-year transition period proposed, we still would like to see what is going on there.

The Construction Material Processors Association are concerned about the protection of resources that enable extraction of construction materials that is cost efficient to market – a similar vein to what I have already covered, because it is the taxpayer ultimately, the end consumer, who is paying for these. They also raised issues about the involvement of the local government authorities and even that the timing sequence for a decision by an LGA should be shortened from 12 months. Things do get held up. Sometimes the local government authorities are not always fully across all of the issues. If they are complex, it slows down their decision-making processes.

I want to also touch on the importance of mining in Victoria and in Australia. It is particularly important. The very recent Victorian Minerals Sector Economic Contribution Study commissioned by Minerals Council of Australia indicates that the sector contributed \$510 million in direct spending in the Victorian economy in 2021. There are a number of ways that I want to highlight. We have had for a long time a very historic goldmining history, and this is still going, with significant operations at Fosterville, Ballarat, Stawell and Costerfield, which has also got an antimony mine. We have mineral sands mining. Mineral sands mining is really important because that is where you find the rare earth elements, and the rare earth elements are what are so critical to modern society. We have deposits in the north and the west of the state and a particularly large deposit of mineral sands – in fact one of the most valuable globally perhaps – down near Bairnsdale, 20 minutes north-west of Bairnsdale.

Mineral exploration has really been growing in Victoria, and I think that is a good thing, because these rare elements are what are required in electronic components. These are things that we use in daily life. It has allowed things to get lighter and smaller. The sorts of things I am talking about are with telecommunications and medical science – our phones, computers, MRIs, laser scalpels and anything relying on magnets and lasers. If you think about our phones, the SIM cards – tiny little SIM cards – are silicon with phosphorous and gold, and it is so important that we continue to make sure that we have mining operations in Victoria. The closer it is to home and to any manufacturing base, the better it is. Lithium is something I want to touch on, because lithium is required in so many things: batteries – rechargeables for mobile phones and even larger laptops – and we also use it in the health industry certainly as a component in the treatment of manic depression.

In other areas that are so important for food processing, there is mining. We have aluminium. Coca-Cola uses 300,000 tonnes of aluminium to produce their Coca-Cola cans in America. That is quite

extraordinary. Closer to home, tinned products use tin and copper. Health care – uranium is used in cancer treatment and radiation. We have pacemakers relying on platinum and titanium in artificial joints, and as I said, for bipolar disorder we use lithium. There are more than 40 mined metals and rare earths needed to produce a single smartphone, and it is so important that we support this industry to make it a great industry in Victoria.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (15:16): I am very pleased to speak on the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023, and I thought I would start out by pointing out what the problems are that this bill is seeking to solve and will solve once passed, subject to the will of the chamber, obviously. The statutory endorsement process, essentially a preapproval of the work plan, has been criticised as unnecessary, costly and inefficient, and in some cases proposals that receive statutory endorsement are later rejected at the planning stage, resulting in significant up-front costs being incurred by operators in preparing a work plan without early advice from local councils about the likely problems in obtaining the planning approval. I think something really, really important to zone in on here is: it is important to note that these projects receive statutory endorsement with little or no community input. So these are some of the significant elements which this bill is seeking to overcome. That is why these legislative reforms are so very important. Statutory endorsements are based on the operation of the project itself, but do not consider a key question: is this the right location for this development?

We can see where the vulnerabilities are in the current process to date. The risk is the inconsistency in the work plan and lack of transparency, including – and again coming to this community aspect – the lack of public availability of work plans. You can see the problems that have to be fixed. An absence of community input to the approval process after statutory endorsement can – further problem – give rise in the community to an impression that work plan approvals are predetermined, undermining the credibility of and faith in decision-making in the industry. We can see some significant problems there.

There is a further issue which has been alluded to as well: once approved, the work plan is not changed or updated except in limited circumstances. The work plan system is static, and herein lies a very large problem. There is no adequate process requiring operators to review and adapt their work plan to changes in their operations in a dynamic way. Again, this is a problem which this bill is seeking to overturn. Let us come to some of the solutions. We are replacing the opaque and restrictive work plans with a constant statutory duty to eliminate or, if not possible, to minimise the risks of harm as far as reasonably practicable. This brings the regulation of mines and quarries into line with the approach and regulatory practices of the Environment Protection Authority and WorkSafe. This also removes the statutory endorsement requirement, treating mining and quarrying applications in the same way as other permit applications to create, and I am coming back to this critical element, greater community input into proposals – get this – right at the beginning of the process, ensuring there is open and transparent engagement. You might wonder why I am emphasising this point. Because there has been some criticism suggesting the reverse, now I just want to affirm factually what this bill will actually deliver. This removes a significant source of unnecessary cost and time delay for industry from the approvals process, without reducing regulatory oversight.

So you can see there are important caveats built into this legislative reform. It will deliver a simpler regulatory framework by streamlining processes for the submission, assessment and determination of regulatory approvals for mineral and quarrying operations. A duty-based model is a far greater way to manage risk than the current work plan system. I think that probably gives you a little overview of some of the very significant caveats and also some of the solutions that are being brought about by this legislative reform.

I do want to go to some other anticipated concerns which are being addressed by this bill. Another concern was that the first time communities hear about a mine could be when they start digging. I am very happy to say that this is completely false and shows a complete lack of understanding of the bill. With this reform, community input will now be the first step before a new project can be approved via the planning process. This brings quarrying and minerals projects into line with any other

developments, so I hope that allays some of the concerns that may have been anticipated unnecessarily. But it is good we have the questions raised, then it is great in this circumstance, in debate, to be able to address them.

A couple of the other issues that I did want to speak to are, if we look at clause 38AAG(1) of the bill:

The holder or former holder of a licence must, before carrying out any work under the licence, apply to the Department Head for a determination of the risk level for that licence.

The bill requires new operators to carry out an initial self-assessment of risk when applying for a risk tier determination by Earth Resources Regulation. I note that there may be some concerns about this concept of self-assessment, but I want to address those concerns. That self-assessment will be based on the prescribed criteria and information, but – and this is what is important – ERR will make the final determination of the risk tier. Again we can see important caveats that are built into the fundamental and central tenets of this bill. If someone is wanting to create a new minerals mine or a quarry, their risk tier is assessed and ultimately determined by the regulator. Again we can see that there has been a lot of careful consideration and analysis ahead of compiling the fundamental changes that are being brought about through this bill.

I just want to reiterate a point that was made by another learned colleague – that is, when it comes to environmental assessment, these reforms do not change the Minister for Planning's ability to require projects with potentially significant environmental impacts to be assessed through the environment effects statement process. This does not change. As we have seen previously and are continuing to see, all the new minerals and mining projects currently being progressed in Victoria have been referred to an EES, so we have a direct reference point as well, which I think is good and lends itself to the credibility of this caveat.

What about concerns about consultation with regard to the formulation of this bill? I am happy to say and to affirm that the government consulted widely with local government, industry and the broader community, including representatives of traditional owner groups, environmental justice advocates and landowners, during the development of this bill over a number of years. Any suggestion to the contrary is simply not true, so I hope that that also addresses any concerns that may be flagged in that regard. The bill purely creates the enabling framework for transitioning to a duty-based model, every aspect of which will be set in regulation, codes, standards and guidance material. These will be subject to a public consultation process before they come into effect in 2027 so industry and community can have confidence in the standards set. I think all would agree that that is well and truly a reasonable time frame to give community really intense consultation on these important reforms, and we are saying it here in the chamber. We are affirming it, so that should also go towards allaying some of the concerns that may be anticipated in this space and in this state.

Another point that I did want to raise was with regard to fundamentally the element of enforcement. For instance, a duty holder will commit an offence of breaching the statutory duty if they fail to minimise the risks of harm posed to the environment, members of the public, land, property or infrastructure as far as reasonably practicable in carrying out the work under a licence, work authority or in relation to the rehabilitation of land, and Earth Resources Regulation will be ensuring compliance with the general duty. This bill also expands – and this is very important – Earth Resources Regulation enforcement options, increasing the maximum penalties available under the act for instances of non-compliance with the statutory duty. This includes jail time for aggravated offences and a stronger enforcement regime, including increased penalties for non-compliance and including jail time for egregious breaches. So you can see it is really strengthening the space with which to enforce very important elements and controls concerning the matter of mineral resources. We know that in the renewables industry and when building train tracks and the like, fundamentally they do need minerals to be able to do this. This is just part of the process. We cannot pluck the minerals from the air; they do have to come from the ground. But equally it is very important to have proper controls in place, caveats that are there that can be enforced and very significant and profound community consultation over a reasonable time period.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (15:26): It is my pleasure to rise today to speak on the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023. This is a bill that is very important to my patch, my electorate of Mildura, that covers 37,500 square kilometres and which is very, very, very rich in mineral sands and in fact rare earths. I will get onto that little bit later, but I obviously want to highlight the provisions that will allow a more streamlined planning framework and make things a little bit more swift on the ground, because some of these projects with regard to mineral sands and rare earths have taken 10, 15 years to get off the ground. Some of them are still in the very infant stages, such as Avonbank. Hopefully now they are up to the last stage of submitting that work plan, so hopefully this will streamline that project as well.

I have been doing a lot of speaking with friends, colleagues and contacts that I have within the mining industry, because they are very thick on the ground in places like Mildura, like Donald, like Ouyen. There are plenty of people around that have either worked in the industry or currently work in the industry, and there are people who are actually degree-qualified geologists in Mildura. There are actually a lot of them, which may surprise some people. It surprised me. So I have been doing a lot of – I will call it consultation – speaking to them and getting all sides of the story, particularly when concerns are raised with my office regarding this bill in particular, this amendment.

As the member for Albert Park stated, there has been some concern conveyed to my office in particular about the belief, somewhat misplaced, that this will remove regulation from the mining industry in this state, and it will not. All it seeks to do is streamline that work planning process so that we can get projects off the ground more quickly, because, as we know, demand for mineral resources and rare earths is growing day by day by day. So we need those mineral resources – the mineral sands, the rare earths – to keep that investment in renewable energy moving forward. In all of the electronics that we use every day, our phones, our computers, everything these days – we live in the digital age – mineral resources are a key element. That is not to mention, like the member for Eildon stated earlier, some really important medications that come out of rare-earth deposits and mineral sands and different mineral elements.

On the concern around removing regulation around mining and quarries – I mean, the regulation is good. We need regulation in a sector like this, of course, and sometimes we tend to over-regulate certain industries, but this is just getting rid of the red tape, and you do not often see that come through this place. Usually we are adding more red tape and more red tape until we find it hard to move, but this one is actually going to streamline that process for the industry. It is one of those occasions where the outcome will be quite positive and really practical on the ground, and that is what we like to see, particularly the Nats – we are practical, pragmatic people and we like practical solutions, so it is a good thing. I know that when we start talking about mines and quarries some people immediately start twitching at the very thought of digging holes in the ground, but like I said, mineral resources are critical not only to things we use every day but to things that will become more important into the future, like electric cars – you cannot have an electric car without nickel – phones and the ability to develop renewable energy. The investment is going into the same part of the world – my part of the world – where we have 360 sunny days a year on average to harvest that solar energy.

I have got some facts that I could bamboozle you with, and why not – I have got 5 minutes. Solar photovoltaic plants, wind farms and electric vehicles require more critical minerals to build than their fossil fuel-based counterparts. It makes me giggle when you start weighing up electric cars versus fossil fuels and all that kind of stuff. A typical electric car requires six times the mineral inputs of a conventional car, and an offshore wind plant requires 13 times more mineral resources than a similarly sized gas-fired plant. Since 2010 the average amount of mineral resources needed for a new unit of power generation has increased by 50 per cent as the share of renewables in new investment has risen. We can see why we need to streamline the process of pulling those minerals out where we need them, in a carefully planned and regulated way of course, and to look at the environmental impacts that will have after the life of the mine has ended. Some of these mines that have been planned at the moment

have 25-year work plans written for them and some of them are expected to have life spans of up to and above 40 years, so it is really important.

Like I mentioned earlier, there are quite a few projects in my patch. In the past – almost the immediate future, although ‘immediate future’ is probably talking 10 years ago, but that is immediate when we talk about mine life – there was the Iluka sands mine at Ouyen, and soon we will have the Donald rare earth and mineral sands project, to mention a couple. There are also neighbouring projects like Avonbank, which goes into Lowan, and the Goschen mine, which is in Murray Plains. That has great benefits not only for the industry itself but also for the entire region. The Donald rare earth and mineral sands project has been subject to a detailed evaluation over many, many, many years, and all main regulatory approvals have been achieved or are well advanced – they are just about ready to kick off. The project evaluation and the technical work have included the completion of the mine planning, which is what we are talking about – the recovery after it has ended. The processing plant and the infrastructure designs have been done. The engineering design has been done. Product transportation, sales, marketing and the major regulatory approvals have been done, with the exception of the project work plan. Hopefully now we can streamline this and bring that project to life more quickly.

The Donald mineral sands project will be and can be certainly a unique contributor to the local community. They have committed themselves to a long-term generational project – and it will be – with a life up to 40 years. The company has committed itself to extensive community consultation, and it believes it has an obligation and an opportunity to make a sustained and longer term contribution to the region, and it does. They will adopt a policy of seeking to employ local people with all of the jobs that will come from this, and that is a priority. They will only relocate specialist skills when they need to, and like I said before, there are many, many university-qualified geologists and experts on the ground in our region. A local procurement policy is also in place, and that spans from catering services in the mess halls to the trades specialists. Housing is a real issue in our area, as it is everywhere, and these mines will need to house their workers somewhere. The legacy that will be left after these mines is not only great for the industry itself, but we will be left with workers’ accommodation and things that can be used afterward or that are multiuse, which is fantastic. We saw that with Ouyen. There are 18 new house builds this year in Ouyen, so that town is booming afterwards. They have a very, very active, committed community that is helping Ouyen thrive after the mine closed down.

Also there are other mines in the planning stages, like I said, in neighbouring electorates – the Goschen project and the Avonbank project – which really do have major benefits for the entire region. There is a lot of distance between towns and between mine sites. Fly-in fly-out is not always an option, unless you are close to Mildura, which has an exceptional regional airport, and we are very, very lucky to have that regional airport in Mildura. But a lot of it is driving. Imagine trying to drive in and out of these mine sites, and it might be tough at the moment because you do have to dodge a lot of potholes. But imagine not being able to dig a quarry and try and fix these quarries without the mining industry. Hopefully this amendment will allow the quarries to open up – the ones that are in the planning stages at the moment. Maybe we can get some of those potholes fixed just a little bit more quickly so we can get the mine workers in and out safely – not to mention their families – and get them home to their families as well. Mineral resource mining, rare earths and mineral sands, is growing exponentially in the Mildura electorate, and it is really exciting for things to come.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (15:36): It is great to rise to contribute to this really important bill and to follow colleagues on my side of the chamber, the member for Albert Park and the member for Preston, who bring a wealth of experience in this kind of effective regulation of our extractive industries. The member for Mildura talked about some of the growth areas for our extractive industries in Victoria, across the Mallee and the Wimmera. It is great to see that things like mineral sands are making such an important contribution to our state’s economy.

I want to talk briefly about the purpose of this bill. I will not dwell too long on those technical dimensions because I think the member for Preston gave a fantastic exposition of those and why they are so important. But it is important to note that the purpose of this bill is to amend the Mineral Resources

(Sustainable Development) Act 1990 (MRSD act) to modernise the regulatory approval processes for exploration, mining and quarrying industries in Victoria and in doing so improve the management of risks associated with minerals and quarry operations by a primary duty – and it is important to focus on that dimension, that primary duty – to eliminate wherever possible the risks of harm.

It is important to address the inherent risks of mining. The nature of mining and quarrying activities poses risks and can be a potential cause of serious harm to public safety, the environment, infrastructure, land and property. They are not static risks, they are inherently dynamic. They are emerging and evolving. They recede and they emerge over time, especially given the longitudinal nature of a mine or a quarry, which can extend over decades. In a previous life, as it were, I spent quite a lot of time on the west coast of Tasmania, and others may also have visited that part of the world, places like Queenstown, where the environmental damage and the legacy of unregulated mining in the 19th and 20th centuries has left an incredibly scarred landscape. It is indicative of why effective regulation is so important. We need a strong mining sector; it is an integral part of our economy. It has been for 180 years in this state. But doing that in balance with effective regulation that minimises those risks, eliminates them to the extent that it is possible, is so important. You only have to look around the physical environment of some of those previous mine sites where that effective regulation has not been in place to see why this bill and why the work that has been conducted by Better Regulation Victoria, by the Minister for Energy and Resources' team, by the minister herself, is so important, and I thank them for that. The need for reform has been highlighted in a number of studies and reviews, including *Getting the Groundwork Right* and *State of Discovery*, which are fantastic publications championing our state's resources sector.

I just want to note that in streamlining while also maintaining the integrity of the regulatory process, the amended MRSD act will decrease red tape and costs involved in obtaining permission to commence work. That is expected to reduce the administrative costs for operators associated with extractive operations by approximately \$3.25 million to \$3.5 million every year and in doing so, put downward pressure on the costs of extractors.

As those who come to this house know – there are many who do not, particularly of the Greens persuasion – housing is the most incredibly important policy area confronting our state today, so putting downward pressure on extractors, making the cost of house building cheaper, I think is a good thing to do. If only there were Greens colleagues – fellow parliamentarians, I should say, not colleagues – to endorse that, that would be lovely.

Gary Maas: They have got to turn up.

Iwan WALTERS: They have got to turn up. They do have to turn up, member for Narre Warren South. I am going to have a bit of a frolic through the history of mining in Victoria. This chamber, this city and the economic fabric of our entire state were built on the prosperity originally delivered by mining. I know we have got a number of regional MPs on our side of the house particularly concentrated in the golden triangle of Bendigo, Ballarat and Stawell – and I will return to Stawell later. The golden triangle had the richest alluvial fields in the world, member for Melton. From 1851 to 1896 the Victorian mines department reported that a total of 1,898,391 kilograms of gold were mined in this state. Gold was the key driver of Victoria's economic diversification away from wool.

As a Labor MP I think it is salient that the role of gold in our state's economy was also what set Victoria apart in the 19th century by increasing the purchasing power of the working man and woman. The gold rush between 1850 and 1860 increased the real value of wages by 70 per cent. It made sure that working-class people in this state were relatively wealthier and better off with a higher purchasing power than any other equivalent in the rest of the world. That set us on a path to prosperity and to modernisation, which the labour movement captured and supported, and has built the state and the economy we enjoy today.

There is a purpose to this, Acting Speaker, you will be happy to know. The reason gold was so important to the Victorian economy, and the contribution of the Victorian economy to the global economy, was in part due to the operation of the gold standard. Others may also be aficionados of economic history and like their gold standard history, but for the period 1717 to 1931 Britain and consequently Victoria and Australia operated a formal or a de facto gold standard for a lot of that period. It meant that the holder of a bank note could claim the convertibility and demand immediate payment of bullion at a fixed conversion rate, if they held that bank note. That regime required sufficient gold to be in existence to maintain convertibility. In effect global economic expansion and growth under the gold standard were contingent on a constantly increasing supply of gold. So Victoria's contribution to the world economy in that first wave of pre-First World War globalisation cannot be underestimated.

As I said, there is an important point to this historical interlude. If we get the regulatory settings right, we can help to unlock a new wave of investment and prosperity that is built on our extractive industries, but this time around things like mineral sands and rare earths, which are integral components in the new wave of the green economy, in batteries, in things which are going to power us through the 21st century and into the 22nd, without diminishing the prosperity of working people in Victoria but by providing new opportunities and new jobs. So it is important, and the gold standard does have a role to play, even in this speech today.

Mineral sands exploration has grown by 321 per cent in the last four years alone. That is just a small indication of the real interest that exists in developing our state's critical mineral opportunities. Exploration is growing as well – \$222 million was spent in the last recorded financial year alone. That is a huge investment in regional Victoria. It creates local jobs, it upskills the regional workforce and it enables investment in the local communities that really need it most.

I do want to, in summary, reflect on the importance of making sure that externalities are captured through the regulatory process – that we avoid environmental catastrophe and that we do not have a model that socialises the costs on to communities and privatises the gains. I talked a little bit about Queenstown before. I think that a social licence for the resources sector is critical. We do know that earth resource exploration and development come with inherent risks. That statutory primary duty will form the basis of a new outcome-focused and risk-based regulatory framework, which is particularly important in Victoria because we are small, because we are relatively densely populated and because we have a diverse economy.

My own lived experience is indicative of that. I taught at Stawell Secondary College, which is only a few hundred metres from what I think has probably been either the biggest or the second biggest producer of gold in Victoria over the last 20 years. It means that community buy-in is incredibly important. The important work that the mine is doing in providing jobs and generating gold that adds to our capacity to pay for public services through royalties here also adds to our balance of payments and other great benefits like that at a macro-economic level. It is reliant on there being good information flows through to community through things like the Stawell Gold Mines community hub, where information about mining activity is shared and where applications for environmental planning and permission are there and visible for the public to be able to access and have clarity and confidence that what is happening is in accordance with law. But it is going beyond that; it is buying into the idea of social licence being particularly important for our mining sector.

In the short time remaining to me, I just want to say that Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee has considered this bill and particularly the new notification offence whereby authority holders have an obligation to tell the secretary if circumstances change, even if those changed circumstances reveal breaches of law. The critical point here – and SARC has considered this; we have written to the minister to get some further information – is that if operators act in good faith and if they are accurate in their reporting, that acts as an effective safe harbour, so there is no excuse not to do the right thing.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (15:46): I rise to speak on the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023. This bill does a number of things that have already been outlined by the initial speaker, my colleague the member for Caulfield, on behalf of the Shadow Minister for Energy and Resources, who is away sick. Basically I am going to stick to some parts of the bill that do some good things. The bill reforms how mining and quarry works are approved and regulated, and it does it by introducing a general duty to eliminate or minimise the risk of harm to the environment, public, land, property and infrastructure. So basically it replaces the current work plan, and that is a good thing because we do need some flexibility in the industry. That is what the industry has been telling us.

The member for Caulfield talked about his time in the portfolio, when in 2017 the industry was saying that they needed to have more flexibility so that things could happen at a rate that was reasonable rather than having the red tape compromising and killing the ability for mining to take place. Obviously what we do not want to see is any compromise to the environment. But this change will look very similar to the general duty model in the environment and OH & S legislation. Now, I have been contacted by people concerned about this change and that it will result in more risk to the environment, and I know that no-one in this chamber wants to see that. We all understand that the environment has a high priority in everyone's mind and that we should always leave things better than we found them, and that is, I think, the intent of everybody in this chamber.

The bill also introduces risk tiers of high, moderate and low to determine obligations under the duty. Now, the Mineral Councils of Australia, Victoria division, have given us feedback on this bill. The Cement, Concrete and Aggregates Australia organisation have also given us feedback, as have the Construction Material Processors Association. Now, these are very important associations because they represent a very important part of our world where we need to be able to mine. The environment has provided for us – minerals and gold that are produced by the environment, not produced by mankind, as I think the member for Greenvale was trying to say. 'We produce gold' – no, we do not. We mine gold – the environment produced it – and we make sure we do it in a responsible way. I can understand the importance of getting this right. We are not opposing this bill, but we do reserve the right, in the upper house, to examine it closely, because what is lacking is some detail. Basically, the Minerals Council and the CMPA and the CCAA have some concerns that there is a lack of detail that this government is leaving until after the legislation is introduced to actually refine, and I can understand the nervousness that that creates.

It does not seem like a responsible approach to me either. I think too often we see this particular government, the Andrews Labor government, rush into legislation with scant detail of how it will actually be implemented. In the last sitting week before the winter recess, we saw the pharmacy bill passed through this house, which is an example of this, where the committee that was going to work out the final details of how the medications would be safely delivered had only been set up a week before the legislation was introduced. They are still not able to give us the details of how the pharmacists will be dispensing these medications in as little time as, I think, November, when that bill is going to come into play. That is one example. The public drunkenness bill is another example of the way this current government rushes through bills with no detail, and I am getting contacted still by the police asking how the health professionals and the police are supposed to handle someone who is in a state of drunkenness and may be a danger either to themselves or others. There is no clarity. That is meant to be coming into play in the first week of November, Melbourne Cup week. Still, the lack of clarity is concerning.

I have been on many boards where you set strategy for five to 10 years and you then look back when you have been off the board for a while and you realise the goodwill or the intent has actually changed and what you intended in the strategy has really shifted significantly. That is why legislation is so important. It is not about let us suck it and see how it plays out. It is about putting the parameters in place so the regulations sit firmly within some strict guidelines. I can understand the organisations are nervous about this, but they all actually agree with the intent, so we are, as I say, happy to go along

with that, because the last thing we want is to hold up progress when it comes to making sure we have access to mined goods.

Mining is incredibly important. The member for Caulfield outlined the contribution to our state economically that mining brings in annually, and it was in excess of \$1 billion. That is all very important, but so is having a roof over our head and so is having roads to drive on. We have got companies in South-West Coast – Bamstone quarry is a really great example of a mining company. There are only two bluestone quarries left in Victoria. You will be shocked, I am sure, to hear this. We have got bluestone quarries which have high-quality bluestone, and what I will tell you now is, I thought, quite interesting. There are different qualities. Bluestone can have a lot of iron in it, which rusts. When it rusts it becomes quite slippery. Bamstone have to compete against China because the Andrews Labor government actually bring in bluestone and put it in our pavers, in our streetscapes, and that is actually really dangerous. So it is a really big problem when we have got a government that does not prioritise procurement from local businesses like our very valued Port Fairy Bamstone quarries, who do so much good for our local community and so much philanthropy. I think this government could have a bit of a think about what we would lose if we lost businesses like that. Putting procurement policies in place that prioritise businesses like that is a sensible thing to do. As a farmer you know that the biggest cost to bringing anything on transport is the weight of something, so surely when bluestone is being brought from China there is something very, very wrong, especially when it is of inferior quality and dangerous to our community, because slipping over on our streetscapes is not what we want to see.

That brings me to our roads, because I remember when Bamstone was sending bluestone down to do the streetscape in St Kilda – our roads are so bad and have got a lot worse since this – that the pieces of bluestone were breaking when they were being transported in the trucks down to St Kilda from Port Fairy. I think that really epitomises the state of our roads. We have got to have mines getting quarry material out so that we can fix our roads, build our houses and meet contracts in an affordable way – although we saw the humiliation Victoria suffered under the Commonwealth Games when this government broke the contract, so maybe they do not value efficiency and good business the way I do. When you run a farm you need to understand those sorts of things – but maybe not.

This bill, we hope, will improve the regulatory environment and not add more red tape, and that is why we want to support the councils saying that they want the bill to go through. But I ask myself: why is this bill coming into the Parliament at the moment? I would suspect it is to avoid the criticism of Victoria being ranked last in the most recent report of investment attractiveness in mining. I suppose that comes again to our reputation as a state. Businesses are leaving left, right and centre because of the taxes imposed on businesses. Look at the cost of WorkCover to businesses; it is killing and crippling businesses.

Unfortunately, the government has got a lot to learn. We value the environment, and that is why it is important to get this right. I do have a concern also about the risk mitigation aspect. Who is going to determine what low and what moderate is, and will this just end up in VCAT? If it has not got that clarity in the legislation and it looks more confusing because the regulatory parameters are not set yet, we will end up with more VCAT hearings when they are just backlogged to over two years now. That will not help the industry, and helping the industry is what I am absolutely intent on, because I want to see our quarries working efficiently, getting those products of limestone, bluestone – all the sorts of quarry material that we need to build our roads and build our houses – as efficiently as possible to our shires, to our builders and to our industries that require them.

I just hope this government understands the importance of the work that they have got in front of them to make sure this state progresses. I am afraid that from what I saw with the Commonwealth Games I am not convinced that our government does have an appreciation of good, efficient business. But let us hope this legislation does something towards that.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (15:56): It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to contribute to the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023. Deputy Speaker, you would know that Victoria's minerals and extractives industries are vital to our state's economy, in particular in regional areas outside of the metro area. They generate around \$6.3 million each year and comprise 3.2 per cent of Victoria's industrial output. Just in the 2021–22 financial year this sector contributed 30 per cent of the total growth in our state's economy, so a significant driver in economic growth in the state of Victoria.

Our state, Victoria, has a long and proud history in the mining sector. The Latrobe Valley is an area that contributed to Victoria's energy production for generations; we are obviously moving away from coal-fired power at the moment, but nonetheless mining in that area has been something that has been incredibly important for generations. Obviously the gold rush in both Bendigo and Ballarat and the surrounding areas some time ago was important as well. But it is not just mining in that traditional sense that we have thought about, but also the many quarries around Victoria where we extract the very important minerals that we use to manufacture the materials that contribute to so many important infrastructure projects in our great state.

Our ambitious infrastructure projects and also the rising demand for affordable housing have placed an enormous demand on the resources and minerals that we have here in this state. The resources we excavate, like high-quality minerals for our tunnels, train tracks and roads and cement for housing construction, are essential for Victoria's future.

Whilst we are moving away from that traditional mining that has played such a pivotal role in the Victorian economy for so long, our mineral resources sector is going to continue to be so incredibly important to build the rail infrastructure, whether it be the new Tarneit West station that we are building in my community of Tarneit – it is absolutely fantastic; whether it be the level crossing removals that we are undertaking all around Victoria, including three that have been removed in my municipality of Wyndham; whether it be significant infrastructure projects like the West Gate Tunnel, a project that is being built purposely to benefit those in the outer west and cut their travel times to the city by up to 20 minutes; or indeed whether it be the Metro Tunnel, the most significant rail project that we have undertaken in this state – all of those projects, and obviously the building of affordable houses and new homes, the building of new schools, all of those projects and indeed our economy rely on this sector, which is why it is so incredibly important.

Even though this sector and the projects that it supports are so incredibly important, the legislation governing the sector is unfortunately outdated, complex and inflexible. This has resulted in a series of challenges for the industry and most importantly for the communities that it impacts, in particular those regional communities. The current works approval process is highly convoluted. It is fraught with inefficiency. It is fraught with red tape. I actually agreed with something that the member for Caulfield said, perhaps for the first time in my being in this place, when he made a contribution on this bill earlier: the process is bound with red tape, making it incredibly difficult to get through, which is why this piece of legislation is so incredibly important.

To initiate any project the current legislation mandates three stages: a statutory endorsement of proposed works; application for a planning permit; and then finally, once you get through all of that, approval of a work plan. This process is often criticised for being time consuming, costly and inconsistent. For instance, statutory endorsement is a sort of pre-approval that in many cases is later denied at the planning stage. This means operators incur substantial costs in preparing work plans without prior consultation with local councils regarding potential issues. This lack of early communication exacerbates delays and increases costs for operators, breeding frustration and mistrust. Furthermore, there is a troubling lack of transparency in this process. Work plans, which include crucial detail like rehabilitation plans, are often kept out of public view. As I said, there is a lack of transparency around that process and the community has little to no say in the approvals process after the statutory endorsement. This situation can cause a sense of suspicion among community members,

potentially undermining their faith in the industry and the decision-making process and indeed their faith around the project.

To add to the issue, the current system does not facilitate the dynamic updating of work plans. Once a work plan is approved, it is largely set in stone, with changes permitted only in rare circumstances, meaning that the process is not agile and there is no flexibility within it to change if circumstances do indeed change. This static approach does not align with the realities of mining and quarrying, where conditions and requirements can change rapidly, as I suggested.

The heart of this bill is an innovative approach replacing the current restrictive work plans with a more proactive, constant statutory duty to eliminate or, if not feasible, to minimise the risks of harm as far as is reasonably practicable. This proposed change aligns the regulation of mines and quarries more closely with the regulatory process practices of the EPA and WorkSafe Victoria. So firstly, it removes the requirement for statutory endorsement, treating mining inquiry applications just like any other permit applications. This provides an opportunity for greater community input into that process, into the project and what is happening and into proposals right at the outset of the process. This shift will ensure more transparent and open engagement, fostering trust and collaboration between industry and communities. And it is incredibly important during these processes that we bring the community along with the project and we give them a sufficient opportunity for consultation and to be heard. This new approach can significantly reduce unnecessary costs and time delays in the approval process without compromising on regulatory oversight. The bill streamlines processes, making the submission assessment and determination of regulatory approvals for mineral and quarrying operations much simpler. The shift from rigid work plans to a duty-based model will also allow more effective management of risks. This is a dry piece of legislation, but it is one that is so incredibly important. I congratulate the minister and her staff, and I commend the bill to the house.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (16:06): Today I am also speaking on the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023, and as others have said, this bill is a shake-up in the way that mines are approved and regulated in Victoria. I have been listening to the contributions from other members, and it is true that the way that mines are approved and regulated in Victoria now is not working. That is clear. The process is confusing; it is opaque. Many communities who live near quarries and mines, especially, suffer from this. The environment also suffers from this. Personally I have worked with many local communities across the state over the last 10 years who have really had to fight tooth and nail to stop bad mining proposals from going ahead – something that has not been talked about a whole lot in the chamber in this debate. These are proposals that would have poisoned local communities and rivers, decimated biodiversity and severely affected the people who live near them. Sometimes it is a years-long or decade-long fight from local communities, who are often vindicated in the end when an environment effects statement or similar determines that the mine is not a good use of that area. But communities in the meantime have to go through so much. Many communities who are living next to mines have mines that do not take their responsibilities seriously enough, and that has a real impact on people's daily lives.

We could have taken an opportunity to fix some of this, but the government has put forward a bill that we fear could make things even worse. We fear it has been designed in a way to make it simply easier to get mines approved in Victoria. Mining companies so far seem quite happy with the bill, but locally affected communities, councils and environment groups are all raising serious concerns with it. I think it is important when all of those groups are raising serious concerns about a bill that we do look at some of those concerns, so I would like to detail some of those today.

Firstly, the bill would remove a crucial requirement for mining companies to lodge work plans with the Earth Resources Regulator. To be honest, when I first looked at this change I thought it looked like something that was written and designed by the Minerals Council to make mining easier, and I have heard some of the contributions from Labor MPs today saying that getting a mine approved is time consuming and costly, that there is too much red tape and that we are increasing costs for operators, which to me sound a little bit like some talking points from the mining industry. But let us look at what

work plans are – the thing that the government will be removing. Work plans cover details like community engagement plans; elimination or mitigation of risks, particularly for work that might impact the environment, groundwater, the community, land, property or infrastructure; and also plans for rehabilitation. This bill replaces work plans with a duty for mining companies to self-assess and then minimise risk to the environment and people, akin to perhaps the general duty under the Environment Protection Act 2017.

I heard the previous Labor speaker say that work plans contain crucial details for certain things in the mining plan, but now we are removing them. Work plans do offer this singular first step in ensuring transparency and public reporting for local communities. They create some level of environmental oversight and general compliance. They are not perfect, and we know that things are perhaps not working as well as they could, but I do not think that just removing work plans is necessarily the right answer. Mining licences are not publicly available documents, so this means that work plans are the only things detailing mining and quarrying projects that communities can access. Yes, they have to pay a \$30 fee, and yes, they are often not as transparent as they could be, but without them we do not really have anything. Otherwise communities would have to go through long, expensive and often fruitless freedom of information requests. There is nothing really in these amendments that gives us confidence that companies will have to provide equivalent publicly available details in another format, save for perhaps a watered-down requirement for a rehabilitation plan, which I think has some issues as well. In the minister's second-reading speech we read that some industries have complaints about the current approvals process – basically, that seeking statutory endorsement of a work plan before getting planning approval led to unnecessary cost and delay in the approvals process for mining companies. Maybe we could have reordered the process and could have done things differently rather than scrapping the work plan entirely.

Potentially what might be worse for communities is what it means for work plan variations, which are currently required for any operator who suddenly decides to expand their mine, for example. Under this bill it seems that all they would have to do is notify the department head, and, say, a mining company wants to double, triple or quadruple the size of their project. It is not clear how the community would find out about that. So not only does this remove some level of transparency and a review avenue for communities who might not want to see mine expansion, but potentially it removes their shot at the only mechanism we have for an actual environmental investigation – a referral for an environment effects statement – because unless the minister calls for one, the decision to request an EES will remain the decision of local councils, who are already, as we know, quite under-resourced but will now be saddled with this additional job of deciding whether or not to approve mines in their local communities.

This brings us to a second concern that many groups are raising with us with the bill, which is that without the requirement for a work plan, the first and only step in the approvals process becomes planning permission. This places the first decision regarding mining and exploration activities on local government and the planning department rather than the groups with the geological and environmental expertise, the resources department and the Earth Resources Regulator. Objections will still come to councils and the Minister for Planning will remain a referral authority, but neither the community nor council will have the benefit of an ERR-endorsed work plan to assess a project's level of risk, the adequacy and honesty of a company's mitigation efforts or the long-term costs and benefits of a proposal. Even MinterEllison has come out and admitted that this has the potential to shift a greater burden onto the planning regime to effectively assess, approve and regulate mining and extractive industries in Victoria.

So what information will councils now make their decision on, beyond a mining company's self-assessed risk plan? That is unknown. Whatever they get, they will effectively have to assess themselves without department or regulator staff and expertise, and I think this goes to the crux of some of the problems with this bill. We are saying that having to do all that work in a work plan first before going for approval is too much red tape, too much effort and too much cost for mining

companies, but instead what we are getting is a mining company self-assessing whether they are a low-risk or a high-risk operation, they send that to councils and councils have to decide. But what information do they have to make that decision? Very little information. They do not necessarily have the expertise. They do not have the benefit of a work plan that has been endorsed by the ERR to even look at and say, 'How do we even make this decision?'

I think there are some problems there. It is probably designed that way so that councils are more likely to approve mines than not. I do not know if many councils can bring together dedicated teams of ecologists, hydrologists, geologists, First Nations historians and other environmental scientists that would be required to really properly assess mining applications, and certainly I do not think they can do that in a rate-capped environment. Labor is essentially asking councils now to assume the role of a state regulatory body. Will they be given any resources to do this? In our briefings there has been no indication that that is the case, so probably the answer is no.

Councils also do not have the same powers as a regulator or state department. I have had former councillors contact my office directly to remind us of the specific deficiencies with the Victorian planning provisions – namely, that they are not prescriptive and do not cover certain mining impacts. These include radiation from mineral sands mining, compliance with the Commonwealth *Critical Minerals Strategy* and its national security issues, consideration of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, matters of national environmental significance, water security and more.

Recently Ballarat City Council in fact refused to request an environment effects statement for the Ballarat Gold Mine's new tailings dam. They simply rubberstamped the permit, although a VCAT appeal has now been lodged. So under this bill Ballarat could be more or less alone in now monitoring that dam's ongoing self-assessed risks to the community and the environment. How will councils do any of this? How will they obtain the technical expertise on mining operations, on environmental hazards and on the monitoring required to enforce regulatory compliance with the nebulous new duty, the ability to assess ongoing public health impacts of mining? We have not really been told how councils will be able to do all of this. Will they get new financial resources? Will they get new human resources? Who knows.

As I mentioned, planning decisions are reviewable at VCAT, but this again seems counterintuitive, because without a work plan how can councils and communities know how to challenge a project based on environmental or community impacts? What we have been told in the briefings that we have had, which we have engaged in in good faith with the department and the minister's office, is that a lot of these details will be in the regulations, in the codes of compliance. But they are not to come until several years after this legislation is passed. So we are essentially being told to trust the government: 'Everything will be in the regulations. Don't worry about it.' But I have to say that is probably not enough detail, particularly for communities who will be impacted by these mines. It does not give the community a lot of confidence that it will improve things, and in fact many communities are really worried that it might make things worse – it might make things a lot easier for mining companies to run over the top of communities. Not that all mining companies do that, but I have seen enough examples of that in my work here over the last nine or so years to know that that is a very real risk and one that the government should take seriously.

The third concern that has been brought to us is that under these amendments a work plan endorsed by and created with interagency consultation is replaced by a new self-assessment of risk prepared by the mining company, the operator. Essentially for mining companies, now what they will get to do is self-assess how much risk their mine poses to the environment and to the community and then decide for themselves how they will manage those risks. For anyone here who trusts mining companies to self-regulate, I would just remind you to perhaps look at what Rio Tinto did in Juukan Gorge over in WA, Labor's petrostate. There are countless more examples where self-assessment or self-management – self-regulation – have not been particularly successful.

If a particularly honest company admits that their project is high or medium risk, they will be forced to do one small element of the existing arrangement, a rehabilitation plan, and undertake some level of reporting. If a proponent goes for the cheapest option and opts for low risk – and hey, when have mining companies ever publicly underestimated the impacts to boost their bottom line? – the proponent can commence work according to this code of compliance. But as I said, what is in the code of compliance, we do not know. We are told this will come later, after the bill has passed.

On the self-assessed risk plans, what the government is telling us is that they will theoretically be kept in check with a new duty: that mining companies will have to minimise their risks to the environment. Ordinarily we would welcome a new environmental duty. We did so in the Environment Protection Act that we passed a number of years ago. But without a reformed and funded regulator or substantial fees and penalties for non-compliance we are worried that there is nothing to suggest this new duty would actually increase environmental protections. Instead there is a fair bit to indicate that it could actually act as a fig leaf while companies continue to get away with damage to the environment.

There is nothing really here that allays our concerns and addresses the Victorian Auditor-General's Office's 2020 finding that Earth Resources Regulation has nothing meaningful in place to set enforceable requirements to encourage mining operators to comply with their rehabilitation obligation. The proposed fines for breaching it are very low, and mining is exempt from the need to obtain certain environmental approvals during the planning process, such as restrictions on clearing native vegetation and certain approvals under the Environment Protection Act. The logic to these exemptions, we have been informed, was that ERR will ensure these requirements are effectively met in the work plan preparation and approval process where the EPA and the Minister for Planning are consulted. That was the rationale, I guess, for having them exempt from some of these environment laws. But under this bill, if this bill passes, there is no requirement to do a work plan, so the rationale for exempting them from these environment laws does not seem to make a lot of sense. We also note that groups like Environmental Justice Australia and local communities have advocated for the mining sector in Victoria to integrate an environmental impact assessment as part of the assessment of mining projects for years, but this bill does not take the opportunity to do that.

It seems that the reason this bill is being brought forward is twofold. Firstly, mining companies are finding it too confusing and difficult to get mines approved. They want it to be easier. Secondly, there is about to be a boom in mining for critical minerals, things especially needed to build renewable energy. Victoria is not a huge mining state. But we do have some of these critical minerals, and I get that Victoria wants to cash in on that boom. I get that some of these minerals will absolutely be necessary. But if we are about to have a boom and if we are about to have an increase in applications for mining these minerals, surely we need to have a regulatory system that is really robust to deal with that, because it will not just be one mine every few years. If we are about to see a boom, let us regulate it. Deregulating it or allowing mining companies to self-assess, removing important parts of the process, is really the last thing we should be doing.

All of this means that my office has been contacted by a variety of organisations over the last month, quite a wide variety, who are really worried that there will be less transparency and that it will make things much easier for mining companies to go ahead, potentially at the expense of local communities. There is a local group, Mine-Free Glenaladale, out in Gippsland who I have been to visit a few times, who have been fighting a mineral sands mine for a long time. It is a mine that really should not have gone ahead and did not in the end. They won their fight. But it took them a really long time and a lot of work to do that, and they have said to us that this bill is akin to giving the fox the keys to the henhouse and leaving the door wide open.

Environmental Justice Australia says that Victorians deserve a chance to review the bill and decide whether they support the government stripping back oversight and transparency requirements for mining companies, but the public have only had two weeks. I hear a lot of the government's arguments. I hear that it is not working for anyone, the current system. I think, though, that given that the community has not had a lot of time to look at this and given the significant concerns that have been

raised, it is prudent to delay it – to go away and do further consultation and try and improve this bill. Therefore, given all that, I would like to move a reasoned amendment, and I move:

That all the words after ‘that’ be omitted and replaced with the words ‘this house refuses to read this bill a second time until further consultation occurs with local governments, environmental organisations and regional communities likely to be impacted by mining and exploration’.

We would like to see much more consultation done with these groups and the broader public about what these changes really will mean. We would also like to see some more detail about what will be in the codes of compliance and other regulations so we are not just asked to trust that everything will be okay, because the devil will be in the detail. It is for that reason we are moving the reasoned amendment, and we hope all those in the chamber will support that. I think more consultation, more than two weeks, is a good thing for our democracy. We hope that this reasoned amendment is supported. If not, we will not be able to support the bill in this house in its current form.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (16:25): I rise today to contribute to the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023, and of course this is another important technical bill which will streamline and modernise workplace processes to keep up with increasing demand whilst keeping our communities informed and safe. This is a bill that makes positive changes that will benefit our communities, our environment and our future.

I just want to go to the amendment of the Greens and some of the points that the member for Melbourne made. Firstly, I do not see any reason to agree with any amendment. There is obviously no reason for that. The member for Melbourne made a reference to the operators being able to self-assess their risk. This is just not accurate and correct. The bill states quite clearly that the operators will need the regulator’s approval on their risk level, and I think again we see the Greens fearmongering on every issue that comes up just to try and find a position for themselves – that is clearly what they are doing here – and putting doubt into the community’s mind by suggesting that the operators will assess themselves. It is just ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous.

I will go to their lack-of-consultation argument. Our government has consulted widely with the local government. We have consulted widely with industry and the broader community, including representatives of the traditional owner groups, and we will always do that. The environmental justice advocates and landowners – we have spoken to them during the development of this bill. This has happened not over a short period but over many, many years – over a number of years. The bill purely creates the enabling framework for transitioning to a duty-based model, every aspect of which will be set in regulation – the codes, the standards and the guidance material. All of these materials will be subject to a public consultation process before they come into effect in 2027, so there is time for ongoing consultation and for further development. We will deal with those agencies I referred to earlier, like the local governments and environmental organisations, and anyone from regional communities across the state will be able to have input into all the new regulations that will set the standards and requirements for this industry. Of course this will ensure that communities can have confidence in the standards set and have their say on how the industry is regulated.

The introduction of the standard statutory duty and further subordinate instruments, like the codes of compliance and standards, not only improves the regulatory consistency between sites but provides clear visibility to the community of the compliance obligations that the industry must meet. Again I will come back to what the Greens comments were, and again they need to stop fearmongering, as they have done during the course of this week. They have just done it again with this particular bill by putting forward their amendment and making their comments. This bill drives transparency, it drives better standards and it provides a stronger role for communities in this process.

We can strike a balance between responsible resource development and the stewardship of our natural environment. We can have a thriving mining and quarrying industry while protecting our natural treasures for generations to come. Certainly in my electorate of Melton we are seeing a massive growth of housing and construction everywhere. It has been spoken about quite a bit this week. There is plenty

to do in Melton, and we are getting on and doing it, I can tell you. The projections of the population in my electorate – we are around 200,000 at the moment – are that we will get to 250,000 by 2030 and 450,000 by 2050. I will speak a bit more a little bit later about some of the things that are happening in Melton to try and cope with that growth. Of course next year we commence the build of the new Melton hospital. We also commence the build of the new Melton TAFE. We are also removing four level crossings, and on top of that we are putting in a brand new train station at Melton. So we are preparing ourselves for things into the future. Do not believe stories in the paper about the Melton railway line. But not only that, to cap that off we are also building another primary school at Weir Views next year for the opening of the 2025 school year. In Melton we need plenty of mineral resources to be able to build the infrastructure that we are building, and we will need it for many years to come because, as I say, when we get to a population of 450,000 by 2050, there will be a lot of resources that are going to go into the infrastructure build there.

This bill is all about preserving public safety, protecting the environment and ensuring the integrity of our infrastructure, our land and our property by modernising and strengthening the way we handle the risks and making sure we are up to date with the latest technologies and best practices. That is what we are doing through this bill. It is about safety and being innovative, and it takes a fresh approach to safety in mining and quarrying operations. We are in the 21st century, and there is great technology that is involved in these operations. Instead of just following a specific work plan, operators will have a primary duty to eliminate or minimise any risks that they may have as much as possible. This means putting safety first, finding innovative ways to keep everyone safe while we dig for valuable resources. Of course time is important in every industry but in particular in this industry. As I said, this is about the growth across the state – keeping up with that growth and having the materials to be able to build the things that we need to and to provide all the commodities that we require for our modern-day communities nowadays. It gives great strength to the establishment of a risk-based framework that gives us a clear understanding of what is happening and of course the confidence that decisions are consistent, transparent and fair.

Melton is a very unique electorate in many ways, and I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about Melton's natural landscapes. We are located on the Victorian volcanic plain, one of only 15 biodiversity hotspots in Australia – and hot; it is one of the hottest suburbs in Victoria, if not Australia unfortunately, and we are going to try and change that by planting a lot more trees in Melton. Certainly the grasslands are a significant area for Aboriginal peoples and have been dramatically transformed over the past 150 years, and the impacts of agriculture, grazing and urban development are evident as you drive across the Melton landscape. It sits across the Western Plains north and the Western Plains south. There are green wedges in the Western Plains south and areas with rich cultural history, areas which are critical to our state's food production industry. People will notice that as they drive along the Western Highway out towards Bacchus Marsh and as they go through Melton: the very high production of food for all Victorians and Australians in regard to that industry. We need to ensure our food supply can continue to feed not only Victorians but people across Australia, and we will do that and keep that close to home.

Our quarries and minerals industry is rich, especially in regional Victoria, both in the amount of resources that we have in our great state and in what these resources financially bring to our state. Victoria's minerals and extractive industries account for approximately \$6.3 billion annually in economic value. They represent about 3.2 per cent of Victoria's industrial output. In the 2021–22 financial year the sector contributed 30 per cent of total growth in the state's economy. Of course it creates many thousands of jobs for Victorians. I just want to quote some other figures. The extractive resources sector underpins our \$23 billion building and construction industry, and we have all seen that in all of our electorates, about what is going on with the infrastructure build right across the state. We will continue to do that. We currently have 535 quarries produce around 50 million tonnes of stone, limestone, sand and gravel each year, and they generate \$786 million at the quarry gate. That is an amazing effort. In 2021 the mining sector contributed \$13.745 billion of Victoria's total economic output. Again, an amazing effort by such an industry, and a growing industry due to what is happening

around the state and the productivity in this great state. During 2020–21 the minerals and extractive industries were due to pay a combined \$142.3 million in royalties, and again that is something that we gain so we can provide for the rest of the state in regard to that infrastructure build.

This is a really important bill. I see no need for the amendment by the Greens to be agreed to. Again I will come back to the point that I believe they are just continuing to fearmonger. It is not going to work. They can keep trying it as much as they like. It will not work. It is an important bill, and I commend the bill to the house.

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (16:35): I also rise to speak on the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023. As we have discussed and there has been a lot of conversation about in the chamber today, the purpose of this bill is to amend the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990 to modernise the regulatory approval processes for exploration mining and quarrying industries in Victoria. The bill changes the name of the principal act to the Mineral Resources and Extractive Industries Act 1990 to reflect the broader regulatory framework encompassed by the act.

The bill will improve the management of risks to minimise the risks of harm associated with minerals and quarry operations. There is industry consensus that the current work plan system is outdated compared to other modern duty-based regulations in safety and environment. This bill creates a duty to eliminate or minimise the risk of harm to the environment, public, land, property and infrastructure, and to ensure risks are understood and effectively mitigated, replacing current work plans. Also, updating reporting requirements for new and changing work will ensure the emerging and dynamic risks are identified and properly managed over the life of the mining or quarry operations. This bill will remove the requirement to lodge work plans, while retaining the requirement relating to rehabilitation plans, and require the regular review of rehabilitation plans. It will provide for a system of risk levels for authorities that determines the obligations with which an authority holder must comply in relation to the duty to eliminate or minimise risk. Introducing risk tiers such as high, moderate or low will determine obligations under the duty.

Earth resource exploration and development come with inherent risks, and they must be properly managed. This bill ensures risks are understood and effectively mitigated in a proper manner. With this bill community confidence in minerals and quarry operations will be strengthened with the establishment of a risk-based framework to provide consistency and transparency in the way decisions are made and regulatory activities are undertaken, contrary to what we have just heard. There will be greater ability and flexibility to prescribe criteria and standards on public safety, environmental matters and other matters, such as cultural heritage, that keep up with community expectations.

This bill will also promote greater consistency and transparency in decision-making and earlier opportunities for the public to provide input on mining and quarry proposals. Penalty units will be strengthened to reflect the fact that failures to comply with obligations carry serious risks of harm to the environment, members of the public, land, property and infrastructure. It will also encourage competition and remove unnecessary regulatory burdens while safeguarding the community and the environment, with more flexibility for industry to determine how to most effectively manage its risks.

Removing the requirement for operators to prepare and update work plans that must be individually approved by the regulator will remove a significant source of unnecessary red tape for the industry. There can be great delays and frustration with lengthy bureaucracy and red tape that these changes will help streamline. Rehabilitation plans will require approval and will need to be regularly updated to ensure they are responsive to changing circumstances and the land is returned to a safe and stable state. No longer requiring operators to seek statutory endorsement of those work plans before seeking planning approval will remove a significant source of unnecessary cost and delay from the approvals process and provide more flexibility to determine how they most effectively manage risk.

A new outcomes-based focus in the regulatory framework to drive innovation will do away with unnecessary prescription and provide the industry with significantly more flexibility to determine how to most effectively manage its risks. Extensive feedback was received from the Minerals Council of Australia – Victoria; Cement, Concrete and Aggregates Australia; and many others, which is critical input. The duty model frees industry up to manage its own operations in the ways it knows best under the duty to protect people, infrastructure and the environment.

Victoria is facing a critical quarry material supply and affordability risk. We are seeing this across many affected industries, and we must do all we can to protect them. It should be recognised that our current way of life would not be possible to maintain without the quarries. Quarry products provide the basics for our transport network, roads, railways, water and sewerage systems, housing construction, factories, schools, hospitals and so much more – more than we think. There are 1700 businesses offering significant employment and economic benefits. This is a billion-dollar industry.

Victoria's regulatory environment needs to be internationally competitive to continue to attract capital to invest into Victoria to ensure a sustainable and competitive heavy construction materials industry. This in turn facilitates Victoria's improved productivity, housing affordability and lower infrastructure costs. These reforms will significantly change the way that earth resources are regulated in Victoria. There will be comprehensive implementation processes with industry and other stakeholders. The bill will set up a framework and give the opportunity for compliance and much better guidelines.

Our stance today is to reserve our position in the upper house. When the Greens probably call an inevitable vote, we will likely support the bill's passing to the upper house, but only so some of the matters of detail can be discussed in committee. One example of this is we have some emails saying this bill reduces oversight and input from communities, but the minister has told us the complete opposite, saying communities will be notified earlier and there is no reduction in transparency. It is a matter I have just discussed with the member for Gippsland East. What the minister has to do is give us, as other speakers on this side have said, the answers to this question. Sadly, we do not get the chance to go into consideration in detail in this chamber any more, so we will support the progress of the bill to the Council, where they do go into committee and discuss detail and ministers must provide answers under questioning. Our stance today is to reserve our position in the upper house, and when the Greens probably call an inevitable vote, as I said, we will likely support it. Overall this will be a more streamlined and efficient process, and I do commend the bill.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (16:42): Well, it must be the end of the day, because I rise with a big smile. I am very happy to speak on the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023, and I am not just trying to have a joke there. Mineral resources and mining is a big topic in my household, particularly this week because I was just speaking to my brother, who is a FIFO in and out of WA. He works in a goldmine over there and has worked in the mining industry for what must be close to a decade now. He tells me all kinds of interesting stories about working in that mine and driving a truck very deep underground. As exciting as he thinks it is, it is quite a horror for my mother and myself, but back to this bill.

This is a really important bill that will help modernise and improve Victoria's regulatory approach to approving processes for minerals exploration, mining and quarrying in Australia. I appreciate the contribution that the member for Melbourne made and the importance of ensuring that there are proper processes around work plans and approvals. She talked about some of her concerns in relation to that, and I do think that it is really important to have a balance, because even though we want to make sure that there are stringent processes in place to ensure that there is compliance with regulatory processes and other things per se, it is also really important to make sure that businesses are able to operate here in Australia and here in Victoria because, as the member for Melton talked about, they really do employ a lot of people in this state and they have a role to play. They do exist and have existed for some time. Yes, we do need to have responsible legislation and regulatory reform around that, but where there are unnecessary duplications in processes – and we like to throw around words like 'red

tape' – it is part of being a responsible government that you go ahead and remove that to ensure that businesses can operate efficiently whilst also responsibly. That is what this bill is doing. It is an important bill that is going to modernise and improve Victoria's regulatory approach.

We know that whilst our state is not as reliant as others on mineral extraction – I talk about WA, but my brother has also worked in Queensland and in the Northern Territory – the resources sector in Victoria still plays a really important role in our economy and generates approximately \$6.3 billion each year. Having said this, the demand on our resources sector has never been higher, because on top of this our resources extraction sector plays an indispensable role in our government's massive infrastructure program. I know the member for Melton likes to take all the credit for what is happening in the western suburbs, and he is not here to dispute that at the moment.

I would say to the member for Melton and to other people in this place, and most certainly to constituents in the western suburbs that would happen to be listening to this, that Wyndham is also a mighty LGA and has many suburbs. Some of the fastest-growing suburbs in this state and in this country make up the city of Wyndham. Indeed Wyndham has benefited from the Andrews Labor government's investment in infrastructure immeasurably, and I see that and I hear that and I live that each and every single day. Unlike the member for Melton, I am not going to stand here for the next 6 minutes and list all of those projects off, because it would take more than 6 minutes for me to talk about those many, many, many infrastructure programs that are going on and happening in Wyndham as we speak.

Surprisingly, when we talk about our roads, train tracks, tunnels and bridges all relying on minerals extraction, funnily enough, so too does our renewable energy infrastructure, which has also got a really important role to play here in this state and here in this country, right now and for generations to come. Victoria is fortunate enough to have critical minerals deposits, significant on a global scale, let alone a national one. And as we head towards meeting our targets of 95 per cent renewable energy by 2035 and net zero by 2045 our resources industry is going to play an important role in getting us there. This is why it is especially important for regional communities that rely upon this industry generating hundreds of millions of dollars and creating thousands of jobs that we ensure that legislation and bills coming before this house are not only removing some of the unnecessary red tape, as I talked about earlier, but it is also our ensuring that these companies and mineral extractors and mines are still able to operate responsibly within the communities that surround them but also for the workers in those communities that go ahead and indeed have a job in those companies and on those sites.

That is why it is really important that these communities have the confidence that the processes we use to approve these operations are really strongly and appropriately regulated, as they need to be. That is exactly what is happening here. That is exactly what this bill is going to improve. It is going to improve transparency, it is going to improve accountability and it is going to improve oversight of the mining industry here in Victoria, ensuring that all states operate under clear and, most importantly, consistent standards. We know that for businesses to operate efficiently and to want to stay here in Victoria operating their businesses, they need to have certainty and transparency around the standards which we expect and their communities expect them to operate within.

Now, we are a small and we are a very dense state, and I think I can legitimately stand here and say that, being born in New South Wales and spending a lot of time in Queensland and a very small amount of time in the ACT. Victoria is a small and dense state with a mix of industries that make up our economy. Unlike WA, we are not heavily reliant on mining, and it is nearly impossible to avoid having minerals extraction land located in close proximity to other areas such as residential, agricultural or tourism areas, to name a few.

I know when my brother jets off from Coolangatta airport all the way to WA and flies in, he is then flown out to Kalgoorlie, and then I think it is a bus ride into God knows where in the middle of nowhere. And the times when my family have said we will go and visit Ben and have a look where he works and what he does, he has assured us there is no need to do that, because it is in the middle of

nowhere and there is nothing and hardly anybody around him. But here in Victoria it is a little bit different. Over the past week I have had a few emails come through to my office from constituents who have raised concerns with this bill. It is rightly so, and it is very heartening to see that constituents in the western suburbs are looking at this and are thinking about this. I know that a lot of people were concerned that in fact this bill does the opposite of its intention and will deregulate the mining industry here in Victoria, but what I would say to those people is that nothing is actually further from the truth. What we are doing is providing greater certainty and simplicity to the regulatory framework that governs minerals projects. This framework has over the years become really complex and inflexible, which leads to lengthy delays, overlapping regulatory requirements and inconsistent decision-making. In fact what has happened as a result is that the social licence that we were just talking about a bit earlier has been eroded, and rather than stripping communities of their right to have a say, as some have suggested this bill will do today – that they have been deprived of having their say – this bill goes towards fixing this. What we have had is at least three reports that have told us that this area is in real, desperate need of reform. We are getting on now, and we are acting accordingly and providing much-needed legislative improvements.

In the almost 60 seconds I have left to talk about this bill, I just want to talk about that one change in part of the bill that relates to work plans that manage mining and quarrying operations. Under the current arrangements each site has their own individual work plan, which has resulted in over 1200 work plans being lodged with Earth Resources Regulation. The process is three-tiered: there is a statutory endorsement followed by the application of the planning permit and then it concludes with the approval of the work plan. The mining and quarrying industries are the only two industries that require the statutory endorsement process, which effectively functions as a preapproval process for the work plan. This stage has been criticised for being unnecessarily costly and inefficient when half the time the projects do not pass the planning stage and are effectively redundant. What this bill is doing is trying to improve those processes, making sure that things can be done on time. I commend the bill to the house.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (16:52): I too rise this afternoon after listening to an extensive debate on the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023, where both sides of the house, it appears, except for our friends in the Greens, have agreed that this is an area of government policy and activity in the state of Victoria that is desperate for reform. As a short-term shadow minister for resources, I am well aware of the need for reform here, in fact so much so that I am somewhat concerned with elements of this bill that has been presented to the Parliament. The government has been dragged kicking and screaming to the position of having to do desperate reform because this state is in fact running out of urgent and critical building resources, particularly in the areas of sand and blue metal, which of course are the essential components for any type of building construction, road work, suburban development and other elements. They are the building blocks of a modern First World city and a modern First World state. Industry representative after industry representative, company after company and community after community that are relying on these products will tell you any day of the week how difficult and how expensive these essential building products are becoming in the state of Victoria because of the lack of simplicity and planning around making these resources – these crucial resources – accessible to everybody who needs them.

We have seen in recent times long-held stocks and stores of these resources coming to their end, and I know from firsthand experience in my own electorate the process to get approvals for quarries and sandpits in particular takes forever. In fact recently just a short distance from Colac, with very few environmental and/or neighbourhood or area concerns, the process still took over 10 years for approval so that the quarry could begin to operate as a resource. In that time there were some very significant state projects literally on the boundary of this potential resource.

We had the Mount Gellibrand wind farm, which consumed a huge quantity of materials. Instead of being accessible for that fantastic renewable resource, they were in fact having to be trucked and shipped many, many hundreds of kilometres. Not only was that bad for the environment, ironically, it

was incredibly expensive and added many, many millions of dollars to that renewable project, because instead of literally driving out one gate and straight back into the other, the trucks were doing somewhat of a 250-kilometre round trip – just to take the materials in.

At the same time as that wind farm of course the state government and the federal government had embarked on their Princes Highway west proposal, which consumed a similar amount of material. Exactly the same problem arose, where the essential building blocks – the blue metal material that forms the basis of concrete and cement – was coming from many, many miles away, at great cost to the road surfacers and everything else. There are lots of examples like that right across the state of where we need these materials.

We know for a fact that with the government's endless tunnel building and rail crossing removals – which the government touts as a good thing – the consequence is that that has absolutely hoovered up existing sand and rock supplies to Melbourne, to the extent that quarries that have existed now for 20, 30 or 40 years on the outskirts of Melbourne are now basically dried up. They are empty. In fact I visited one out towards Donnybrook where the quarry is now searching through mullock heaps of old topsoil and material that had been cast aside decades ago. They are now fossicking through that to try and bring material out because they have literally run out of space and are still waiting for approval for a new resource.

The challenge we have is that, with this bill that has come through, the government is promising the industry that that 10-year turnaround for approvals – which seems to be about the average time – they are going to cut that back. But as we so often see with this government, the devil is in the detail. It is a bit like 'We can host the Commonwealth Games, but the detail is just a little bit complex. In fact it's beyond this government's ability to put together' and 'We can offer a fast train to Geelong. The detail is there, but we can't quite do it'. We are hearing that a lot from this government.

While the industry welcomes the government's desire to streamline, they have not actually told anybody how they are going to streamline it. Therein lies the problem for the industry: they need detail. This Parliament really needs the detail. What people fear is that this is once again like a pre-election promise from the government: easily said, easily spoken about, but not very easily delivered. As we have in fact seen with Commonwealth Games, as we have seen with Geelong fast rail, as we have seen with airport rail and as we have seen with the duplication of metropolitan train lines in the west of Melbourne, all were quickly cancelled when it got too tough for this government to embark on them. This desire by the government to speed up the quarrying, mining and mineral industries in this great state is an admirable objective but one poorly formed.

I also point out that the Greens moved a reasoned amendment to this. I am not too keen on that because I think we do need to progress this. But the Parliament and those involved in the extractive industries will need to keep an eye on this government – we will certainly be doing that on this side of the house – and continue to try and hold them to account on their promise of a speedier, more efficient and more effective approval system for this vital industry. While we want to progress and go forward in this state, it is of huge concern to this side of the house and certainly to others that we are having to import – as we are now – sand from New South Wales when we have had reserves of sand set aside here in the state of Victoria for literally decades and decades. In some cases some sand supplies were set aside more than a century go, and yet we are unable to access those valuable reserves because this government cannot get its approval systems right. What that means, when we are having to rely on the efficiency and effectiveness of other state jurisdictions, is that it is actually costing taxpayers, unnecessarily so.

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

The minister has moved the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023 be now read a second time. The member for Melbourne has moved a reasoned amendment to this motion.

She has proposed to omit all the words after ‘That’, replacing them with the words which have been circulated. The question is:

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

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

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (70): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Martin Cameron, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Chris Crewther, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D’Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Wayne Farnham, Will Fowles, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Sam Groth, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Emma Kealy, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Tim McCurdy, Steve McGhie, Cindy McLeish, John Mullahy, James Newbury, Danny O’Brien, Michael O’Brien, Kim O’Keeffe, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, John Pesutto, Pauline Richards, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Michaela Settle, David Southwick, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Bill Tilley, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Kim Wells, Dylan Wight, Belinda Wilson, Jess Wilson

Noes (3): Gabrielle de Vietri, Tim Read, Ellen Sandell

Question agreed to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

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

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (70): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Martin Cameron, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Chris Crewther, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D’Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Wayne Farnham, Will Fowles, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Sam Groth, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Emma Kealy, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Tim McCurdy, Steve McGhie, Cindy McLeish, John Mullahy, James Newbury, Danny O’Brien, Michael O’Brien, Kim O’Keeffe, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, John Pesutto, Pauline Richards, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Michaela Settle, David Southwick, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Bill Tilley, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Kim Wells, Dylan Wight, Belinda Wilson, Jess Wilson

Noes (3): Gabrielle de Vietri, Tim Read, Ellen Sandell

Question agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

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

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

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

Business interrupted under sessional orders.*Adjournment*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Auburn High School

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (17:10): (271) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to come out to Auburn High School and speak directly with officials, parents and students in relation to the insufficient funding provided to the school across successive budgets. Education empowers and transforms people to be their best selves. It benefits our whole society when every child can realise and maximise their talents through education. Auburn High is a success story for state education. Earlier this year I visited their campus and was able to see firsthand not only the outstanding dedication of their teaching staff but also how their facilities were in desperate need of upgrades. Over the past five years Auburn High has been forced to put its hand into its own pocket to the tune of over \$2 million to help fund major projects. This includes \$150,000 on the removal of asbestos from older buildings, \$405,000 to reconfigure classrooms to reduce the impact of construction works on student learning, \$750,000 on the construction of a new senior building and \$540,000 on increased costs associated with COVID-19. It is unbelievable that a state like ours – a state which, if you listen to the government, has never been more prosperous – cannot afford to fund state schools properly.

The main building at Auburn High has only six cubicles and three urinals for boys and 14 cubicles for girls. There are over 730 students at the school. In the 2022–23 state budget the government provided the school with \$495,000 from the Minor Capital Works Fund to renovate 12 bathrooms – the first time they will have been renovated since 1976. On top of this amount, Auburn High made a co-contribution of \$190,000 to the project. However, due to soaring building costs, only eight bathrooms can be completed with the available funds. The Andrews Labor government has now asked the school to contribute at least \$256,000 more, otherwise the full project will not proceed. That is just not acceptable. This would of course mean that Auburn High's total contribution to this project will nearly equal the capital funding provided by the government, and it would be a surprise to families across Victoria if they learn that it is a dollar-for-dollar contribution on construction costs for government schools. If the Andrews government does not act to remedy this situation and cover the entirety of the funding shortfall, then we will know that Victoria truly is broke. The staff, parents and students at Auburn High School should not have to pay the price for the Andrews government's inability to manage money. The minister should come to the school and join with me in visiting the school's precincts so that we can begin work on the finalisation of these important projects.

Miners Rest sports facility

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (17:13): (272) My adjournment matter tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Community Sport. The action I seek is that the minister joins me in my electorate of Ripon to visit the site of the future Miners Rest sports facility. The brand new facility will be a game changer for Miners Rest, finally bringing community sport to the heart of the growing community in Ballarat's north. It will include a competition-grade oval, a sports pavilion, change rooms, amenities, car parking and more. The facility will mean Miners Rest kids and locals of all ages will be able to play sports close to home, and it will mean we can get a local footy club established as well. I welcome the opportunity to visit the site with the minister and introduce her to the hardworking locals that fought for this facility for current and future generations of Miners Rest residents.

Shepparton sports and events centre

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (17:13): (273) My adjournment is to the Minister for Community Sport, and the action I seek is that the minister provide funding for the redevelopment of the Shepparton sports and events centre. This is a priority project and was an original project request at the beginning of the regional Commonwealth Games model. This is a priority project for the Victorian basketball association, with the opportunity to attract both state and national basketball tournaments to Shepparton, which are now being lost due to the facility not being up to standard. It is also a priority project for the Greater Shepparton City Council, who have invested in the design to have the project shovel ready. The building, which was built in 1972, needs immediate attention, with the facility deteriorating at a fast rate. During the floods the stadium was marked as an emergency evacuation centre but could not be used due to the facility leaking and not been compliant. The new facility would become a sporting and events centre, with a 3000-seat show court which would be used for bigger and broader attractions. The \$2 billion regional package announced following the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games must be fairly distributed, and I call for the minister to invest in this much-needed community facility.

Veterans support

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (17:15): (274) The adjournment I wish to raise is for the Minister for Veterans. The action I seek is for the minister to join me and members at the Caroline Springs RSL to outline how the Andrews government is delivering on its election commitment to make sure that veterans in Victoria get the support that they need.

Earlier this year I had the pleasure of being amongst the many veterans in Kororoit at the Anzac Day ceremonies in both Aintree and Caroline Springs. I have listened to the many stories the veterans and their families share of their own experiences during their service but also their experiences when they return to civilian life. We know that sometimes returning to civilian life after a career in the defence force can be a challenge and that sometimes veterans need a helping hand to make that transition successful. Victoria is home to more than 100,000 veterans, but we know that a large number of them are not currently connected to any existing veteran concession scheme. That is why the Andrews Labor government has introduced a veterans card – the first of its kind in Australia. This is a separate card to the Department of Veterans' Affairs card, and there are no concession levels. It is one card for all veterans living in Victoria, and it is simple to sign up and to start saving. Whether you have served a day or been on multiple deployments, every veteran who calls Victoria home will be entitled to a Veterans Card Victoria. This is a way to recognise their service and give our veterans cost-of-living relief through discounts on car registration and trailer and caravan registrations, free fishing licences and access to Victorian government employment programs. I am very proud of the dedication and commitment that Minister Suleyman has shown our veterans, not only in Melbourne's west but across all of Victoria. I invite the minister to come and join me for morning tea at the Caroline Springs RSL and outline how this Labor government is supporting veterans.

Mansfield emergency services

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (17:17): (275) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Emergency Services, and the action I seek is for the minister to finally invest in the much-needed development of the Mansfield emergency services precinct and with it build the new Mansfield SES station. I know the minister is aware of the council's and community's needs here because she has been personally briefed by them and understands the significance.

I am disappointed that another state budget has come and gone without investment in this project, which really should be treated as a priority. The SES has been in the top five, I understand, list of priorities for the state for quite a number of years, as has the ambulance station replacement. Mansfield Shire Council have dedicated an area now to establish the emergency services precinct, but they need the state government to help support it and to move things along. Mansfield's request has been ongoing for years, and I have been raising it for some time as well. The council are very clear about where it needs to be located, but they need to work with the emergency services minister to understand the requirements of each different agency so that they can do initial planning prior to having the funding for a new SES unit and a new ambulance station.

The SES unit is currently located on that land, in the middle of it. They desperately need their station rebuilt. The current station is outdated. It does not accommodate all of the gear that they have. They do unusual activities, because they do High Country and Alpine National Park and work on Lake Eildon as well, so it is quite a diverse mix. They have got a lot of gear. They have got truck and water vessels that they need to store and secure.

The ambulance station facilities are outdated, and it needs to be replaced. It was built in the 1970s, and it is not fit to house the 10 paramedics and five vehicles. The CFA have nowhere to train, and their station is located almost in the middle of the town. A good precinct may mean in future the police station can move and expand there too. So the ask for the minister is that she work with the council to help establish that emergency services precinct and provide the funding for the initial SES unit to get moving.

Northcote electorate planning

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (17:19): (276) My adjournment is to the Minister for Planning, and I warmly ask the minister to join me in the Northcote electorate to speak with members of my community about some of the planning challenges we are facing in the inner north. Northcote, like so many other parts of Melbourne, is grappling with the housing crisis, and there are many planning matters that are of immediate and paramount importance to us. What makes the inner north so precious and unique is hard to pin down because there is an intangible magic to our suburbs. We are a vibrant mix of creativity and culture, proudly diverse, hardworking and adaptive. We have beautiful open spaces, access to public transport, great schools, unique and eclectic shopping precincts and amenities that make it a wonderful place to live. And it turns out it is not just me that thinks so highly of our patch – in 2021 Northcote topped the list of Melbourne's most livable suburbs. But with these assets comes the challenge of balancing our growth with preserving our livability and our distinct and cherished inner-north character.

Like most members in this place, I hear every day from locals in my community voicing differing views on issues like heritage, sustainability, density, open space, tree canopy, improving amenities, increasing services and the critical need for more housing choices. Striking the right balance is critical, which is why I invite the minister to Northcote to engage with residents, hear their diverse perspectives and get a thorough understanding of the complexities that face our inner-urban suburbs.

Victoria's population is set to pass 11 million people by the middle of the 2050s, and many of those people are expected to be living in Melbourne's inner and outer north. That means we need clear and considered planning that leverages our strengths and creates opportunity and prosperity in our suburbs. The government's world-leading commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2045 also presents an exciting opportunity to embed sustainability into every facet of the planning process – an

opportunity our Labor government seized last week when we announced an end to all gas connections in new buildings starting from next year. Alongside of all of this, we are continuing to deliver what matters for the inner north. We are upgrading schools, we are building better parks and modern transport links and we are protecting our biodiversity through initiatives like the \$10 million Green Links Fund, which is there to protect our precious waterways which border the electorate of Northcote. I look forward to welcoming the minister to Northcote when her schedule permits.

Council swimming pools

Tim READ (Brunswick) (17:22): (277) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Climate Action, and the action I seek is for the state government to provide grants to councils to help them convert their swimming pools from gas to electric heating. As Brunswick residents will verify, I am often found at the Brunswick Baths, but as if seeing their local MP in his speedos is not bad enough, my pool-going constituents might soon be dealt another blow. There are reports that some pools around Victoria are turning down the temperature to cope with rising gas prices. I have heard from several councils that they want to change their public pools from gas heating to electric. They are committed to climate action, and heating public pools is one of the biggest contributors to their carbon footprint, but they just do not have the cash for that initial spend on heat pumps, especially as they are continually paying more for gas. Councils just need a bit of help to make that initial investment, after which their heating bills will fall.

I first asked the minister to act on this back in 2021, and since then the climate crisis has worsened. We saw the catastrophic flooding of Lismore and around Victoria last year, we have seen frequent wildfires around the world and just in the last few weeks the world experienced the hottest July since records began. But something good has happened too. The Victorian government has just banned gas connections in new homes and public buildings from 2024, a policy the Greens have been keen to see for a long time. This is a great start, and the government should continue this momentum. Last week UN Secretary-General António Guterres said – referring to the planet, not swimming pools – that:

The era of global warming has ended. The era of global boiling has arrived.

It is long past time to do everything we can at all levels to decarbonise, so I ask the minister once again to help local councils tackle one of the biggest contributors to carbon emissions and help them get their pools off gas.

Eastern Volunteers

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (17:24): (278) My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers in the other place, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me in a visit to the Eastern Volunteers headquarters in Ringwood to discuss the application of their newly announced volunteer grant. The opportunity both given and created by volunteer work is vast and with decent support can be the backbone of a close-knit community like mine. Being a volunteer allows people to become actively involved in the community they live in, picking up some incredible work skills, networks, future job opportunities and plenty of karma. Be it through essential care like in the Biala special needs childcare facility or the Royal Flying Doctor van service that both operate in my electorate, volunteer programs are simply an invaluable asset to people, and we cannot thank them enough for the work that they do. We could start to thank them, however, by providing funding to volunteer groups to sustain their work, which is why this year's budget does exactly that.

I was proud to announce a \$60,000 grant being delivered to the Eastern Volunteers services group, which has dedicated itself to volunteer groups and small businesses for 30 years right in the heart of my electorate of Ringwood. This funding will go towards many new initiatives designed to strengthen the quality and quantity of volunteers and the opportunities volunteer work creates. This funding will be used to recruit and retain people from the Eastern Volunteers central volunteer bank, who are relied on by over 690 organisations, including health services, community sport and environmental and animal causes, and who even make Victorian attractions like Puffing Billy possible. This

\$60,000 grant will allow the central volunteer bank's commitment to more than double from 7 hours a week to 15. Not only that, it will also target key priority groups for training and recruitment, such as young people looking for work experience that puts them in the career they want – and the same for parents returning to the workforce; people living with a disability; and Victorians with English as their second language. This grant expands the invaluable opportunities provided by volunteer work, such as by the great people at Eastern Volunteers. I look forward to talking strategy with them, and I hope the minister will join me in that great adventure.

North East Link

Jess WILSON (Kew) (17:26): (279) My adjournment tonight is for the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. The action that I am seeking is for the minister to meet with the residents affected by and concerned about the construction of the North East Link in the electorate of Kew. Last week I, together with the member for Bulleen, the member for Caulfield and the federal member for Menzies Keith Wolahan, held a forum on the North East Link to listen to the concerns of local residents. This project will impact on many residents in the electorate of Kew, particularly those who live in Balwyn North near the proposed Bulleen interchange. Clarity, accountability and practical improvements for the North East Link are the key things residents seek from this government.

A key concern raised by residents is the impact of air quality both during construction and once in use. In particular residents seek clarity around who or which organisation is responsible for ensuring air quality impacts are measured and maintained to an acceptable level. Is it the EPA, the department or the North East Link Program? Other residents raised their concerns about the likely pollution effects of the project's lack of filtration in the tunnel exhaust stacks. Another key concern is noise pollution. Many residents say they are facing significant noise pollution from the worksites currently and are also concerned about the impact of increased traffic flows along the North East Link once complete. Residents rightly want reassurance that there will be adequate noise protections in place and seek clarity on the design and when they will be in situ.

Residents also sought further information about the relocation of the Doncaster park-and-ride. Many residents of Balwyn North use this park-and-ride every day to commute to and from the city down the Eastern Freeway. Understandably they want clarification about the time line and the destination of the relocation of the park-and-ride. More generally, a key theme raised by many residents was a perceived lack of transparency and accountability about the construction of the North East Link. They detailed their difficulties in communicating with or providing feedback to the North East Link Program. Some raised issues about the conduct of contractors working on sections of the project. They had negative experiences with some contractors and felt the complaint mechanisms put in place by the project were inadequate or so opaque as to be useless in terms of getting an outcome. They felt it was difficult to get clear answers to their questions and suggested an independent person be appointed to field questions and complaints about all these issues.

Finally, I want to raise my significant concerns about the impact of the North East Link on Belle Vue Primary School. Belle Vue Primary is a key stakeholder in the project given their very close proximity to the interchange. However, parents from Belle Vue say they feel in the dark about who to speak to about the impact of the project on their school community. Specifically they want to know the projected health impacts of air and noise pollution during construction of the North East Link as well as when it will be operational. They consider the air quality impact of the North East Link to be a significant occupational health and safety issue, an issue they are duty bound to address on behalf of the teachers, the students and the parents at Belle Vue Primary.

Of course these are just a handful of the key issues raised. With the North East Link expected to be one of the most expensive transport projects built in Victoria's history – potentially in the world – per kilometre, it is critical that the residents of Kew are properly consulted and their feedback is incorporated in the design and the construction process. I ask that the minister meet with the residents of Kew to discuss these issues.

Pascoe Vale electorate road safety

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (17:29): (280) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is for the minister to visit my electorate and consider the various local road and road safety issues that my constituents from across Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West have raised with me. Since 2014 the Andrews Labor government has been taking real action to improve road, public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure across my community so that locals can get home sooner and safer, whether it be through the construction of the Metro rail tunnel, which will provide for increased capacity along the Upfield and Craigieburn lines; the removal of four dangerous level crossings via Coburg along the Upfield line at Moreland Road, Reynard Street, Munro Street and Bell Street; the world-class new Upfield active transport, cycling and walking corridor through Coburg; improving tram services along routes 1, 19 and 58, including through the introduction of low-floor accessible trams; developing a major bus review for Melbourne's north to plan for a modern and sustainable bus network; \$11.9 million to finally remove the dangerous roundabout at the corner of Gaffney Street and Sussex Street in North Coburg through the installation of traffic lights; or the introduction of safer speed limits and other road safety upgrades along Sydney Road, Nicholson Street, the Bell Street bridge, Moreland Road, Walhalla Street and Derby Street to assist vulnerable road users.

However, notwithstanding these initiatives, and as I said in my first speech, more opportunities remain to address local road safety issues that many locals have contacted me about. Some of these hotspots include the Bell Street bridge in East Coburg, which the Department of Transport and Planning recently undertook community consultation on and which local residents and Coburg High students look forward to receiving the findings and outcome of from the minister; the \$350,000 we have provided to plan for and deliver a new pedestrian crossing on Gaffney Street in Pascoe Vale between Cumberland Road and Pascoe Vale station; Murray Road in Coburg, where local residents recently held a well-attended community meeting on 18 June to discuss and share growing concerns about improving safety for all commuters along this corridor; the T-intersection at Boundary Road and Derby Street, Pascoe Vale, which is becoming increasingly congested and hazardous for motorists and vulnerable road users alike; the Moreland Road and Queen Street intersection in West Coburg, which has become more hazardous also for pedestrians since the opening of the IGA Xpress; as well as the Kent Road separated bike lanes trial that had been imposed and is currently under review by Merri-bek council, which over 2000 local residents, local sporting clubs, the health clinic and many other local stakeholders have called on council to redesign and go back to the drawing board on to ensure that the road safety needs of all communities are considered.

I welcome the minister visiting these and other local road safety hotspots that have been raised with me by local constituents, which I look forward to also working on as a member of the Parliament's Economy and Infrastructure Committee, which next week will be conducting its first community hearing in Merri-bek on Wednesday 9 August on road safety and vulnerable road users, which I encourage all local residents to attend, as the member for Kew will too.

Additionally, this Saturday 5 August I would also like to draw the minister's attention to the Transport Workers' Union national convoy that will be taking place and will call for national road safety reforms to protect the lives of freight drivers, couriers drivers, rideshare and gig economy workers and by extension all commuters. With almost 4000 local Merri-bek residents working in the transport and logistics industry, 4.2 per cent of the local workforce, the minister's consideration of these matters coming locally is important.

Responses

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (17:32): I welcome the member for Pascoe Vale's really thoughtful comments because I know he is a passionate advocate for road safety in his electorate, and also it is great to hear the important work that my union,

the Transport Workers' Union, is doing to improve road safety, particularly for truck drivers. Road safety is at the heart of everything that we do, and I really thank the member for his continued advocacy. We are about making those record investments to help Victorians be safe on our roads, and the TAC has delivered more than \$1.4 billion since 2016 to deliver those life-saving road safety initiatives in the *Towards Zero* strategy. In 2021 we launched Victoria's new road safety strategy, which was that first action plan, in collaboration with state government departments, the TAC and Victoria Police, and since launching that strategy we have invested \$648 million, which includes \$263 million last financial year, to drive down road trauma. But of course there is always more to do. For those important projects that you have raised in your electorate I would be absolutely delighted to come out and seek ways, particularly with things like Kent Road, which you have outlined tonight, to be able to work through that important work that your constituents have done. So thank you very much for raising these issues tonight.

In relation to other matters that members raised, the member for Hawthorn raised a matter for the Minister for Education; the members for Ripon and Shepparton raised matters for the Minister for Community Sport; the member for Kororoit raised a matter for the Minister for Veterans; the member for Eildon raised a matter for the Minister for Emergency Services in the other place; the member for Northcote raised a very important issue for the Minister for Planning; the member for Brunswick raised a matter for the Minister for Climate Action; the member for Ringwood raised a matter for the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers in the other place; and the member for Kew raised a matter for the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, and I will refer them accordingly.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will call that a day. The house stands adjourned until next we meet.

House adjourned 5:35 pm.