



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Tuesday 3 October 2023

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Jacinta Allan

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Ben Carroll

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

John Pesutto

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

David Southwick

Leader of the Nationals

Peter Walsh

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Mary-Anne Thomas

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury

Members of the Legislative Assembly
60th Parliament

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

¹ ALP until 5 August 2023

² Resigned 27 September 2023

³ Resigned 7 July 2023

⁴ Elected 3 October 2023

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

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Tuesday 3 October 2023

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

Members

Member for Warrandyte

Swearing in

The SPEAKER (12:04): I advise the house that I have received the return to the writ issued on 13 July 2023, which states that Nicole Werner has been elected for the electoral district of Warrandyte.

Nicole Werner introduced and sworn.

Member for Mulgrave

Resignation

The SPEAKER (12:06): I wish to announce that on 27 September 2023 I received the resignation of the member for Mulgrave.

Ministry

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (12:06): I rise to advise the house of changes to the ministry which took effect yesterday 2 October 2023, and I make them available to the house. I also make available to the house the updated representing ministers document for each chamber.

Shadow ministry

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (12:07): I rise to advise of changes to the shadow ministry and shadow parliamentary secretary, and I would also like to make that available to the house.

Bills

Special Investigator Repeal Bill 2023

Introduction and first reading

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (12:07): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to repeal the Special Investigator Act 2021 and to abolish the Office of the Special Investigator, to make necessary transitional arrangements, to continue in operation certain offences, to make consequential and related amendments to other acts and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (12:08): I would ask the minister to provide a brief explanation of this bill.

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (12:08): I thank the honourable member for Malvern. The bill will repeal the Office of the Special Investigator following the conclusion of its work, including winding down the statutory authority and removing the statutory role of special investigator.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

Introduction and first reading

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) (12:08): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Casino Control Act 1991, the Casino (Management Agreement) Act 1993 and the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (12:09): I request a brief explanation of the bill.

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) (12:09): The bill will deliver gambling harm reforms and improve the implementation of recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence by introducing mandatory closure periods for gaming venues outside of the casino, improving government's ability to prohibit harmful betting products from being offered to Victorians and strengthening the statutory management provisions to ensure continuity of operations if the casino licence is cancelled. The amendments also clarify administrative issues around the payment of winnings and provide a framework for addressing downtime in the casino management precommitment system.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Petitions

Brighton Primary School

James NEWBURY (Brighton) presented a petition bearing 757 signatures:

Issue

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the fact that Brighton Primary School, which is turning 150 years old in 2025, has been continually overlooked for capital funding despite the dire need for building upgrades. Since 2016, schools by the Bay from Port Melbourne to Beaumaris have received significant capital works contributions, while Brighton Primary School has been left behind. Brighton Primary School's inclusiveness as one of four specialist hearing units for deaf children in Metro Melbourne underpins the importance of the institution and its place in our community. Nearly two thirds of the school's 550 students are taught in 14 demountable classrooms, some of which are over 40 years old, poorly insulated and well beyond their useful lives. In addition to this, the aged main school buildings require significant refurbishment to bring them up to a standard that is conducive for providing quality education in an appropriate and inspiring environment. The teaching staff have contributed by providing quality education as evidenced in the last three years NAPLAN results. Quality education is essential and requires investment from all levels for the development of our children and the community's future.

Action

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly provide capital works funding in the 2024-25 Budget to Brighton Primary School, which has not received any capital works financial support from the government since well before 2016. The Brighton Primary School Council has done its part and shown commitment to this initiative by self-funding their own vision into a masterplan that it is very keen to discuss and obtain feedback from the Government on. We ask the Legislative Assembly to recognise the great work that the teaching faculty have done and do their bit to allocate this much needed capital investment to ensure our students can learn in inspiring and contemporary facilities.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Donnybrook Road

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo) presented a petition bearing 2243 signatures:

Issue

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the ongoing traffic issues on Donnybrook Road, causing significant disruptions for residents living in this rapidly growing area.

Action

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and the State Government to make a financial commitment in the 2024 State Budget to prioritise the duplication of Donnybrook Road, including replacing the Mitchell Street roundabout with traffic lights.

Marriage certificate correction

Emma KEALY (Lowan) presented a petition bearing 89 signatures:

Issue

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly. I would like to bring your attention to the following matter for Transgender and Non-Binary individuals who are married before transitioning. Victorian transgender individuals are allowed to correct their name and gender on their own birth certificate. After the correction they're given the opportunity to correct their name and parental descriptor on their children's birth certificates. Currently the Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages Victoria, does not allow individuals who have transitioned after marriage, who have gone through the process to obtain a new gender affirming corrected birth certificate, to correct their marriage certificate. Individuals who were married pre-transition and want to continue going by their married surname are forced to either have their spouse's surname printed on their birth certificate, instead of their own birth surname OR to divorce and remarry their spouse. Post-transition we are still legally married, but our marriage certificate does not reflect who we are. We would like to have all our identity documents to reflect the same legal name and gender not a mix match of names and genders.

Action

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly to introduce an amendment to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996, which will allow Transgender and Non-Binary individuals to correct their Marriage Certificate to their legally corrected gender with Groom/Bride/Spouse along with their legally corrected name without having to go through a lengthy and costly divorce.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow on motion of James Newbury.

Drouin police resources

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) presented a petition bearing 753 signatures:

Issue

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the lack of a 24/7 police station in Drouin and the risk it is creating in the local community. The current Drouin police station is often unmanned, and when issues occur within Drouin police, if available, are sent from Warragul causing significant delay in response times. Both Drouin and Warragul are growing rapidly in population, with recent data showing annual population growth of more than 3 per cent each year. By 2041 it is estimated Baw Baw Shire will grow to be more than 87,000 with the majority of new residents moving to Drouin and Warragul. The redevelopment of the Drouin police station and allocation of new officers needs to occur immediately to support the community.

Action

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly direct the Victorian Government to take immediate action so that a 24/7 station can operate within Drouin to protect the local and surrounding communities.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

*Documents***Department of Health***Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023–27*

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:12): I table, by leave, the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023–2027*.

*Committees***Public Accounts and Estimates Committee***Report on the 2023–24 Budget Estimates*

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (12:12): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, the report on the 2023–24 budget estimates, together with appendices and transcripts of evidence.

Ordered that report and appendices be published.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee*Alert Digest No. 11*

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (12:13): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 11 of 2023, on the following bills and subordinate legislation:

Bail Amendment Bill 2023

Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023

Human Rights and Housing Legislation Amendment (Ending Homelessness) Bill 2023

Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023

Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023

SR No. 120 – Environment Protection Amendment (Wind Turbine Noise) Regulations 2022

SR No. 22 – Road Safety Road Rules Amendment (Electric Scooters) Rules 2023

SR No. 23 – Road Safety (General) Amendment (Electric Scooters) Regulations 2023

SR No. 26 – Corrections Amendment (Parole) Regulations 2023

together with appendices and an extract from proceedings.

Ordered to be published.

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

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 – Education and Care Services National Amendment (Bassinets) Regulations 2023 under s 303

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and Ombudsman – Operation Watts – Progress report – released on 14 September 2023

Ombudsman – Investigation into the Department of Transport and Planning’s implementation of the zero and low emission vehicle charge – released on 27 September 2023

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

Ballarat – C241
Boroondara – C376, C399
Colac Otway – C123
Corangamite – C63
Darebin – C214
Greater Bendigo – C283
Kingston – C199
Knox – C189
Macedon Ranges – C127, C159
Melbourne – C455, C458
Mornington Peninsula – C239, C270
Port Phillip – C201
Pyrenees – C54
Stonnington – C296, C335
Victoria Planning Provisions – VC242, VC243, VC246
Whittlesea – C271
Yarra – C320, C321

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Building Act 1993 – SR 102
Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017 – SR 100
Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 – SR 99
Dangerous Goods Act 1985 – SR 103
Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – SR 98
Supreme Court Act 1986 – SRs 95, 96
Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996 – SR 101
Wildlife Act 1975 – SR 97

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under section 15 in relation to statutory rules 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 103

Documents under section 16B in relation to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*:

Ministerial Order 1412 – Structured Workplace Learning Arrangements

Ministerial Order 1413 – Work Experience Arrangements

Guidelines under s 26 for the preparation, content, publication and availability of statutory rules

Victorian Local Government Grants Commission – Allocation Report year ended 31 August 2023

Yoorrook Justice Commission – Yoorrook for Justice: Report into Victoria's Child Protection and Criminal Justice Systems – released on 4 September 2023.

PROCLAMATIONS – Under SO 177A, the Clerk tabled the following proclamations fixing operative dates:

Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Act 2023 – Division 1 of Part 4 and s 267 – 20 September 2023 (*Gazette S483, 12 September 2023*)

Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Act 2023 – Whole Act – 15 September 2023 (*Gazette S483, 12 September 2023*).

Bills**Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023***Council's agreement*

The SPEAKER (12:15): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 without amendment.

Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023**Statute Law Amendment (References to the Sovereign) Bill 2023***Royal assent*

The SPEAKER (12:15): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 and the Statute Law Amendment (References to the Sovereign) Bill 2023.

Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023**Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023***Appropriation*

The SPEAKER (12:16): I have received messages from the Governor recommending appropriations for the purposes of the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023 and the Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023.

Business of the house**Standing and sessional orders**

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:16): I move, by leave:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended on Wednesday 4 October 2023 to allow the member for Warrandyte to make her inaugural speech for a maximum of 15 minutes, immediately after the matter of public importance.

Motion agreed to.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (12:17): I desire to move, by leave:

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

Leave refused.***Motions*****Member conduct**

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:17): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (1) acknowledges the new Premier of Victoria;
- (2) notes the Premier's responsibility for nearly \$30 billion in major project blowouts, including:
 - (a) \$3.6 billion on the Metro Tunnel;
 - (b) three years and \$4.7 billion on the West Gate Tunnel; and
 - (c) \$13 billion on the North East Link.

Leave refused.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:18): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house notes that:

- (1) the Premier was responsible for the Suburban Rail Loop, which the Parliamentary Budget Office says will cost \$75 billion more than the government promised; and
- (2) condemns the Premier for her mismanagement of this project.

Leave refused.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:18): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house acknowledges:

- (1) the former Premier's disdain for IBAC, the Victorian Ombudsman and the anti-corruption agencies in general;
- (2) notes the current Premier's complicity in that toxic culture of secrecy; and
- (3) calls on the Premier to take meaningful action on the pile of corruption reports in the Andrews–Allan governments.

Leave refused.

Committees

Economy and Infrastructure Committee

Reference

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (12:19): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house refers an inquiry into childcare availability to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee for consideration and report no later than April 2024. In particular the committee is to examine areas of improvements for Victorian childcare regulations and services, to address accessibility issues and to identify more flexible childcare opportunities for all Victorian families.

Leave refused.

Motions

Childcare services

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (12:19): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house notes that the lack of childcare availability, especially in regional Victoria, acts as a barrier for families to return to the workforce.

Leave refused.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (12:19): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house acknowledges the shortage of childcare places in regional Victoria has worsened the Labor government's cost-of-living crisis.

Leave refused.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (12:19): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house notes current childcare regulations in Victoria limit the access to child care for Victorian families and must be reviewed to increase access to family day care, in-venue care, long day care, occasional care and outside school hours care to improve flexibility for families without compromising child safety.

Leave refused.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (12:20): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house acknowledges that since 2014 the Labor government has comprehensively failed to address and improve childcare accessibility and availability in Victoria, particularly in regional areas.

Leave refused.

Commonwealth Games

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (12:20): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (1) acknowledges the new Premier of Victoria; and
- (2) notes that the Premier was responsible for the humiliating Commonwealth Games cancellation, including:
 - (a) a \$4 billion cost blowout;
 - (b) \$600 million in cancellation costs; and
 - (c) the shattering of Victoria's international reputation, which will take years to repair.

Leave refused.

Business of the house**Program**

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:21): I move:

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

Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023

Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023

Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023.

It is fantastic to be back after a relatively short but certainly eventful break, and what a privilege it is to stand here as the Leader of the House with a new leadership team with the Premier of Victoria Jacinta Allan MP, the member for Bendigo East. We are so excited about the possibility that our new Premier brings with her, a fantastic focus that she has already articulated on fixing our housing challenges here in the state of Victoria. The ministry as it has been reorganised reflects that priority of our new Premier and of course her focus on children. Only our Andrews–Allan Labor governments have had a consistent focus on young people in this state, through some of our world-leading initiatives, including Best Start, Best Life.

We are very excited to be back here today with a full program, a lot of very important bills to debate in the house this week. I know, I anticipate and I hope that those on the other side will see fit to support the government business program this week because, as I said, we have got three very important bills to debate. I know as always that members on this side of the house are ready and willing and able to get up and contribute to the very important debates that I anticipate we will see this week. Before I go into talking a little bit about those bills, can I take the opportunity to welcome the new member for Warrandyte. Of course we look forward to her inaugural speech being delivered tomorrow night. We know what an important occasion it is for all members of the house and what a great privilege and honour it is to be sworn in as a member of this place, and the inaugural speech obviously is such an important time to outline your own values and the contributions that you hope to make as a member of this place.

The Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023 is all about ensuring that our government can deliver on the many great and important reforms for early childhood in this state. We know the real benefits that come from making sure that kindergarten is available to all children, not just those whose parents can afford it, which has been the case in the past. As we expand eligibility for kinder and we expand the number of hours in which children are able to attend, and indeed as we introduce pre-prep – that 30-hour play-based learning week – for all four-year-olds, we need to ensure that we have in place the powers that we need in order to be able to build all the new infrastructure that we need in order to deliver those kindergartens.

A bill that I know everyone across the house will want to contribute on is of course the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023. It fulfils our government's commitment to legislating a ban on the hateful, vile Nazi salute, and I look forward to the whole of the house supporting that bill when it is debated.

Finally, the Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023 – this is a really important piece of work, and I want to thank the Minister for Emergency Services in the other place for all that she has done to be able to bring this bill to the house. Our government accepted in principle the 20 recommendations identified as part of the ESTA capability service review led by former Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police Graham Ashton in 2022. The government is committed to commencing the legislation swiftly following its passage through Parliament. Of course it is a bill that seeks to strengthen the governance, the accountability and the oversight of Victoria's 000 services. We need to ensure that we have got a real partnership between each and every one of our emergency services sectors and we are looking also to make sure that that entity is brought closer to government for greater accountability and oversight by government.

On that note, again, it is going to be a big and exciting week as always. The Allan Labor government is all about delivering for the people of Victoria, and that is what our government business program is about.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:26): It is a historic day with the change of the Premier – as we just heard, the announcement of the resignation of the former member for Mulgrave – and the new Premier in the chamber for the first sitting day. As we come into the chamber I know that we and all Victorians are watching closely to see what if anything will change about this government and what if anything will change about the behaviour of and the issues that the community clearly had with the government. I note the Leader of the House was speaking about support for children and support for child care after refusing leave to a member seeking to introduce a number of motions on that very issue. So there are actions and there are words, and it is okay to come into this place and say you stand for something but then effectively vote against members having the opportunity to put those issues on the record and, in that member's case, raise those motions on making more child care available.

In terms of the government business program, this week, for the first time in this term, there are bills; there are bills this week. On this side of the chamber, when the government business program was released we saw that the government had actually drafted some things and the Parliament would be debating bills. It was novel for us to see that rather than debating sledge motions, we will be debating some bills, which is what we have been calling for. I think it is important – and I thank the government for listening to the calls not only of the opposition but also of all Victorians – that there are bills to be debated for the first week this term. There are, as the leader of the house said, a number of bills that are important. I know the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023 is one. All three bills I am sure will have many members across both sides speak on them, but that is one particular bill that I personally and the member for Caulfield have been lobbying for, for want of a better term, for years, which has come out of committee work several years ago and has become an important feature of the week for us to all speak on.

As the Leader of the House also said, and can I say with some excitement, we are so happy on this side of the chamber for the new member for Warrandyte to have been sworn in this morning. We welcome the member for Warrandyte to this place. As we agreed earlier, the member for Warrandyte will be giving her first speech tomorrow afternoon at 6 o'clock, and I hope that every member will be in here. I hope that the community switches on the online streaming to watch it, because it is so exciting to see such a wonderful person not only elected by their community but also given the opportunity to speak in this place. I know that we are all very, very excited to be here for the member's first speech.

In terms of the government business program, because of the depth of a number of the bills, I approached the Leader of the House seeking an opportunity to take one of the bills into consideration in detail. We feel that it is important that a government provide an opportunity for the house to

scrutinise bills. Unfortunately the government declined our request to take the bill into consideration in detail, which we were clearly disappointed by, surprised by and shocked by, frankly. So on that basis we cannot support the government business program. I am sorry, Leader of the House. I do hope that in the future, when we request that a bill go into consideration in detail, ministers have the capacity to actually debate bills and have an understanding of what the bill contains and the government is not afraid to take those bills into the consideration in detail, because that truly is what it is about: the government does not agree to consideration in detail because ministers do not understand the depth of the bills and they do not have the capacity on their feet to defend the bills. So unfortunately we will not be supporting the government business program, but we look forward to seeing this government and how this government behaves.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (12:31): What a moment to rise in this place as we recognise the resignation of the member for Mulgrave, the former Premier of Victoria. Such a significant legacy has been left across Victoria by a really transformational Premier, and it has been incredible to see that and then to move through to Premier Allan, who has not missed a beat – an absolutely incredible transition. What this means for our Parliament, our democracy and our communities has been substantial. To see the incoming Premier put housing and our kids on the agenda is really exciting. Some might say that in a government business program or a government business agenda, whether it is more of the same or something changes, what does not change is the huge talent that is on our side, delivering a transformational agenda – just the housing statement that was released a little while ago. So to see our ministers and a significant time where portfolios move around as well and see that team put together is really, really amazing.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is a procedural motion. It is not an opportunity to talk about the personality spats over recent days in relation to Labor's reshuffle.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mordialloc, this is about the government business program. I ask you to speak to the government business program.

Tim RICHARDSON: Yes. I am just acknowledging the huge agenda that this government is undertaking, and we see that the bills coming forward this week are just another story in the work that has been done to get to this point. The bill in education regulation has a lot of interest on our side as we undertake a huge kinder reform agenda. It is a great opportunity for members to talk about early childhood education – not to come forward with motions that they cooked up over a three-week period. That is not government business, that is grandstanding for 15 seconds for a grab on Facebook. That is not doing the hard work of government business. I have done stats before. I have looked through contributions from members across the Parliament. I do not know how many put their name down on the bill, and the member for – he has got relevance deprivation, seriously.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, again, this is a tight procedural motion. I understand the former member for Mulgrave never spoke on a second reading this term, but that is not –

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask for points of order to be succinct. There is no point of order.

Tim RICHARDSON: So it is important around how the week runs, and some might be sensitive about that; that is okay. Hopefully there has been a big chat about more contributions on behalf of communities during the government business program. There are three significant bills coming forward, so let us see, out of all the contributions and the names that are put down, how many people put their communities' interests forward, because so far the government business contributions from us on this side for bills have been substantial. There have been a few stand-outs on the government business program. I want to give a shout-out to the member for Eildon and the member for Gippsland South, who do great work and make a great amount of the contributions; I think they do a third of the bill speeches. They are literally carrying that team. I did not see that get reflected in the shuffle recently, but that is okay; they do a lot of work and have a lot of contributions coming forward. Hopefully on the Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023, which is really important work with the reforms and the

recommendations that have been put forward, there will be contributions and recognition of the work that has been done and then we will see that come forward in the health area. Obviously the minister does an outstanding power of work in that space.

Then to see the early childhood space – I absolutely love the transformation that is going on across our state. It really is nation-leading reform. The fact that that bill has come forward to this Parliament on this day gives members an opportunity to reflect on their kinders locally, the contribution our early childhood educators make and what the significant reform of scaling up pre-prep means. It is such a transformation. It did not have bipartisan support or multipartisan support; that is okay. Hopefully members can come to their government business contributions and really back in this policy and back in this legislation, which scales up kinder and scales up pre-prep.

I think this is the only time I would probably ever agree with the member for Brighton on anything. The Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023 is a really important piece of legislation for inclusion and for the protection of communities. It is absolutely acknowledged that the work that has been done through committees to get to this point has been substantive and has made sure that it is impactful and that it is implemented right. There has been a power of work done, so to the Attorney-General, thank you for the work that has brought this bill to the Parliament. Really, across the Parliament there is a significant amount of interest in speaking to and acknowledging this as a significant moment for our state.

Finally, a shout-out to the member for Warrandyte. It is a wonderful opportunity when you come in and get elected to stand up on behalf of your community and share your values and your story of how you have come to be in this place. So all of us will be tuning in at 6 pm tomorrow. We wish her well in that contribution and look forward to hearing her story, her personal account and how she will represent her community in Warrandyte.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (12:36): I am happy to say a few words on the government business program. I will begin by endorsing the member for Mordialloc's commentary about the member for Warrandyte – the new member for Warrandyte. We all look forward to hearing her inaugural speech tomorrow night. It is a great honour to be in this place as a member of Parliament and as a representative of your community. I wish her all the best in her career and for her speech tomorrow night, which I look forward to.

As much as I do say it is an honour to be in this place, sometimes as a local member it is also difficult to be in this place at the wrong time. If I could make a very oblique connection to the Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023 and perhaps, Speaker, with your indulgence, make a couple of comments. My community and the community of my colleague the member for Gippsland East are currently under threat from bushfire at the moment. Literally as we speak, I am very anxiously watching what is happening in Loch Sport. The fire has crisscrossed around the area and now, with potential wind changes, is threatening right on the edge of Loch Sport, which has only got one road in and one road out. I am quite anxious about what is happening there. I have just received a text from my wife to say it has started raining in Sale. There are a few spots being heard on rooftops in Loch Sport, but not much at the moment, and looking at the radar there does appear to be a bit of a hole around the areas that the fire is. But hopefully as the afternoon progresses the rain will come and address that issue. My thoughts are with the people of Loch Sport, Seacombe, Golden Beach, Paradise Beach and the areas around, which are under threat as we speak. I hope that very soon that threat will pass. Certainly there is concern. It has just been reported on social media – I hope this is wrong – that the Loch Sport police station has burnt down. I do hope that is wrong; it has not been confirmed as yet. Again, that is right on the edge of town. My thoughts go out to everyone who is concerned in Loch Sport at the moment and the surrounding area.

My great thanks of course to the many hundreds of CFA volunteers who are working not just in Loch Sport but also on the Briagolong fire and elsewhere and to the Forest Fire Management Victoria firefighters, who are doing their best in what have been pretty difficult circumstances in the last couple

of days. There is fire now; we have forecasts for floods. My colleague the member for Gippsland East and I are getting the Emergency Management Victoria warnings to evacuate for fire and then, in the next day or two, for potential floods. It is just extraordinary. I do hope that soon that threat will pass. I thank you, Speaker, for your indulgence on that.

The government business program – as the member for Brighton indicated, it is interesting to actually have three bills to be debating this week. I thought it was a bit rich that the member for Mordialloc was talking about us putting up motions that are not important. That is what we have been debating on the government business program all year. There has been hardly any legislation, so they have been putting up motions.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gippsland South, through the Chair.

Danny O'BRIEN: Sorry, Speaker. We have got three bills this week, including the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023, which I look forward to debating. I heard the member for Mordialloc say what great things there are. We are bringing this bill now to allow us to build more early learning centres and child care as there were a number of announcements, including, both in the budget and in this bill, for Foster. Members will be surprised to learn that the Foster Early Learning centre has been open since the start of the year. I am not sure how they funded it, because it was only just funded in the budget in May, but anyway, the government is a little bit all over the shop on that particular one.

Tim Richardson: Did you get an invite?

Danny O'BRIEN: No, I did not get an invite to the opening. That is another sore point, member for Mordialloc, that once again local members do not get invited to these things unless they are on the right side of the chamber.

We also have the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023, which I look forward to speaking on, and the Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023, which is very important. As I indicated, right now our emergency services are critical to the state and there have been significant failures in that area, particularly with respect to ambulances, over last couple of years, so I look forward to hearing whether this is actually going to make a difference. But it is disappointing that once again on this legislation we do not get the opportunity to go into consideration in detail to further debate it, and as a result that is why the opposition will not be supporting the government business program.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (12:41): In rising I would like to acknowledge the situation that is currently happening in the electorate of the member for Gippsland South and convey the thoughts and best wishes of my community and I am sure every other member's community in this house as well. In that respect we would like to acknowledge and pay our respects.

I rise to proudly speak in support of the first government business program of the new Allan Labor government. In doing so I would like to acknowledge and commend the outgoing Premier Daniel Andrews for his distinguished service to this state and for all of the government business programs he oversaw the implementation of, which have delivered us a legacy of landmark projects and policy reforms that will benefit us for generations to come. I would also like to congratulate the new Premier and Deputy Premier on their respective elevations, both of whom I look forward to working with, beginning with the adoption of this very first government business program, which I am pleased to support. In doing so I would like to also acknowledge and commend the member for Warrandyte for being elected, and I look forward to her first speech tomorrow night as well.

This is a government business program that follows in the tradition of preceding Labor government business programs, which since 2014 have been all about getting things done, doing what matters for people and taking real action to build a better and fairer state, whether it is across jobs, education, transport, health, environment or social justice. While we on this side of the house remain ever focused every day on delivering for the Victorian people regardless of their postcode or what their income is

or what their background is, it is sadly the Liberal–National opposition who continue to remain ever focused on the politics of fear, division and opposition. While Labor has continued to govern since 2014 with real purpose that has been accompanied by real action, the Liberal–National opposition continue to oppose for opposition’s sake, as is the case in opposing this week’s government business program. The sad reality is that there are absolutely no fresh ideas whatsoever from this Liberal–National opposition, who appeared to be Pesutto-ing. If the Liberal–National parties’ idea of a refresh is to bring back a Matt, it should not be the Matt from Bulleen, it should be the Matt from the UK.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is a procedural debate. I know it is the member’s first time speaking on this and a member speaking for the first time does get some latitude, but this is now drivell, and I ask you to bring the member back to the procedural debate.

The SPEAKER: Order! Manager of Opposition Business, I ask you to keep your points of order succinct. The member will come back to the government business program.

Anthony CIANFLONE: Thank you, Speaker. In doing so I would also like to acknowledge that if the opposition were serious about actually considering the agenda of the government business program, it would not be appointing a cost-of-living shadow minister with 17 properties who belongs on *Shark Tank*, not in the shadow cabinet.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, firstly the member has defied your ruling and shown that this government are more interested in nasty personal sledges than debating their own motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Pascoe Vale, I ask you to speak to the government business program.

Anthony CIANFLONE: Thank you, Speaker. This government business program will help us pursue a better and fairer state. We are going to be debating, all going well of course, three very important bills this sitting week that will actually make a real difference to the lives of Victorians. The bills are the culmination of an enormous amount of work by the respective ministers, their offices, departments and this government – all of whom I thank and acknowledge. They include the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023, the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023, which I look forward to speaking on as well, and the Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023.

Beginning with the education and training reform amendment bill, this is a bill that will actually help us in delivering better kindergartens and early childhood learning opportunities for families across the state. The bill seeks to expand the state’s powers to acquire and develop land or to take or grant other interests in land for the purposes of providing early childhood education, care and associated services as part of the Best Start, Best Life reforms. These are groundbreaking reforms. Free kinder for three-year-olds and four-year-olds will be a game changer in terms of young people and children – not just in their early years and with their cognitive development now but also in their future years – and help to give them the foundation for a good, prosperous, healthy life, no matter their income, no matter their background and no matter the postcode of their families.

Secondly, the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill reaffirms the Victorian Labor government’s commitment to combating racism and hate. In good faith I do acknowledge the strong interest and support of the member for Brighton and also the member for Gippsland South and other members –

James Newbury: Caulfield.

Anthony CIANFLONE: Sorry – I apologise – Caulfield, who have done a lot of work in this space too on the other side. All Victorians deserve to feel accepted, safe and respected, and that is why in response to a mounting number of abhorrent incidents that have occurred over recent times, we are

moving to legislate a ban on the Nazi salute by prohibiting the public display or performance of any symbol or gesture used by the Nazi party – (*Time expired*)

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (12:46): I just want to say a couple of words on the Greens position on this. We will be opposing the government business program in this case. We feel like going into the third reading or consideration in detail or committee – it is called a number of different things – is a really important tenet of our democracy, and we have not done it once in the last year in this Parliament. I think we did it only twice – if my memory serves me correctly – in the last Parliament over four years. It is a chance for members to get up to ask detailed questions about bills which will become most likely law in this state, so it is quite a significant thing. It is a chance for members to ask questions of the ministers directly responsible for those bills, to have those questions answered and to have things clarified so that the community can understand the impact of that legislation, and yet we do not do it at all. It is a real blight on our democracy that we do not do that. It means that this chamber is not functioning as it is supposed to. It means that members cannot represent their constituencies the way they should.

We have long argued for several changes to the standing orders in this place, including time for non-government members to get up and raise matters, including bills but also for consideration in detail or the third reading of the legislation that comes before us. It is a longstanding position of the Greens. While the three bills that we have before us today are important and the Greens support them – they are things that are making important changes to our laws – the community has a right to understand what those changes are and to really look into the detail of them. So for that reason, in this instance we will not be supporting the government business program.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, with your indulgence, I just reported the news that the Loch Sport police station had been burnt down and that I hoped that was not the case. To correct the record, it has been confirmed by police media that that is not an accurate report. So that is a good news story, and I thank you for your indulgence in correcting the record.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (51): 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, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (31): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Gabrielle de Vietri, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, Sam Hibbins, 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, Bridget Vallenge, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Jess Wilson

Motion agreed to.

Committees

Electoral Matters Committee

Membership

The SPEAKER (12:54): I have received the resignation of Evan Mulholland MLC from the Electoral Matters Committee effective from today.

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:54): I move, by leave:

That Wayne Farnham be a member of the Electoral Matters Committee.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

Malvern electorate crime

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (12:55): I have been contacted by a number of my constituents in recent weeks who are, sadly, feeling unsafe. They are worried for themselves, and they are worried for their children. There have been a number of high-profile incidents at Chadstone shopping centre and Glenferrie Road involving attacks on school students, while break-ins mean that people are increasingly feeling unsafe in their homes. Last week's crime statistics reported a 42.6 per cent increase in burglaries across the Malvern electorate in just the past 12 months. Despite these undeniable facts, a lack of local police numbers means the Malvern police station, which is supposed to be open 24 hours a day, has at times been closed to the public. This is completely unacceptable. This Labor government has allowed crime to increase while shutting our local police station. On behalf of my constituents, I call on this Labor government to properly staff Malvern police station and get serious about tackling crime in my community.

Sir John Bloomfield

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (12:56): On another matter, I acknowledge the extraordinary service of one of my predecessors in the district of Malvern Sir John Bloomfield. A proud Liberal, Sir John was a barrister and served his country as an army officer during World War II. He was elected to Malvern on 11 July 1953 and served until 18 May 1970 – a period of 6156 days, which included 11 years as the Minister of Education. He was Parliament's longest serving member for Malvern until today, and I take this opportunity to acknowledge his exceptional service to the people of Malvern and the Parliament of Victoria.

Glen Huntly level crossing removals

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (12:57): I am thrilled to share exciting news from our community. Glen Huntly is now level crossing free, a major step in our ongoing efforts to improve safety and convenience for residents and commuters. Removal of the 71st and 72nd level crossings, at Glen Huntly Road and Neerim Road, is a monumental achievement. The removal of these level crossings and Melbourne's last tram square will significantly reduce travel times for 20,000 vehicles that pass through these intersections daily, providing much-needed relief to commuters. We also celebrate the reopening and resumption of train services at Glen Huntly station. This achievement was made possible through a 58-day, round-the-clock construction blitz, which included the reconstruction of the station, excavation of 64 Olympic swimming pools' worth of soil and the construction of a 1.2-kilometre trench beneath the existing road. The newly upgraded Glen Huntly station now offers an improved, accessible commuting experience.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our local community for their patience, the resilience of our local traders and the cooperation of commuters along the Frankston line during the works. The revitalisation of the Glen Huntly station precinct promises to rejuvenate our local shopping centre and enhance our community's environment. We are committed to improving our state's transport infrastructure. With the upgrade of 37 train stations, 72 level crossings gone and work ongoing at 18 additional sites, we are well underway with delivering our promise to remove 110 level crossings by 2030. May I recognise the Premier, the former Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, and also fondly remember the late Louis Pakula, whose tireless advocacy as a local resident for the removal of level crossings in Glen Huntly played a pivotal role in this project.

Flood recovery

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (12:58): The recent flood inquiries that have been held around the state of Victoria have continued to show the lack of support, and sheer neglect in some cases, from this Victorian government. We have heard how this tired government has let down communities in Rochester, Echuca, Seymour and Shepparton. There are many smaller communities in between who still seek answers and solutions to future flood mitigation. The previous Premier was very quick to visit and offer support to these communities, but nearly 12 months on we are still seeing many of these families homeless, waiting for planning permits and financial assistance. Like the bushfires in East Gippsland in 2019–20, we often see the Premier visiting and offering support to these communities during their hour of need and then the bureaucratic red tape blocking the real assistance going forward. One year on from these devastating floods we are seeing the same movie all over again. I urge the current Premier to visit these communities and deliver real outcomes, not just a warm handshake and a Facebook post.

Ovens Valley electorate football and netball clubs

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (12:59): A huge shout-out to all of those in our football and netball clubs and the winter sporting programs in our regions – another exciting finale for our great communities. I want to particularly congratulate Yarrawonga Football Netball Club president Ross Mulquiney for his exceptional leadership this year, having had a difficult pill to swallow losing last year's premiership by three points. But he did not dwell on the circumstances and turned up in 2023 and took the chocolates. As Tina Turner said, it is not what happens to you in your life, it is how you deal with it that counts. Yarrawonga Football Netball Club certainly got back on the horse and rode it to victory in 2023.

Ministry

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (13:00): Firstly, I would like to congratulate our new Premier on her role and the Deputy Premier and our new Minister for Prevention of Family Violence and Minister for Employment. The faces may change, but the job remains the same. I would also like to put on record my thanks to our former Premier Daniel Andrews for his decades-long commitment and dedication to our state and Parliament. It has been a privilege being a member on the government benches. Now the work continues.

Avila College

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (13:00): I was asked to drop in to Avila College the other week by a student representative council to discuss the provision of feminine sanitary products in schools. I met with a group of student leaders who were very passionate and put forward the notion that all disposable sanitary products should be available in bathrooms as a matter of course, and on this we wholeheartedly agree. It was very pleasing to see that we now have open conversations about menstruation and related social policies.

Growing up in a chemist shop, it never seemed like a big deal, but it is only recently that we are having open conversations about menstruation and policies for the provision of these products in place, and in that regard I thank the Minister for Women, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education for their ongoing work in providing these products in schools and hospitals. There is always more to do, and I think there will be a day when these products are in every bathroom everywhere as a matter of course. Thanks to Sienna, Amy, Mia-Bridgette, Amanthi, Sophie, Sameen and Cheyenne and their mentor teachers Ms Stephens and Ms Savaglio for organising and facilitating a great discussion. With young women like these making great arguments and getting involved, I think the future is in very good hands.

Diane Wright

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (13:01): Diane Wright has had a positive impact on the quality of life of hundreds of Australians and has been a trailblazer in paving the way for innovation in regional palliative care. Diane served as president of Anam Cara Colac from 2011 to March 2023 and has now stepped into the role of president emeritus. Diane received a Medal of the Order of Australia in 2019 in recognition of her community work. Other awards include a Paul Harris fellowship from Rotary, an outstanding women's achievement award from Zonta International, a place on the Victorian women's honour roll and life membership of Palliative Care Victoria. Diane's contribution, along with that of her husband Andrew, will be recognised by the Anam Cara Colac community following their AGM this November.

Palliative care holds a special place in Diane's heart. Diane's journey with palliative care spans some 25 years, and in this time she has made a significant contribution to the community in founding Anam Cara Geelong and Anam Cara Colac. The community worked together to establish Anam Cara Colac, raising more than \$3.2 million and providing more than 12,000 hours of pro bono labour. Now in its 12th year of operation, Anam Cara Colac is a highly successful palliative care service. On behalf of all the people of Polwarth, Surf Coast shire and the Geelong region, we thank and acknowledge the hard work and dedication of service from Diane Wright.

Anti-vilification legislation

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (13:03): Last week I had the pleasure of joining our Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes for a round table with our local Muslim community leaders in Tarneit to talk about strengthening anti-vilification laws in Victoria, a commitment that we made during the 2022 election campaign, because we know that the best laws that are made not just in this state but in this country are guided through community consultation and indeed lived experiences. Through my time representing Tarneit I have heard countless stories from community members about their experiences of racism and Islamophobia, in particular from female members of that community. This sort of behaviour is absolutely abhorrent. It is disgusting, and there is absolutely no place for it in our community in Victoria. Our government recognises the importance of community leadership when it comes to tackling this issue, so that is why I would like to thank everybody who came and spoke with both me and the Attorney-General. Your input is absolutely invaluable, and your lived experiences will guide this legislative change. Thank you also to the Attorney-General for joining me, and I look forward to continuing to work with you and the Tarneit community towards this goal.

Sandringham electorate transport infrastructure

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (13:04): I encourage the newly minted Minister for Transport Infrastructure and Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop to show greater empathy and understanding of the Highett community when it comes to the level crossing removals at Highett Road and Wickham Road in Highett. The Labor government has committed to sky rail at Highett Road and Wickham Road against the wishes of my community, and I say to the new Minister for Transport Infrastructure: please do the right thing by the residents of Highett. Please listen to the residents of Highett. Please come down to Highett and hear firsthand the concerns of the Highett community, who do not want their community divided by sky rail. They also want the level crossings removed quicker than by 2029, which is the current commitment of the new Allan Labor government.

Further, the government wrongly plans to do away with half of the Sir William Fry Reserve in Highett. The Sir William Fry Reserve of course is the start of the Suburban Rail Loop, but at the same time they have plans to develop, with 26-metre-high residential towers, the former Gas and Fuel land on the Nepean Highway in Highett. What the Highett area actually needs at the moment is master planning of that area, which is why I have called on the government to pull together a cross-agency working group to get this right for my community.

Mickleham Road upgrade

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (13:06): Rapid progress is being made on the \$220 million stage 1 Mickleham Road upgrade in my electorate of Greenvale. This transformational road infrastructure project will make journeys faster and safer for every Greenvale resident and the 25,000 motorists who rely on Mickleham Road every day. I was delighted to join our new Premier at the worksite last month to see the scale of progress being made by skilled teams from BMD Group and Major Road Projects Victoria. New roadways and shared paths are already taking shape, while more than 23 kilometres of telecommunications and utilities have been relocated, including the main Melbourne and Sydney NBN connection and a vital aviation jet fuel pipeline that keeps Victoria's economy moving. I am proud to be part of a government that gets on with it and invests in what matters for our communities.

Hume indoor cricket centre

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (13:06): I was delighted to join my friend and neighbour the Minister for Community Sport at the new \$10.8 million Hume indoor cricket centre, which is under construction at the Greenvale Recreation Reserve, home of the Greenvale Kangaroos Cricket Club of course. I am delighted that the Allan government is working with Hume council to deliver this new world-class community cricket facility in Greenvale, featuring a six-lane indoor training space, new change rooms and enhanced opportunities for local cricketers. I acknowledge the strong support of Hume council and mayor Joseph Haweil for this great project and for the broader upgrades of Greenvale Recreation Reserve. I cannot wait until the indoor cricket facility opens ahead of the 2024–25 season, and good luck to Greenvale Kangaroos, whose premier cricket campaign kicks off this Saturday.

Bushfire preparedness

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (13:07): It is the first week of October and already bushfires are wreaking havoc across Gippsland. Emergency warnings are blaring over local radio stations, and overnight a fire in Briagolong doubled in size. People have been forced to evacuate, homes have been lost and those staying behind to protect their properties have been told it is too late to leave. Gippsland endured the Black Summer of 2019–20, and the scars of Black Saturday in 2009 are still fresh. We are now being told to brace for another catastrophic bushfire season.

Because of Labor's nonsensical closure of the sustainable native timber industry, our bushlands have not been maintained and we have an abundance of fuel, exposing us to unacceptable risk. Residents in towns with only one way in and one way out have contacted my office with grave concerns, because their only escape route is now a deathtrap of overgrown bushes and trees. Our local CFA brigades, who selflessly put their lives on the line every summer, have been left to go it alone, doing their own fundraising to upgrade facilities that are not fit for purpose, because Labor refuses to appropriately fund our volunteer firefighting organisations. CFA numbers are also down. Some 10,000 volunteer firefighters fled the CFA during the former Premier's time in office. This is not a coincidence. Premier, our regions are suffering the consequences of Labor's inaction. What will you do to ensure we do not have another Black Saturday?

Laverton electorate infrastructure projects

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (13:09): Something very, very, very special happened last Tuesday morning in the heart of Sunshine. The new Premier and I, along with Minister Stitt in the other place, popped down to Sunshine to visit Brimbank City Council and fantastic representatives from the Sunshine Business Association. We discussed around the table the really important projects to the people of Brimbank and most importantly to the folks in the Laverton electorate. We talked about amazing projects like the Metro Tunnel, the West Gate Tunnel, the Albion station rebuild – an entire \$80 million worth of investment happening right there – and the \$143 million Sunshine precinct master plan, as well as Melbourne Airport rail. This was a great conversation in which our new Premier was able to hear directly from Brimbank City Council, and the views of our community were put forward. We are keen to see these projects delivered. We then went on to have a walk around Albion

station. This \$80 million upgrade of this much-loved – but in much need of an upgrade – station sits at the very heart of the Albion community. Our new Premier was able to see firsthand what an entire rebuild and upgrade to this station will mean to the local community. I look forward to working with the new Minister for Transport Infrastructure to deliver these very projects.

Boroondara Community Outreach

Jess WILSON (Kew) (13:10): Last month Boroondara Community Outreach celebrated 30 years of incredible and life-changing work. BCO is renowned in our local community for its support for people who are socially isolated or living with a mental illness. BCO helps people live with dignity and engage with the community by providing support services, food relief and various group activities that foster connection and belonging. It was such an honour to attend BCO's 30th birthday celebration and congratulate and thank the BCO team. I would like to acknowledge everyone at BCO for their work and in particular Reverend Natalie Dixon-Monu for her outstanding work leading BCO.

Our Lady of Good Counsel Primary School

Jess WILSON (Kew) (13:11): Congratulations to the grade 5 and 6 students at Our Lady of Good Counsel Primary School on their outstanding speeches to conclude their leadership program for 2023. I was honoured to help adjudicate the speeches, and the speeches ranged from off-the-cuff 1-minute speeches to thoughtful, prepared presentations on a range of important topics. Congratulations to the award recipients for best speeches Xavier and Eliza, best off the cuff Thurston and Maddy, most improved Sam and Ned and best evaluators Sarah and Zoe. Thank you for including me in this special event, and keep up the awesome work at OLGC.

Balwyn Greythorn Jets

Jess WILSON (Kew) (13:11): Last month I was honoured to watch the Balwyn Greythorn Jets under-14 girls win their third premiership flag in a row. This local club does incredible work to foster teamwork, resilience and determination. I would like to congratulate the girls on their terrific season, the inspiring work by coach Kim and their club president David and all the parents for their awesome efforts during the season.

Vermont South Special School

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (13:12): It was an absolute delight to attend *Under Construction: The Case of the Missing Toolkit*, the 2023 Vermont South Special School production. It was a great production, all about the \$10.1 million investment currently being undertaken at Vermont South Special School. As part of these works, we are building brand new teaching and learning spaces for students to enjoy for years to come, and construction is now well underway. I would like to take this opportunity to give a huge shout-out to the cast, led by Indiana, Blake, Agrem and Borrell, who with their peers did a stellar job acting, singing and dancing. A big thankyou too to principal Jane Henderson for the invitation to the production and for always advocating to make her school the best it can be.

I am proud to be part of the Allan Labor government, because we are not just delivering a \$10.1 million upgrade at Vermont South Special School but investing more than a quarter of a billion dollars to upgrade every single special school across Australia, plus we are creating co-located before- and after-school care and appointment spaces for NDIS navigators at every single special school too. Our investments in special schools are life changing, and it was terrific to see the positive impact it is having on the students at Vermont South Special School. I look forward to working closely with Victoria's new Minister for Education the Deputy Premier as we continue our bold transformation of special schools across the state not just at Vermont South Special School but also at Glenallen School in my electorate. Congratulations again to all involved in the Vermont South Special School production and all the teachers and education support staff who create a thriving learning community every single day.

Climate change

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (13:13): It is only three days into October, and we already have fires raging across Australia, including here in Victoria where several towns in East Gippsland have been forced to evacuate. We have just lived through the hottest September here on record. Online we see videos of New York City and the dangerous flash flooding that they are experiencing. We have already had heatwaves in Sydney – 34 degrees in spring. Holy hell, this is getting really scary, and yet I look around and I see politicians just acting like it is business as usual. It is not business as usual. This is terrifying. People are terrified.

We have a new Premier here in Victoria, and I hope she changes direction, because under the old Labor Premier Daniel Andrews we had new gas developments approved by Labor. We had a new coal project supported by Labor. We had secret deals to extend the life of our coal plants here in Victoria. This is not the way to solve climate change. In fact the bare minimum we need to do is stop supporting new coal and gas. The science says we need to keep coal and gas in the ground. It is literally that simple. Yet here in Victoria we have Labor continuing to support new coal and gas projects. We have to change direction. We need to turn around and run 100 miles an hour in the opposite direction. No new coal and gas. Solve climate change. Stop this hell that we are going into. It is that simple.

Antonine College

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (13:15): On 14 September I had the privilege of attending the official opening of Antonine College's impressive new science, arts and sports building. Situated at the school's St Joseph campus in Pascoe Vale, the modern facilities will equip students with the skills they will need for the future. From very humble beginnings in 1980, with the arrival of the Antonine Sisters from Lebanon in Coburg, the Antonine Maronite community has gone on to grow, thrive and make an invaluable contribution across our community, particularly in the north, through the initial establishment of an Arabic language school, cultural school, aged care facility and kindergarten. The Antonines opened their first primary school campus in East Coburg in 1998, followed by their secondary campus in Pascoe Vale in 2011. I would like to pay tribute to the entire school community for making these new facilities possible, including His Excellency Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, superior general of the Antonine Sisters Mother Nazha El Khoury, parish priest Joseph Takchi, Antonine Sisters congregational leader Sister Mariette Kareh, school college principal Joanne Bacash and all the school council members, volunteers, teachers, parents and all of the students. It was a wonderful celebration.

Brunswick Zebras Football Club

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (13:16): On 23 August I had the pleasure of accompanying the Minister for Community Sport to officially open the new female-friendly change rooms at the Brunswick Zebras soccer club at Sumner Park. This \$1.1 million project was made possible by a \$760,000 Merri-bek council investment, \$250,000 from the Victorian Labor government and a mighty \$100,000 from the Brunswick Zebras, the club itself. The facilities are absolutely exceptional, and they will help cater for the increased demand for women and girls off the back of the Matildas' success. As a former player of the club, I commend the project.

Bushfire preparedness

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (13:16): As I stand here there are several townships in my electorate and indeed that of my colleague the member for Gippsland South under threat from fires. I believe it has just started raining on at least one of the firegrounds but hopefully all of them. I certainly encourage people at the moment to stay off the roads, listen to the VicEmergency services updates either on the app or the websites, and stay informed and stay vigilant. I just want to give a shout-out to all the firefighters who for the last couple of days have been going all night trying to address these fires and also to the businesses and the families who allow their workers and their loved ones to be released to fight the fires.

Last sitting week I stood in this chamber and spoke about the massive fuel loads we have building up in the bush and the fact that we are so vulnerable again; that is the major issue and the major cause of these fires. The fire triangle needs ignition, it needs oxygen and it needs fuel. The only one we can control is fuel, and that is what we need to address. I also want to just quickly mention – and I am very pleased – that emergency relief centres have been opened in Sale and Lucknow. Possibly within 24 to 48 hours we will be dealing with flood threats in East Gippsland, such is the volatility of what is going on down there this week. I just want to reinforce for everyone in our communities of Gippsland South and Gippsland East that are impacted to stay vigilant and stay informed.

Daniel Andrews

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (13:18): I want to take this opportunity to thank our former Premier the Honourable Daniel Andrews for his commitment to this place over the last 20 years and for being the Premier of our state for the last nine. I knew Daniel when I was just 13 years old. He was a colleague of my mum in the office of Alan Griffin, who was the federal member for Corinella back in those days. I have watched Daniel grow from a teenager into the man and leader we see today. He has always been passionate and hardworking and most of all dedicated to making positive change for all Victorians. Before being elected to this place it is no secret that I worked in Daniel's electorate office in Mulgrave. The Mulgrave community absolutely loved him, and I am sure that he will be missed. Barb and the staff at the electorate office will miss him too.

My electorate in Pakenham has seen so much progress under this government: things like new schools, new kinders, level crossing removals, two new train stations on the way and a community hospital to come – this is just to name a few. This is due to the ambitious agenda that Daniel set for this government, something that we should not forget. On a state level we have seen such big reforms – too many to name. He was at the heart of many of these projects and reforms that we see. Importantly, he cared about our most vulnerable. He did not let the noise distract him from doing what is right. I sincerely thank Daniel for his service, support and friendship and wish him, Cath, Noah, Grace and Joseph all the very best for whatever lies ahead.

Parliament Prize

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (13:19): I rise to congratulate Rose, one of the students at Reservoir Views Primary School, for her highly commended entry into the 2023 Parliament Prize. As many of us know, the Parliament Prize gives schoolchildren the opportunity to put forward what they would say to this Parliament, and Rose's entry in particular spoke about some road safety issues in the Keon Park area. I think Rose is absolutely right to identify that we do have a problem there with people shortcutting through those quite narrow suburban streets to avoid Cheddar Road and other main roads. Indeed we will speak to the minister and we will speak to the local council about what we can do about that issue. She points out the lack of stop signs and the speed limits. I think we have to think about whether 40 kilometres per hour is more appropriate for some of those narrow suburban roads. I see the Minister for Roads and Road Safety is here, so I am sure she will be happy to take that up on Rose's and our behalf.

Preston electorate road safety

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (13:20): Separately, I do think there is a bit of an issue with Google Maps and Apple Maps and the way they direct a lot of traffic down some of these suburban streets. I know at Croft Crescent, David Street and Arthur Street there is a legitimate question about whether those apps are taking into account safety outcomes as well as travel times.

Louise Kenney-Shen and Jim Shen

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (13:20): Finally, just quickly I would like to congratulate Louise Kenney-Shen and Jim Shen on the safe arrival of their second son. People may know that Louise works in my office, but Louise and Jim also make a very big contribution right across our community.

I am sure we all wish them the very best and thank the Mercy hospital for their support of those parents and their newborn.

Veterans support

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (13:21): Over the past month my office and I have single-handedly helped more than 50 veterans across Ripon apply for the Victorian veterans card. I have held two morning teas in Ararat and Maryborough with the local RSL sub-branches to help members take advantage of this fantastic Labor government initiative. I want to give a big thankyou to Lyn Russell, Frank Neulist, Scott Rigby, Greg Dalmayer and the Ararat RSL sub-branch for helping spread the word far and wide from Skipton to Avoca, Moonambel and even Daylesford, outside of my electorate. A big thankyou also to Danny McIvor, Lee Turton, Ben Holscher and the Maryborough RSL sub-branch for hosting me yesterday arvo too.

These brave men sacrificed their lives for our nation, and they continue to give back to our community through their volunteer efforts every single day. They deserve our ongoing recognition, appreciation and support. Our state is home to more than 100,000 veterans, but we know that 60,000 of them are not currently connected to any existing concession schemes. That is why the state Labor government introduced the Victorian veterans card. It is an Australian first and entitles every veteran in Victoria to 100 bucks off their car or motorbike rego, free trailer and caravan rego, free boat and fishing licences, free public transport on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day and access to dedicated employment programs. I will always back our local veterans, and I look forward to supporting more across Ripon to sign up to the veterans card soon.

Elizabeth ‘Lizzie’ Aylett

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (13:22): The launch of This Girl Can Week is a fantastic opportunity to recognise a remarkable local woman of Monbulk, Elizabeth ‘Lizzie’ Aylett of Ferntree Gully, whose lifelong commitment to girls and women in sport has left an enduring mark on our community. Lizzie’s journey in the world of netball began at the age of 15 as a player and spanned more than 70 years. She took up the whistle as an umpire in 1964. Witnessing the shortage of experienced umpires during her daughter Jenny’s matches and unpleasant attitudes from some of them towards the girls, Lizzie took it upon herself to make a positive difference. Remarkably she only stopped umpiring last year, after 58 years, at the tender age of 85. But Lizzie has not even given up on netball. She continues to mentor junior netball players and umpires, devoting her Saturday mornings to their development. Her enduring presence in the white uniform on the court is a testament to her passion and fervent belief in girls sport. She is a life member of Belcoma Netball Club, one of the oldest in Monbulk, and the Whitehorse Netball Association. Lizzie is a true inspiration to us all and is described by her granddaughter as the epitome of a human ray of sunshine. From my meetings with Lizzie, I would have to agree wholeheartedly. Thank you, Lizzie, for your outstanding commitment to girls sport in our community. This girl can? Well, that girl did.

Scouts Victoria

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (13:24): Speaking of young people and activities, I had a wonderful time stopping by Scouts Victoria’s Cuboree 2023, held at the beautiful Gilwell Park in Gembrook in my district of Monbulk. The event saw over 3400 Cub Scouts enjoy an unforgettable adventure. Thanks to all the volunteers who made it happen.

St Francis Xavier College, Berwick

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (13:24): A few weeks ago I had the honour of attending St Francis Xavier College, Berwick, for their sod turn to mark the commencement of construction of their non-government schools capital works project. St Francis Xavier is a Catholic school that values excellence and development of academic and character potential, with a commitment to inspiring creativity, innovation and personal development. The Non-Government Schools Capital Fund is contributing \$3 million towards the demolition of the school’s relocatable buildings and replacing

them with a new learning centre. I got a chance to meet with the principal Vincent Feeney and deputy principal Collette Bond for a tour of the impressive school before the official ceremony. He described the new learning areas, the collaborative spaces and a green tech digital room, with works forecast to conclude in the middle of 2025. Non-government schools are an important part of Victoria's education system, with over one-third of Victorian students studying at Catholic or independent schools. I look forward to visiting St Francis Xavier College's new learning space when it is complete.

Business of the house

Notices of motion

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) (13:25): I advise that the government does not wish to proceed with notices of motion, government business, today and ask that they remain on the notice paper.

Bills

Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Natalie Hutchins:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (13:26): I rise to speak today on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023. I must say it is an honour to speak on this bill today as I was appointed yesterday as the Shadow Minister for Early Childhood and Education. It was a real honour to be appointed to that portfolio. There is a great deal of work to go into this area, whether it is child care or kinder reform or primary and secondary reform over the coming years, and this is really an opportunity to talk about how we can ensure that all Victorian children have the very best start to life. Of course child care, kinder, pre-prep and primary education are absolutely critical to that.

Today's legislation before us looks at the government's childcare policy, how that will be implemented across Victoria and how that will be rolled out across both metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria when it comes to the expansion of government childcare programs. The main purpose of the bill is to amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to extend the Victorian government's current powers of compulsory land acquisition for the purpose of building schools and take that power to cover state-owned kindergartens and childcare centres as well. As we know, the government currently does have the power under that act to compulsorily acquire land for the purposes of school education and for the purposes of building new schools and expanding schools, but the legislation before us today will look to expand that power to give the government the ability to also acquire land on the basis of childcare centres, and it fits into the government's program when it comes to the expansion of kinder and pre-prep.

The government announced this policy last year. It certainly was announced with much fanfare, but those on this side of the house have a great deal of concern about the implementation of this policy and, more importantly, the delivery of this policy. It sounds terrific in headlines to say 'free kinder', but we know from the on-the-ground experience of kinders right across Victoria, particularly those sessional kinders in our electorates, that free kinder is really a misnomer. Many kinders, particularly those sessional kinders which are run by hardworking parents on a committee with the input of local councils, are struggling to make ends meet under this program. I will certainly speak more about that today.

This should be a broadly straightforward proposition, but there is always a concern and – particularly when it comes to this government – a catch when it comes to any additional powers. Compulsory acquisition, while in some circumstances required, is a controversial way of government acquiring land and should be used in very limited circumstances. In this instance we are looking at it for the

purpose of expanding quality education for Victorian children, and we want to ensure that it is done in a way that meets those objectives but is also done in a way that appreciates the importance of property rights right across Victoria.

The Education and Training Reform Act is the legislative framework that governs public education in this state, and it provides the authority for government to compulsorily acquire land for the purposes of the act, which of course is linked to public education in Victoria. As it currently stands the act does not extend that authority for the purposes of early childhood education. Now, there is a significant body of research that we all know of, and I know many on this side of the house often speak about the importance of early childhood education. In my previous roles I have worked with the federal government to ensure that we have access to child care and that families have access to child care, not only to provide that early childhood education but also to help increase women's participation in the workforce. It is critical that we put early childhood education at the forefront of education policy and ensure that we put Victorian children's early years at the forefront of education policy. This is something that governments all over the world are recognising with research and by making investments in early childhood education, and Victoria and Australia are no different in this regard.

As our population grows we need to make sure that we do have access to early childhood education and that it keeps pace with demand. I know that many on this side of the house and particularly some of my regional colleagues often talk about the childcare drought in regional Victoria and the lack of access to childcare centres and the lack of access to child care and kinders more broadly, and so looking at how we can expand childcare access right across Victoria and not just in metropolitan Melbourne will be absolutely critical to delivering that for the future of our Victorian children.

This should be a fairly straightforward matter. As we know, the government already has broad compulsory land acquisition powers to build new schools and more broadly across other projects, so we are looking at how that can be commensurate with building early childhood education and care centres. But we do have concerns on how this government will deliver on its promise, and this one in particular has been a very rocky rollout from the outset. The government's proposal to give itself more power to compulsorily acquire land does give us all cause to pause and reflect on their ability to do so in the past. One of the examples that I reflect on when it comes to this government compulsorily acquiring land in the past was a huge failure of government policy. One of the most egregious examples of the implementation of compulsory acquisition in this state's history was when it came to compulsorily acquiring land on the Caulfield to Dandenong sky rail project –

A member: Oh, here we go.

Jess WILSON: Indeed here we go – where the government acquired too many homes. The government at the time acquired 130 residences, and now it looks like that is in excess of 40 homes in surplus. That came at great cost to the Victorian taxpayer, acquiring those homes, and now because of these surplus homes and the time that has passed, the government is looking at putting those surplus homes back on the market and making a significant profit – a windfall gain, if you like – on the sale of those properties. Yet when it comes to a windfall gain for the government of course there is no tax applied to that. So people's homes have been compulsorily acquired under that corridor – excess homes because of poor planning when it comes to the management of these major projects from this government. Whether it is the Big Build, whether it is sky rail or whether it is the Commonwealth Games, we all know that this government likes to make very grand promises, but when it comes to delivery and when it comes to consultation with local communities it is failure after failure.

On the sky rail project – one of the last examples of compulsory acquisition under this government – more homes were acquired than was necessary. Those have now either been put onto the rental market at significant profit to the government or are being put up for sale at significant profit to the government. This is just a flagrant disregard for the property rights of Victorians and, really importantly, shows a lack of understanding of the core role that property rights actually play in a liberal democracy. I think the issue here around the surplus homes that were acquired under the Caulfield

corridor of the sky rail is something that has been a windfall gain to the government – thanks to rising property prices – and obviously the government will make a buck or two putting those back on the market. But what they have failed to appreciate here is that compulsorily acquiring someone's home is one of the bluntest instruments that a government has at its disposal. It should be used sparingly and should be used in extremely limited circumstances, because forcing people out of their homes is unnecessary at the best of times, and it is exactly the kind of action that erodes trust in government. This is a problem we have more broadly, as I have spoken about before. This government likes to make grand promises – promises that make big headlines like free kinder – and then we see the delivery of that, the actual rollout of that program, impacting the lives of Victorians in a way that was not explained at the time of the announcement and with a complete disregard for the impact that those policy blunders have on Victorians.

I know from my own area, the electorate of Kew, and the boundary there with Bulleen, where the North East Link is being built, that compulsory acquisition has taken place in that area, particularly on the Bulleen side of the new interchange. Those people have gone to hell and back when it comes to the acquisition of those homes. It has upended their lives, so we have to make sure that in the event the government does need to acquire property it does so in very limited circumstances and, where it can, consults with the local community and understands the impact of that compulsory acquisition.

The other issue with the compulsory acquisition under this piece of legislation is that there is no real sense of what the cost could be to the budget of compulsorily acquiring land, whether that is private homes, whether that is land from community organisations or whether that is from non-government schools. If there is an opportunity to take, for example, an oval from a non-government school, then that will have a significant impact on that community and it will also have a budgetary impact, and that has not been appropriately outlined in the debate around this bill. In the former minister's introduction and second-reading speech there was no indication as to the likely cost of such acquisitions. This is a very, very big program. It is a \$14 billion program announced by those opposite, and that in itself is a huge figure. To add to that, the potential acquisition of land right across Victoria has not been budgeted for, and they have not been transparent with the Victorian people.

When it comes to the ability under this bill to acquire land for the purposes of childcare centres, we understand the need to expand, but we do say that it needs to be done in very, very limited circumstances and all other avenues need to be explored before we get to that point. When initially announced, this policy was very much focused on the fact that the government was looking to co-locate these new childcare centres at school sites. We all understand the benefits of co-locating childcare centres and kinders at school sites, particularly primary schools, as it will co-locate the education requirements, it will be easier for parents when it comes to pick-up and drop-off and it will ensure that we are creating education precincts right throughout Victoria. So all avenues need to be explored before we go down the path of any compulsory acquisition of private property when looking at the acquisition of private homes and looking at how the original remit of the government's announcement around the expansion of childcare centres – government-owned childcare centres – was to be through co-location with government schools. We know that that has not occurred, and we have seen a list from the government of the 30 locations that have been identified to date. The \$14 billion Best Start, Best Life childcare, free kinder and pre-prep policy looks at putting in place 50 childcare centres across Victoria. Thirty of those locations have been identified, but only four specific sites have actually been identified by the government to date, despite the fact that this was announced some time ago and that these childcare centres are proposed to be delivered by 2028. So there is a lot of work to do to ensure that there is delivery of this policy over the coming years in the lead-up to 2028, and we know that the delivery of this policy to date has been very, very rocky. I speak to local kinders, sessional kinders, in my electorate regularly, and they are on their knees when it comes to being able to provide the adequate level of child care and the adequate level of education at these kinders that the families expect, because simply the free kinder policy does not go far enough to cover the resources of those local kinders – and that is the story right throughout Victoria.

Looking at the Best Start, Best Life policy and particularly the free kinder aspect of that, it was as I said announced in late 2022. It was a big headline election announcement from this government – one that sounded great when put right across the airwaves and right across TVs in the lead-up to the 2022 November election – but of course delivery is always a second thought when it comes from the Allan Labor government. Naming the program ‘free kinder’ is something that is naturally going to be very attractive to the Victorian people – families who are struggling with cost-of-living rises under this government. What is there not to love about something that is free? But, as is always the case with this government, the devil is in the detail. What is left out of the talking points is that this program does not actually meet the resources required to provide the expected level of education at these kinders.

There is nothing in the government’s so-called free kinder program which implies that the government is fully funding kinder across the state, because it is simply not the case. The government will happily tell you that the minister goes to these kinders and makes announcements, but when I asked the previous minister to meet with my local sessional kinders to discuss the impacts of this program I did not even get a response. I hope the new minister will come and meet with sessional kinders in my electorate, and with sessional kinders right across Victoria, to understand the impact of the free kinder policy under the Best Start, Best Life policy from this government.

The so-called free kinder policy provides \$2500 of funding per enrolled child per kinder, but what may be surprising to those opposite is that \$2500 per child does not actually provide what is required for many kinders to provide their resources. When it comes to staffing requirements in particular, many of these kinders have had staff in place for many years – early learning educators that have gone through training and have various levels of expertise when it comes to delivering early childhood education – and the \$2500 per child simply does not cover their salaries. It simply means that these sessional kinders will have to cut back on staff. At a time when we are seeing the need for expanded services in this space and when we need to see more offerings when it comes to child care, we are seeing sessional kinders under immense pressure and not being able to keep their doors open.

There is one kindergarten in my electorate that has asked its families to bring a pack of toilet paper and tissues at the start of each term because it cannot keep teachers in place as well as provide the basic materials it needs to run the kinder. That is because the \$2500 simply does not cover what is required for many, many sessional kinders across Victoria to run. We have heard that from other local councils as well. Knox City Council are already saying they are going to pull out of service delivery, citing that the unsustainable operating environment brought on by this government’s free kinder policy is making them have to close their doors across that local government area.

The rollout of this program, as I said, was very much in the election context about making a big announcement of free kinder – ‘We’ll roll that out as an advertising blitz’ – but it gave these kinders very little notice to decide whether to opt in or opt out of this policy. If you opt in to this policy and you choose to take the \$2500 subsidy per child, you cannot charge a gap fee on top of that to meet the needs of that local kinder. There is no ability for these local kinders to cover the costs of their staffing needs, their program needs and their rent. Many of these local kinders like to take the students – the children – out on excursions. Unfortunately now that cannot take place because they simply cannot cover their needs under the \$2500 per child provided by this government.

As I said, Knox City Council has said it may need to pull out of service delivery. There is an easy fix to the situation. You could provide the option for kinders to charge that gap fee – to ask whether they can put that forward. The benefit of being able to do that, and to meet the costs of these kinders that are providing early childhood education, is that parents can choose to go to the kinder that asks for a gap fee, or not. Parents have choice when it comes to which kinder they want to send their children to, and in being able to have that gap fee you are able to provide the adequate level of early childhood education that these families expect.

The fact that they are not able to charge this gap fee means that many of these local kinders will need to run at a loss. They will have to cut costs and they will have to cut programs. As we know, if they want to be able to remain solvent and viable, they cannot continue to continue to run at a loss for many years on end. I have local kinders regularly saying to me that they cannot see a situation in two, three or four years time in which they will be able to keep the level of programs and the level of staff that they have on board. I must say, having met with a number of these staff, the work that they do to ensure that they are meeting the needs of their students and meeting the needs of the children in the kindergarten means that they go above and beyond every single day. There is an incredible amount of work that goes into planning for these programs, the education offerings and the classes, and they have very limited ability to have support staff when it comes to the administration required around local kindergartens. I know the government, those opposite, will say, 'Well, they can just make a few savings here or there', but this comes down to the fact that they are looking at basic costs that they cannot avoid – whether that is rent, whether that is the cost of teachers and staffing or whether that is the cost of providing that administration support. Many of these kinders – sessional kinders certainly – are run by parent committees that give up their time year on year and take on the responsibility for decision-making when it comes to opting in or opting out of these programs, and these decisions have ramifications for years to come.

The other point here is when we talk about the free kinder program and the lofty ambitions of those opposite – and we all agree we need to do more to support the expansion of child care across Victoria – the ability to provide 30 hours of kindergarten per week for every four-year-old child in the state within a decade is a very big aim with very little detail attached to it. We are seeing that in the bill before us today. The original plan to co-locate these childcare centres, to expand the program right across metropolitan and regional Victoria and to co-locate that at schools, it is now being realised, is something that is not going to be possible in every circumstance. So we are going to need to be able to acquire private land, potentially, to expand and roll out this program. Kindergartens – those that will be impacted by this and those that are looking at the rollout of this program – have no detail on how this is actually going to be rolled out. That is also true when it comes to how the additional hours will be sustainably funded and delivered between the state, local, community and private providers. We know that childcare centres and kinders already struggle to fill shifts and meet the required staffing ratios. The thought of how they are going to increase those hours to meet the expansion of this program, and the program that the government has put in place for the coming years, is really creating a lot of concern in the sector.

Given all this, you will understand that the Liberals and Nationals on this side have hesitation in handing over further power to the government when it comes to being able to compulsorily acquire land for the expansion of their child care and their free kinder program, even if it is in the pursuit of an aim that I think we all share in this place, which is being able to provide early childhood education for all Victorian children. This is certainly the case in regional Victoria – as I said earlier, many of my colleagues from the regional electorates often talk about the fact that there is a childcare drought in regional Victoria – but unfortunately the Labor government's abysmal track record when it comes to poorly drafted policy and even poorer implementation does not recommend to us that this is a thought-through policy. The bill put before us today is in many ways an admission that their original policy intent with this – to co-locate with schools – has failed and now they are looking at other ways to deliver their program. Unfortunately, being able to compulsorily acquire private property, people's homes, may now be the consequence of not thinking this program through in the first place.

I think many of us in here probably agree that we do not want to ever see the government have to forcibly acquire land only in many cases to put it back on the market a few years later and make a profit for the government. We all know with the debt in this state they are looking for any cash they can find, and compulsorily acquiring homes, overacquiring those homes, and then looking at putting them back on the market for a profit a few years later – over 40 of those homes – may deliver the government dividends. But of course that comes at a great personal toll to the people whose homes they were in the first place. So it is imperative the government fully consider the opportunity cost of

acquiring this land and weigh up the needs of future families for early childhood education and the location of these services with the current use of the land in question.

I encourage the government to go back to its original policy intent and look at how it can, as much as possible, co-locate these child cares and kinders at existing schools, particularly government-owned primary schools, where the land already exists and it would make sense to co-locate them and ensure that there are education precincts created throughout Victoria. It is going to be very, very important that the government attempt to strike that balance, and unfortunately, if past performance is any indication of future performance, we on this side of the house do have serious concerns and believe they will face serious challenges in the delivery of this policy. Indeed this bill goes towards that.

The initiative that this bill is largely intended to support – Best Start, Best Life, as proclaimed by this government – is a flawed suite of policies that are being implemented without consultation and with little care when it comes to those on the ground providing education services and childcare services. Greater consultation from this government would be welcomed at all levels of their program rollouts and major infrastructure projects. We on this side of the house understand the need to expand childcare services, particularly in regional Victoria, but it is time that the government stepped up and actually started listening to the concerns of the sector, the concerns of the local communities and the concerns of the sessional kinders and the parent-run committees when it comes to the rollout of this program. With a new minister at the helm I am hopeful that the government does have a different approach, a more collaborative approach – an approach that will see the minister reaching out to these local communities, reaching out and meeting with sessional kinders to understand the impact of this government program on the private providers and indeed on these sessional kinders that are co-run with local councils so we do not see many of these sessional kinders having to decide to close their doors in the coming years because they simply cannot fund their operations and they cannot meet the costs of funding their operations, particularly when it comes to those inputs like rent and staffing costs, which are absolutely critical.

Thank you to the government for the opportunity to speak on this bill today. We certainly have serious concerns about the ability for this program to be rolled out, and it is certainly something that the government need to heed when thinking about whether or not they do need to acquire land under the government's Best Start, Best Life policy, and they need to look for all other options and work with local communities before deciding to acquire anyone's private property.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (13:55): It is great to rise to speak on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023, which really is another chapter in a significant reform agenda as we transform early childhood education. When I was Parliamentary Secretary for Schools, the first brief that I had was around the transformational power of early years, and it is the single biggest lever that you can pull to change the outcomes and lives of our youngest Victorians. I know the member for Kew's was the first speech in this space, and she gave a good account. You can tell that you are in opposition when you turn around and say, 'You're not doing good enough. We're not opposed, but we're not sure you can deliver' or 'You won't deliver. It's not enough, but we won't commit to more funding'. That was the classic opposition speech of not taking a position on reform and not detailing whether you support the legislation or the bill. And then the most egregious point made, which was quite extraordinary, was around the erosion of trust in government, of complete disregard for policy blunders that have occurred. That was the member for Kew's contribution. Now, where did we have an example of needing to acquire land for early childhood education and schools? I do not know, but almost on cue comes the member for Bulleen. Where was that location? Fishermans Bend. Where was the erosion of trust and confidence in rezoning of land, with the Andrews Labor government then needing to go and literally acquire land for the betterment of our young Victorians who would be in some of the newest suburbs? When I heard that said –

Matthew Guy interjected.

Tim RICHARDSON: Here he goes. He's on cue. The gunzel's in the place. He's back on the front bench. I tell you, it is good to see you back, Matthew.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bulleen!

Tim RICHARDSON: But on the erosion of trust and confidence you could not get a greater example – off goes the sign, the next day there goes education and there goes early years. It took the former member for Monbulk and Deputy Premier going back with the Minister for Planning Richard Wynne to correct that. So when the member for Kew was talking about the erosion of trust and the complete disregard for the policy blunders that occurred, I thought, 'The member for Kew hasn't talked to the member for Bulleen'.

Matthew Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Bulleen!

Tim RICHARDSON: I tell you, when the member for Bulleen still looks like the best option on that side, you have got to go what on earth is going on here. I mean, he sounds good, he is up and about, he has got a bit of a new look, he has got a spring in his step – is he Matt or is he Matthew? He is looking great. He is up and about, isn't he? It is good to have him back. I think we are all pumped for him. The Leader of the Opposition is a bit nervous. But it is an example of where you get policy wrong, where you get some blunders, and the rezoning of Fishermans Bend and correcting that was one.

Listening to the member for Kew on early childhood education – hello, we have had three- and four-year-old early years rolled out, 15 hours, and we have had thousands more early childhood educators choosing their profession, choosing to support the youngest Victorians in their journey – she was talking down the sector as if kinder were on its knees. Kinder is the greatest career you can choose now. Choose to support young Victorians and get amongst it. Pre-prep is a visionary policy. We know that that early years connection, the 15 hours of three- and four-year-old kinder, is so substantial. But we are taking that further as well.

When those opposite say 'Well, you don't deliver for regional and rural areas', they should have a look at the rollout. One of the first repping events that I did was in Birchip, and we opened up a new early years facility there with the council. It was an amazing aspirational event there, and to see what has been achieved has been absolutely extraordinary. The rollout is challenging, but this government is a reforming government. It is not by chance that every other jurisdiction copies this policy, comes forward with a free kinder policy or a rollout of three- and four-year-old kinder or is talking about pre-prep, because we are setting the national agenda in early childhood education and education right here in Victoria. So we are not talking down early childhood education but pumping it up. We want people to choose it as a career. We want thousands more Victorians to choose to educate the next generation.

This land acquisition is similar to what we saw with the 100 schools that we rolled out. Remember when we came to government? We had no new schools to open. It was just a vast range – no education facilities, no schools. But 100 schools have been delivered by the Andrews and Allan Labor governments, and we have transformed things. One of those was the acquisition power, and that made it more flexible to ensure that we could get more policy through. Building more on that agenda is really critical as well. So whether it is on school locations, partnering with councils or partnering with private non-profit providers, this is a substantial rollout that will benefit our communities for many years to come. We will not take talking down kinder in this place as we lead the nation's agenda in transforming those outcomes for young Victorians. That is the key, and that is what we are focused on here –

The SPEAKER: Order! The time has come for me to interrupt government business for questions.

Can I acknowledge in the gallery a former member for Gippsland West Susan Davies.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Taxation

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Premier. Today the Treasurer announced at a business breakfast two new taxes that will add further cost pressures to Victorians struggling with the cost of living. Was the Premier aware the Treasurer was going to announce these new taxes this morning – the 51st and 52nd new or increased taxes under Labor since 2014?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:02): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. He mentioned the Treasurer being at a breakfast this morning. Can I also say in answering the Leader of the Opposition's question that this morning I was with the Minister for Planning in Brunswick at a Nightingale project where we were talking about the bold reform agenda that we released a couple of weeks ago that is about building more homes for more Victorians. As part of that –

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Speaker, on context and relevance, the Premier is outlining her morning, not the Treasurer's and the announcement, and is missing the point of the question and avoiding it.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier had only commenced her answer. I ask the Premier to return to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: Before I was interrupted I was about to go to the context of course, because what the Treasurer was talking about this morning and what the Minister for Planning and I were talking to this morning was all about how the government is putting in place a big, bold reform agenda that is about building more homes. We have to look at how across government and how across the entirety of government we bring every effort to build Victorians more homes, because there is no more critical issue.

Of course I was aware of what the Treasurer is bringing to the Parliament this week. Of course I was aware, because this has gone through cabinet. But it does give me the opportunity to talk to, as I said, how the legislation that the Treasurer is bringing to the Parliament this week fits with that overall effort to build more homes for Victorians, because what the Treasurer is doing is extending a policy setting to make sure that more homes are available for people. Victorians deserve the dignity of a roof over their head. Victorians deserve the dignity of a bed to sleep in at night. Land banking does not achieve that. It does not achieve that, and that is why we are looking at making every effort to build more homes for more Victorians.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:04): Neither of these two new taxes were mentioned or included in the May budget or in the housing statement just three weeks ago. Why did the Premier introduce two new taxes as her first substantive act as Premier?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:05): Well, if the Leader of the Opposition had been listening, I think I answered the why in my previous answer to his substantive question. The why is that we are looking at everything we can do to build more homes, everything we can do to increase supply and everything we can do to make sure that in this instance vacant properties are made available for people to be able to live in. Vacant property is an issue. Some people have two or three properties. Some people have nine or 10 properties. Some people have 17.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, may I refer you to *Rulings from the Chair*, page 153, Speaker Maddigan's ruling that:

The Speaker reminded members that when answering a question a minister can discuss alternative views but must do so without ...

making nasty attacks on other members.

The SPEAKER: The Premier did not refer to any member in this house in her response. The Premier has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: bushfire preparedness

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:06): I rise to update the house today on the state of fires and extreme weather that is being experienced in recent days and over the course of this week. What we saw over the weekend, last night and into today is a challenging weather experience, and it does remain a dynamic situation. Yesterday we had a total fire ban in the Mallee, we saw fires in East Gippsland and also the storm weather coming through today. So I just did want to take the opportunity, particularly in regard to the fires in Gippsland, to update the house about the two ‘Take shelter now’ emergency warnings for fires affecting Seacombe, Loch Sport, Briagolong and surrounds, and this behaviour at Briagolong is particularly extreme. We already know that we have confirmed one house lost yesterday, and there is further assessment of asset loss being undertaken today.

There is a ‘Leave’ emergency warning for a number of communities around Fernbank, Glenaladale and Lindenow South. There is an ‘Advice – stay informed’ warning for a fire affecting Golden Beach and Paradise Beach, and there is a ‘Watch and act – prepare to take shelter’ warning in place from Marysville to the New South Wales border, which of course includes Gippsland and the Great Dividing Range. Plus there are also flood watches that have been issued for Gippsland and the north-east. This gives the house and the Victorian community a sense of how dynamic the experiences are for regional communities across the state, and I want to thank the emergency services personnel who have worked tirelessly through this period of time. It is also a timely reminder that we all need to make sure that we have downloaded the VicEmergency app and that we are aware of the surrounds when we are travelling around the state. Do not travel in extreme weather if you do not need to, and make sure that you stay up to date with the latest information, whether it is through the VicEmergency app, through the Bureau of Meteorology or through emergency broadcasters. Please, Victorians, make sure that you are aware of the surroundings. We have got some difficult periods ahead. We are going into summer, and it is a timely reminder.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): (*By leave*) equally, can I just say very briefly and echo what the Premier has said and convey not just to this house but to the Victorian people more generally that we stand ready to work with the government, as we all do irrespective of party, to serve the communities that most need it. Thank you very much.

Government performance

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): My question is to the Premier. Victoria’s non-financial public sector debt is out of control and projected to rise to \$205 billion by 2027 because of the massive cost blowouts that the Premier oversaw as minister for transport and infrastructure, the Suburban Rail Loop and the Commonwealth Games that never happened. Will the Premier urgently come clean with Victorians about the true extent of the state’s catastrophic financial position?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:10): The Leader of the Opposition must have missed the budget that was handed down a few months ago, which laid out very clearly the finances of the state. It also laid out very clearly the strong financial management plan that the Treasurer has put in place to ensure the investments that needed to be made during that one-in-100-year pandemic – the investments that needed to be made to support our healthcare system, which was under huge pressure during that period of time, unprecedented pressure, to make sure that businesses were supported, to make sure Victorians could stay in work. That was investment that the Victorian government chose to make, because we understood that we had to make these investments. Through the work that the Treasurer undertook at budget time there is the COVID debt repayment plan to make sure that whilst our kids may have memories of COVID, they are not paying for it. That is the work that was outlined through the budget.

The Leader of the Opposition, though, also made reference to a range of transport infrastructure projects. He has never met a transport infrastructure project he has supported – never delivered one and never supported one. And here is the thing –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, it is not relevant to make nasty personal attacks in question time – it is not relevant.

Members interjecting.

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

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Speaker, I ask that you rule the point of order out of order. There clearly is no point of order. The Premier on her feet is explaining the facts of the situation, which are that those on the other side have no experience of delivering a single major project and therefore have no idea how to finance or deliver one.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked. I do ask the Premier not to attack the opposition and to come back to answering the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: The Leader of the Opposition's question went to the delivery of transport infrastructure projects, and I can tell the Leader of the Opposition this – that the level crossing removal program is ahead of time and under budget. Seventy-two level crossings are gone. That is investment that is supporting jobs, making suburbs safer and also giving us the opportunity to run more trains. The Metro Tunnel, the project that will transform Victoria's rail network, giving us the opportunity to run more trains –

Peter Walsh: When's it going to be ready?

Jacinta ALLAN: A year ahead of schedule, Leader of the National Party. The Leader of the National Party just asked me when it will be ready: a full year ahead of schedule. We will continue to deliver the big, complex transport infrastructure projects a growing city and state need, because to follow what others did during their time in government, which would be not to build anything, which was to walk away from projects, to scrap the Metro Tunnel, to walk away from critical projects our state needed, would be saying to our state that we are not going to support the productive investment in infrastructure that our city and state deserve.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:13): Will the Premier come clean with Victorians and admit to them the real cost of major cost blowouts that she oversaw as minister for transport and infrastructure, the Suburban Rail Loop and the bungled Commonwealth Games?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:13): Again the supplementary question went to matters that I addressed directly in the substantive question, but I am happy to go over it again. I would be delighted for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition to go over it again, because it is a long list of projects that we are investing in. The Leader of the Opposition has in the running mentioned the Suburban Rail Loop, a project that we absolutely intend to continue to deliver because it is a critically important project. I tell you what, if the approach that the opposition take to the Suburban Rail Loop was taken when the city loop was being built, it would not have been built. These people would have opposed the city loop in the same way that they are opposing the Suburban Rail Loop. We will continue to invest in the productive infrastructure that supports tens of thousands of jobs across our state.

Ministers statements: Victoria's Big Build

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:14): As the new Minister for Transport Infrastructure, one of my priorities is to ensure that Victoria's Big Build not only improves access to transport but improves housing affordability. Our Big Build is slashing travel times to get Victorians to work and to education as quickly as possible every single day. With the Cranbourne line duplication, the Hurstbridge line upgrade, the Mernda extension, the Ballarat line upgrade, the Pakenham line extension and the Melton line upgrade the government is expanding rail services into the growth corridors of Melbourne. The Metro Tunnel, as the Premier has indicated, is a year ahead

of schedule, and it is going to slash rail times by up to 50 minutes a day from places including Cranbourne, Pakenham and Sunbury and everywhere in between.

But we can do more about increasing the availability of affordable housing near existing and improved public transport in our middle suburbs. We will build both up and out, making sure Victorians can afford to live where they want, close to where there are work opportunities and in thriving and sustainable communities. Putting more housing, more education and more jobs near more trains – it just makes sense. We will deliver an additional 60,000 homes in an initial 10 locations across Melbourne – at Broadmeadows, Camberwell Junction, Chadstone, Epping, Frankston, Moorabbin, Niddrie, North Essendon, Preston and Ringwood, all locations with access to good public transport – building more homes closer to where people have the transport, roads, hospitals and schools that they need.

The Suburban Rail Loop, a project that was opposed by those opposite not once but twice, will slash travel times to universities and health and job precincts right across Melbourne. Increased housing in the SRL precincts will cut the cost of housing and cut the cost of transport, saving Victorians both time and money. I am not going to waste a day when it comes to slashing travel times and improving affordability right across this state.

Suburban Rail Loop

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:16): My question is to the Premier. The Grattan Institute says that the Suburban Rail Loop was dreamed up in secret prior to the 2018 election, was never recommended by Infrastructure Victoria and was announced without any consultation with the Department of Transport, Infrastructure Australia or even state cabinet. Will the Premier come clean with Victorians and explain why there was not a business case for the Suburban Rail Loop?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:17): I am feeling a little bit like I am driving the DeLorean in *Back to the Future*. We have had this discussion more than once before, but I am delighted to do it again. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that the Suburban Rail Loop is a project that Victorians have voted for not once but twice. Where is that member for Glen Waverley? There he is. The member for Glen Waverley knows all about the Suburban Rail Loop. The member for Ashwood knows all about the Suburban Rail Loop. I will stop there, lest we go around the alignment. But the reason why the member for Ashwood, the member for Glen Waverley and so many of our other colleagues support the Suburban Rail Loop, alongside the Victorian community, is because they know it is the infrastructure that is going to support those communities. If you are a young person wanting to pursue the course you dream of at Box Hill TAFE, Monash University or Deakin University, you will get there much more easily when the Suburban Rail Loop is built. Melbourne is the fastest growing city in the country, and the fastest growing city in the country cannot stand still when it comes to delivering the productive infrastructure our city and state need. That is why the Suburban Rail Loop is important.

There is also in the Leader of the Opposition's –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Before I call the point of order, I am hearing members yelling out across the chamber and calling members by their first names. That is inappropriate. Members are to be referred to by their correct titles.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, standing order 58 does require the answer to be direct. The question was: would the Premier explain why there was not a business case for the Suburban Rail Loop? I would ask you to ask the Premier to be direct on that question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked. As I have reminded members on many occasions, I cannot tell the minister or the Premier how to answer a question.

Jacinta ALLAN: I am delighted to respond, through the answer to this question, to the member for Brighton's point of order, because he may have missed that point in time in August 2021 when we released the business and investment case for the Suburban Rail Loop. We have released the business and investment case for the Suburban Rail Loop. It has been publicly available for more than two years now, and in that period of time we have got on with the delivery of this project. Victorians also in-between times voted for the Suburban Rail Loop at the 2022 election, and there are now hundreds and hundreds of people working on this project. I was recently in Burwood with the member for Ashwood at what will be one of the tunnel-boring launch sites, where work is underway to deliver the next transport infrastructure project our growing city and state needs.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:20): The cost of the Suburban Rail Loop has blown out to \$125 billion for just its first two stages: will the Premier come clean with Victorians and call a halt to the Suburban Rail Loop so that an urgent independent review can be completed to assess the real cost and its claimed benefits?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:21): We know that when those opposite talk about independent review, it is code for cutting projects, because we have seen this before. I can say to the Leader of the Opposition that we will not be cutting a project that Victorians have voted for twice, because it is a vitally important project. It is about providing better transport connections, being able to create, in the instance of Suburban Rail Loop East, the opportunity to travel from Cheltenham to Box Hill in 22 minutes. It is also about making sure that there is better and more direct access to TAFEs, to universities, to jobs and services, and the chance for more people to live closer to train stations that make it easier for people to get around. So, no, Leader of the Opposition, we will not be stopping the progress on the Suburban Rail Loop.

Ministers statements: medical research

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for Medical Research) (14:22): It is my honour to stand here today as the new Minister for Medical Research and Minister for Education in the Allan Labor government. Before I begin, I do want to acknowledge the great work of my predecessors. We all know Lynne Kosky was a trailblazer after the Kennett government cuts, who rebuilt education and made it for everyone, no matter their background. James Merlino reversed the \$1 billion worth of cuts that those opposite instituted. We restored the school breakfast program – 500 school breakfasts, 500 schools, 1000 by the end of this year. And Minister Hutchins, the new Minister for Jobs and Industry, oversaw our best NAPLAN results to date, and that is a testament to her hard work supporting teachers, schools and communities.

I am very proud to work alongside the Minister for Health on what we are doing as well at Parkville. I was at Parkville on the weekend supporting the girls' and women's football club. That new housing and biomedical precinct is literally going to change lives and save lives. Everyone knows that the Nobel prize was awarded last night to professors that worked on the mRNA vaccine. And yes, you want to know they are real professors and they do have PhDs. I do not know how many properties they own, but they were on the mark. With the member for Oakleigh, just last week I was out at the mRNA Moderna facility in Monash, and we are building that. It is a testament to the Allan and Andrews governments that the only such project in the Southern Hemisphere, a full mRNA manufacturing facility, is being built right here. From Monash to Parkville, you will be able to get to wherever you need on the Suburban Rail Loop. You will also be able, thanks to the Premier, to get off at a train station to get to the mRNA or the new biomedical precinct that the Minister for Precincts is going to really drive and invest in. Who knows, maybe the next Nobel laureate will come out of the work we are doing in medical precincts and the work we are doing right here in medical research in Victoria under the Allan–Andrews governments.

Housing

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:24): My question is to the new Premier. Firstly, Premier, congratulations on your appointment. Premier, in your first press conference you said that housing is the biggest issue facing Victorians right now, yet in Labor's recent housing statement this government ruled out rent freezes or capping rent rises in any way, meaning renters have no protections from unlimited rent rises every single year. Sixteen European countries already have some form of rent control. Will the new Premier change direction and put rent control back on the agenda?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:25): I thank the member for Melbourne for her question and her generous comments at the commencement of her question. I will have to say directly to the member for Melbourne the answer is no: we will not be reconsidering the policy position as articulated in the last couple of weeks. The answer is because we have looked around the world, we have looked in other jurisdictions and the evidence shows that they do not work. They only seem to drive down the opportunities for renters to find a property. That is why in the housing statement there is a range of additional reforms that build on the rental reforms from a few years ago, when there were 130 reforms to support renters rights in Victoria. We are building on those reforms with a particular focus on supporting renters who are experiencing renter stress. The key way to supporting renters is to increase housing supply, and that is why in the housing statement – as part of that effort to build 80,000 homes a year, each and every year, for the next 10 years – there is also a focus on supporting more build-to-rent projects. The industry indicates very clearly that Melbourne is the build-to-rent capital of the nation, and the work that is being done by the planning minister, by the Treasurer and by the precincts minister is about driving more of those sorts of housing developments so that we can give renters the opportunity to have more housing supply for them to go and have a roof over their heads.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:26): I think we will find that rent controls do work. Many European countries have already introduced them, and on the question of supply we currently have more dwellings per adult than ever before in our history. We are building at a faster rate than most other OECD countries, and yet affordability is still at an all-time low and recent figures show rents in Melbourne went up 18 per cent last year. More supply is not going to solve this alone, and certainly not fast enough. We need some other form of relief for renters who are doing it tough right now, who are choosing between putting food on the table, putting food on the table for their kids or having somewhere to sleep every single night. Renters are under immense stress so, Premier, why not put some relief on the table? Why not put rent controls back on the table?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:27): As I indicated in the answer to the substantive question from the member for Melbourne, we have looked at the evidence, and what the member is proposing does not work. The issue that is causing rental increases is an issue of supply, which is why we have released a strong reform program that is about building more homes and also making sure there is more mix in the types of homes that are being built, from build-to-rent to public, social and affordable housing and to the private market as well. That is what we are focused on, not on initiatives that have a good political catchcry but actually do not deliver the outcomes. I say this to the member for Melbourne and her colleagues: we really hope that we can work together to support more housing developments, not block them. The best way to increase housing supply, the best way to support renters, is to build more homes and not block the housing developments that are being proposed.

Ministers statements: housing

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (14:29): We know that it is harder than ever to find an affordable home and that more Victorians now are renting than ever before. While our state currently has the strongest rental protections in the country, we know that there is still more that we can do. That is why the Allan Labor government is expanding protections for renters. Our housing statement not only sets a bold target to build 800,000 new homes but it commits us to closing the loopholes that are driving up the cost of living for renters, giving renters more certainty of their leases,

also their finances and of course living standards. We will crack down on an emerging trend that has seen some landlords evict tenants at the end of their first fixed-term lease. We will restrict rent increases in these circumstances, which is very important. We will incentivise landlords and renters to negotiate fair rent increases and, if agents or landlords are issuing a new lease after they have evicted previous tenants on their first fixed-term one, they will have to offer the property at the same rent for at least 12 months. That means landlords cannot churn through renters purely to get rent increases and gives renters more certainty over their living arrangements.

We have had to fight to deliver our rental reforms every step of the way in this place. Our 2018 reforms, over 130 of them – reforms that have made us nation-leading in this state – were opposed by those opposite, but we know these reforms have made real and meaningful improvements to the lives of renters across our state, which is why we are so committed to doing more. While those opposite continue to stand against renters, we will get on with delivering more housing supply for Victorians and increasing protections for renters.

Commonwealth Games

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:31): My question is to the Premier. The cancellation of the Commonwealth Games cost at least \$600 million, including \$380 million in compensation alone, and trashed Victoria's reputation on the world stage. Will the Premier commit to appearing before the select committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games bid?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:31): Again it is a little bit back to the future, and as I have said to the house on previous occasions, when it came down to a situation where the Commonwealth Games were going to cost between \$6 billion and \$7 billion for a 12-day sporting event, the decision was made to take the \$2 billion worth of investment into regional communities and a billion dollars on regional housing – the most important issue facing regional communities as well as metropolitan Melbourne – invest in community sport, invest in tourism –

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was whether the Premier will appear before the select committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games bid. It is a very straightforward question.

The SPEAKER: Order! As I have reminded members, a point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question. The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: The reason why I was outlining the investments that are being made in regional Victoria right now through the billion dollars in the Regional Housing Fund, the work in investing in community sport, both infrastructure but also programs like the new all-abilities program to support more people with a disability to participate in sporting activity, and the work to support our fabulous tourism and major events industries in regional Victoria is because that is what I am focused on. That is what the government is focused on, not the activities of the upper house. We know all about some of the activities that go on by our opponents in the upper house. We are focused on delivering for Victorians, doing the hard work for Victorians right now, not engaging in those political activities that others want to in the Legislative Council.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:33): Will the Premier do the right thing and finally apologise to the athletes and regional Victorians who were devastated by the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:33): I would say to the Leader of the Opposition and perhaps remind him that he has been in lock step every step of the way with the decision that the government has taken. When asked if he would have made the same decision, his answer was yes. So I say to those regional communities and I say to athletes that the Leader of the Opposition speaks with a forked tongue on these matters. He is trying to walk both sides of the street. He has been in –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, earlier this question time you ruled that nasty attacks on the opposition are irrelevant, and I would ask you to ask the Premier not to do that.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Speaker, once again we hear the Manager of Opposition Business attempt to use a highly gendered attack on the Premier by talking about being nasty, and I ask you to rule the Manager of Opposition Business out of order on his point of order. He is wasting the house's time, and we can see through his attacks.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier was contrasting her views with those of the Leader of the Opposition. I do not rule that it was nasty.

Jacinta ALLAN: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that there was disappointment from some in terms of the decision that was made, but it was the right decision, and it was the right decision because \$6 billion to \$7 billion to hold a 12-day sporting event did not stack up. We have taken the investment and taken the opportunity, which were the reasons why we agreed to host the games in the first place, to put those investments into housing, into community sport and into tourism and major events. I again remind the Leader of the Opposition that he has been in lock step on this decision every step of the way.

Ministers statements: housing

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for the Suburbs) (14:36): I rise to update the house on the Allan Labor government's bold housing reforms under our landmark housing statement. Our bold reforms are already igniting interest from industry partners wanting to be part of Victoria's nation-leading plans to build 800,000 homes over the next decade. In the last fortnight alone the Labor government has received more than 100 inquiries from industry ready to roll up their sleeves and build thousands of new homes under an expanded development facilitation program.

This morning I was delighted to join the Premier to visit Nightingale Village in Brunswick, where former industrial land has been transformed into quality sustainable housing. This redevelopment demonstrates it is feasible to build sustainable, comfortable homes in established Melbourne while developing a mix of housing and retail, including a 20 per cent allocation of housing to affordable housing providers. Through our landmark housing statement we are going to make good decisions faster. We are reforming Victoria's planning system, clearing the backlog of planning permits and giving builders, buyers and renovators certainty about how long approvals will take. Through our affordability partnership with industry, the Allan Labor government will help stimulate investment in the private market to build more affordable homes for the Victorians who need them most.

As Minister for Planning I will also lead the work to overhaul the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to create a modern, fit-for-purpose planning system that works for all Victorians, not against them. We will increase the supply of homes within established Melbourne, building more homes where Victorians want to live – near transport, roads, hospitals and schools and of course friends and families. We are also going to deliver a long-term housing plan to guide how our state grows in the decades ahead. We are getting on with the job of delivering more homes for more Victorians.

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

Tim Bull: On a point of order, Speaker, I wish to bring to your attention some overdue questions. They are question 132 to the Minister for Environment, which I asked in February, and I would hope that that could be followed up, given that it is very much well and truly past the allocated time to respond; and question 386 to the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers; 387 to the Minister for Housing; 421 for the Minister for Housing; 434 to the Minister for Environment; 465 to the Minister for Agriculture; 466 to the Minister for Ambulance Services; 534 to the Minister for Ports and Freight; 536 to the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers; 540 to the Minister for Environment; 601 to the Minister for Health for the Minister for Ageing; and 602 to the Minister for Health. I understand that there have been some portfolio changes, and I hope that the new ministers allocated to those portfolios will please follow up those questions as soon as possible.

Gabrielle de Vietri: On a point of order, Speaker, I refer to a previous constituency question of mine, 156, and the subsequent response. The question was to the Minister for Planning regarding Yarra council's public open space interim amendment to the Yarra planning scheme amendment C306. The answer provided by the minister was in relation to a different amendment, that being amendment C286, which is a permanent amendment and not the interim one which was the subject of my question. I ask that you request the minister to provide me with an answer regarding the overdue planning scheme interim amendment approval.

Constituency questions

Gippsland East electorate

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (14:41): (320) My constituency question is to the Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, who I notice is here at the table. The information I seek is: when will the minister respond to representations made on behalf of Anthony York? In June 2020 Anthony was seriously injured when his car was hit from behind by a drugged and unlicensed driver in an unregistered vehicle. His vehicle was stationary at a traffic light at the time. I wrote to the minister on 13 December 2022, as Anthony was concerned about his lapsing support period, due to its expiry. In 11 months I have received no response. I followed up with reminder letters to the minister in April and May this year – again, Minister, no response. In June his TAC payments stopped. He has had no choice but to access his superannuation early because he cannot work due to the extent of his injuries. Victorians expect you, the minister responsible for the TAC, not to ignore them, and your lack of response in 10 months is shameful.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Gippsland East, through the Chair. The use of the word 'you' is not acceptable.

Narre Warren South electorate

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (14:42): (321) My constituency question is for the Minister for Police and concerns the Victoria Police Blue Ribbon Foundation. Minister, how is the state government supporting the blue ribbon foundation to the benefit of my constituents in Narre Warren South? It was a pleasure to represent the Minister for Police at the recent Blue Ribbon Cup, which was held by the foundation at Narre Warren South P-12 College. The match included a mixture of students with young leaders from Melbourne City Football Club's City in the Community taking on the Victoria Police team. The quality of the match was very high as the skilled youngsters took on the hardened police members at this event, which promotes unity, sportsmanship and community. The cup pays tribute to the work of our police members and those who have fallen in the line of duty, as recently reinforced by National Police Remembrance Day. The blue ribbon foundation continues to break down the barriers between police and our local youth, growing a mutual respect that builds a stronger and safer community. I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my electorate.

Rowville electorate

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (14:43): (322) My question is to the Premier. When will the Premier and her government invest in women's sport facilities within the electorate of Rowville? Now we have a female Premier, I would expect that this will translate into Labor finally investing in women in sport. Labor has completely failed to provide opportunities to women wanting to get into sport within the electorate of Rowville. The Rowville Football Club continue to lack proper changing rooms for their female players, requiring them to shuffle in and out of the men's teams' rooms. For a club as successful as Rowville footy club, it is just embarrassing. Yet sadly this government's failure to invest in women in sport is not constrained to one club in my electorate – no, it is more: clubs such as Scoresby footy club, Lysterfield Wolves, Knox Churches Soccer Club and the Knox soccer club.

Albert Park electorate

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (14:44): (323) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public and Active Transport. I ask for an update on what the government is doing for road safety upgrades in my electorate of Albert Park. I recently visited a busy intersection, Williamstown Road and Graham Street, in Fishermans Bend. As well as it being an intersection for vehicles, it is used by a wide variety of pedestrians crossing the busy road daily, including students who cross the road to get to Port Melbourne Secondary College and other users wishing to access JL Murphy Reserve. What plans does the Allan government have for intersections like this one in Fishermans Bend to make it safer for pedestrians?

Benambra electorate

Bill TILLEY (Benambra) (14:45): (324) My constituency question is for the new Minister for Public and Active Transport, and the information I seek is: what is the limit for unseated, standing passengers on the V/Line six-car train on the Albury-Wodonga line? I had a particularly productive relationship with the previous minister, and I really cannot understand why he is not the Premier today. But on none of those trains – not one of them – should people be standing. They travel up to about 130 kilometres an hour on some of the worst track in Victoria. The journey is close to 4 hours. It is not a suburban rattler, say, from Essendon to Flinders Street, and yet in terms of the ability for passengers to buy unreserved tickets on the ‘booking only’ weekend trains, the train is always booked out. So this is a standing or sitting-on-the-floor-of-a-carriage ticket. Helen Brockman wrote to me recently with a story of a 69-year-old friend of hers who had to stand – (*Time expired*)

Box Hill electorate

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (14:46): (325) My constituency question is for the Deputy Premier in his capacity as Minister for Education. My question is: what is the update on the modernisation works at Laburnum Primary School in my electorate? As the minister will be aware, the Andrews–Allan Labor governments have committed more than \$8.75 million towards major upgrades, which will deliver classroom upgrades and the performing arts building. These are exciting times for Laburnum Primary. Laburnum Primary fosters a wonderful, supportive culture where learning is valued and students achieve. For years they have done this with tired facilities that have constrained their growth and future plans, but that is changing. I would like to thank principal Dr Kim Dray, school council president Matt Hall and the committee, as well as all families, staff and students for their unity of vision to see this project progress into the design stages. I look forward to the minister’s response.

Polwarth electorate

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (14:47): (326) My question this afternoon is for the Minister for Agriculture, and the question I ask is: will the minister be renewing commercial firewood permits after 31 December this year? Having asked the government already this question and not having been furnished with an answer, I ask the question again. I ask this question because literally thousands of regional Victorians rely heavily on the availability of firewood for home heating, home cooking and just going about daily business. Firewood merchants right around country Victoria are sitting eagerly awaiting. They have had no notification. The department of agriculture has not been clear in its advice. We are now only a few months away from the expiration of literally a \$100 million-plus industry that is vital for the energy supply here in Victoria. People need answers. They do not want cheap talk about potential compensation. They want to keep going with this industry. They want to keep supplying and looking after their customers.

Bellarine electorate

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (14:48): (327) My constituency question is for the Minister for Community Sport. Minister, with the recent announcement of the government committing \$40 million for an all-abilities sport fund to remove the barriers to entry for people with a disability to get involved in sport, could you please provide an overview of what this fund may be used for and help to achieve

for the Bellarine? The Bellarine has many wonderful sporting clubs that are full of volunteers committed to seeing juniors have healthy and active lifestyles. In recent times three clubs on the Bellarine have introduced all-abilities programs: Ocean Grove Cobras have introduced an all-abilities Auskick program; Ocean Grove Tennis Club have started discussions about a wheelchair tennis hub; and Wallington Bears, the only baseball club in the Bellarine, has introduced an all-abilities junior program, learning the skills of baseball, which the kids have had so much fun with, and the families. I congratulate the clubs for their initiatives. I look forward to the minister's overview and update.

Ovens Valley electorate

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (14:49): (328) My question is to the Minister for Water in the other place on behalf of Joseph Romeo of Harrietville. He seeks clarification on behalf of Harrietville Cricket Club. Harrietville Recreation Reserve is maintained by the cricket club, a club that has not played cricket since the beginning of COVID. They currently receive a Goulburn–Murray Water bill for \$707 for the cricket ground. They receive a separate bill for the clubrooms. The clarification they seek is that they have not drawn a drop of water in over three years and keep getting a water bill, but continue to maintain the recreation ground as it is a common landing space for helicopters in emergency and bushfire times and for motor vehicle accidents up in the valley. They are seeking clarification regarding their obligation to continue to pay this exorbitant bill for no community benefit, apart from emergency relief.

Ripon electorate

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (14:50): (329) My constituency question is for the Minister for Employment. Minister, how is the state Labor government's sick pay guarantee benefiting Ripon constituents? No-one should ever have to choose between going to work sick and putting food on the table, but for many Victorians, including across the 100 communities I represent, that difficult choice is all too familiar. That is why our government introduced a sick pay guarantee – to help workers focus on getting better. I am so proud that we have now added more than 400 extra casual and contract jobs to the scheme. It will make such a huge difference, giving workers the opportunity to access up to 38 hours a year of sick and carers pay. Accessing the scheme is easy – it just takes 5 minutes to sign up on the Service Victoria website or app or at your local neighbourhood house. Once your details are confirmed, you will be able to access a week's worth of sick and carers pay at a minimum wage. I am so proud to be part of a government that is supporting our casual and contract workers to get a fair day's pay whether they are sick or not.

Bills

Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (14:51): It is great to return to this bill. It was a bit noisier as I saw out my contribution before, but we are back and talking about kinder and its contribution to Victoria. At the time I was talking about some of the reflections by the member for Kew, particularly around our ability to scale up. I would say to the opposition: when you see the rollout of three- and four-year-old kinder, you see the substantial capital infrastructure that has been delivered – literally new buildings, left, right and centre, across our state. I can speak in my capacity as the member for Mordialloc but also as the Parliamentary Secretary for Schools previously. When you get out into regional and rural Victoria, you see what the transformation of early childhood facilities means – that investment and collaboration and partnership – and how this is really transforming the lives and outcomes of Victorians in every community and every local council area.

When those opposite say 'We're not sure about the scale. We don't know how it will be rolled out', we have literally got that in front of us right now. Fourteen billion dollars of investment is a substantial

undertaking for the Best Start, Best Life reforms. We would love the opposition to be supporting this policy. We would like to have a bipartisan, supportive approach, but the contribution from the member for Kew suggests to me that they would scale back this project. You are saying you do not support the free kinder rollout and you do not support the cost-of-living measures that were put forward – the \$2500 investment per family and the difference this is making to Victorians that are doing it tough. We have done that on our values – put that policy forward to help families make ends meet but also to make sure no child goes without kinder, because this is the biggest transformational project we can do. Ninety per cent of brain development happens before a child turns five, and one of the greatest social determinants of life is investment in kinder and giving our kids those opportunities. It is a generational change in policy, and it will mean substantially better outcomes for kids across Victoria. So setting them up for their transition into primary school is a really exciting time.

We see the aspiration; we see Victorians who might not have contemplated choosing early childhood education as a profession now choosing that. Victoria is saying, ‘We back you. We want you to choose education. We support you in that huge journey that our state is on, and you’ve got a job into the future for decades to come, being part of this really big reform agenda.’ We need over 10,000 early childhood educators over the decade. So to anyone in our community who is thinking about what to do, maybe have that immersive experience, whether it is at high school or choosing a career change, and think about early childhood education.

I did note some comments around sessional kinders and some of the challenges that they face. There are challenges in our communities as we scale up. There are literally land challenges. Particularly in my community, in Greater Dandenong, in the City of Kingston, that is a challenge. We were a bit ahead of the pack in going from one-room and two-room kinder at about eight different sites. Quite a few investments were made in the Mordialloc electorate. We got ready for the three- and four-year-old kinder rollout. But pre-prep is transformational. Whether that is on school sites, whether it is kinder facilities or whether it is not-for-profit early years managers that will assist in that, it is all shoulder to the wheel, because we know the consequence of not acting. The lost opportunities from not doing this really important policy work now would have detrimental impacts into the future.

I remember one of the first briefings I got as Parliamentary Secretary for Schools was that you can track whether a child has gone through kindergarten – three- and four-year-old kindergarten – by the time they are 15 on their learning and development outcomes. That is how significant that time is, and we never want a circumstance where cost is a barrier to getting the best set-up, the best opportunity, for a child’s future in Victoria. It is unconscionable to think that anyone would question that, so the notion that kinder is not thriving and is not absolutely a place of aspiration, growth and opportunity does not play out in the facts. To talk down the industry, to talk down those that are fronting up every single day to teach our youngest Victorians does not match the examples we see across the state. To the notion that the government is not rolling out the program – it is literally happening, bursting out. All you have to do is drive around the community and see in every local government area kinders being upgraded. I have seen substantial facility upgrades across the south-eastern suburbs. So it does not play out in facts.

Then you say, ‘Well, I guess that’s the point of the opposition – just to oppose, just to scrap, just to cut.’ But in that environment it would hurt substantially our youngest Victorians. An opposition to free kinder – an opposition to the Best Start, Best Life policy – means cuts. It means closures of kinders and it means a loss of momentum. On this side, we the government are building, we are planning and we are preparing for the kinder building revolution. We are halfway through that, and we are continuing this critical work.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (14:56): I rise today to talk on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023, and I do thank the member for Kew for the detailed briefing that she led off with before.

The bill that we are talking about today amends the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to expand the state's powers for the acquisition, use and development of land for the purpose of early childhood education and care and for the purpose of services associated with early childhood education and care and provides for minor and related matters. The bill extends the compulsory land acquisition powers of the Victorian government, which they do have now, obviously in relation to schools, to state-owned kinder and child care. The ETR act as it stands only provides the minister limited powers to acquire for preschools that are purchased by agreement; the minister cannot currently compel that acquisition of land for preschools. The powers of compulsory acquisition under the ETR act require that the land acquisition is completed consistent with the Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986.

In 2002 the Andrews government promised \$14 billion of investment in childhood education and care, including free kinder, universal pre-prep for four-year-olds and the establishment of 50 government-operated childcare centres. I do note that this was a \$9 billion commitment at the 2022 state election, which has since obviously increased. This policy requires a significant development of new state-owned early childhood infrastructure. The 2023–24 state budget includes provision of \$2.2 billion to build state-owned early childhood infrastructure. In October 2022 the Victorian government announced that the 50 government-operated childcare centres would be up and running by 2028, with an initial estimated cost of \$584 million to achieve this, and identified locations for 30 of these 50 sites. To date the Victorian government has identified land for only four of the childcare centre locations. The government was unable to clarify when sites for the last 20 centres will be announced but has indicated that an announcement is likely before the end of this year, being 2023.

While it is the Victorian government's stated preference to locate the new childcare centres on existing school land, which makes really good sense, with slow progress on identifying these sites the government has now accepted that not all school sites will be suitable for co-locating state-owned childcare centres. That is in part due to the size of the footprint of the school and the land we are trying to identify to put these new preschools on to. As a result the government is now progressing plans to construct an unstated number of these state-owned childcare centres and newly existing school sites, proximate to existing early childcare centres. One of the proposed sites is in my patch down in the Latrobe Valley, and it is set to be Yallourn North and the Glengarry area that we are going to put the new prekindergarten into. Acting Speaker Edbrooke, you know that area quite well yourself. There has been a massive increase in houses in this area, especially out around the Glengarry and Tyers area, and particularly in Glengarry, where they do have their existing preschool, as does Tyers, and they both have junior schools there as well. With over 100 blocks being sold in Glengarry at the moment and young families moving in, it is going to require these services to be up and going in the future.

When briefing the opposition about the bill, the government was unable to provide an estimate as to how many sites may need to be acquired using these powers under its decade-long Best Start, Best Life free kinder plan. It has been confirmed that the new state-owned early childhood education facilities will be delivered by the Victorian School Building Authority. The bill is focused on providing the minister with additional powers to compulsorily acquire land for the provision of services associated with early childhood education and care. As we have just heard from previous members, to be able to educate our children in the free kinder plans and early child care is super important to a lot of families right around the state, not only in the city but particularly out in the country and regional areas where our services are lacking a little bit. But we welcome this so we can get these new facilities up and going.

As outlined in the second-reading speech, the bill will amend the act to:

- a) expand the minister's powers to acquire land, either by agreement or compulsorily, or to take on or grant other interests in land, for the purposes of providing childhood education and care and certain other services associated with ECEC, such as maternal and child health services and community spaces, and
- b) expand the purposes of the ETR Act as they relate to:

- a. the acquisition, use and development of land by the Minister, and
- b. the provision of ECEC and associated services,
- c) expand the principles of the ETR Act to recognise the importance of access to education during early childhood and state support of early childhood education where there is insufficient provision.

In the current climate with accessing materials and workers it is extremely hard to lock in these builds. In the rush to achieve the proposed builds we hope that the acquisition of land is given much thought and that the government does not just rush in and designate a site due to time constraints on rolling out these services.

The bill will enable the state to acquire land for early childhood education and care and associated services proximate to school sites or separate to school sites. 'Associated services' may include services, but not be limited to, maternal and child health centres, mothers groups, playgroups, immunisation services for infants and children or multi-use community spaces.

The bill also includes an amendment that the minister must not compulsorily acquire land for the purpose of the provision of a service associated with early childhood education and care unless the minister is also compulsorily acquiring the land for the purpose of the provision of early childhood education and care. This means that land acquisition powers cannot be used by the minister to acquire land unless early childhood education is going to be placed on the land that is going to be acquired. Compulsorily acquired land has far-reaching meanings. The Victorian government is yet to prove that its Best Start, Best Life plan will not have negative impacts on the overall provision and ability of early childhood education services across the state – both city and regional. The bill supports a rollout of this expensive and likely flawed plan, so we need to get it right. It is of significant concern that the government currently has no idea about how many sites it may have to acquire and how much the acquisition will cost to achieve the early childhood education and to deliver its promised Best Start, Best Life policy. As we said, people do get a little bit jumpy when governments compulsorily acquire land; we can see the reasons for doing this. And as I said before, every parent wants to give their child the best start they can, and early childhood learning and preschool is the way to go.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (15:06): I absolutely agree with the member for Morwell that this early free kinder is the way to go, and so I thank him for that support. However, I do wish to disagree with his comments that we are yet to prove that it will not have a negative effect. As I stand here and speak to you, my three-year-old is at free kinder. Just last week, would you believe that before we received the bill at the restaurant, my daughter, who was doodling on a piece of paper, drew a three and a five and I had no idea she knew how to do that. I was so impressed. She did not pay the bill, unfortunately, but she is learning every day in a fun environment, and I am so glad. And so against the member from Morwell's advice to not rush, we will rush, because these are big changes for a growing population, and as the member for Yan Yean, nobody knows that better than me. In some parts of my electorate, 15 per cent of the population is under the age of five. We have so many young families that are benefiting from free kinder for three- and four-year-olds, and we have got an expanding population that we need to cater for, so we are getting on and we are doing it.

This is a big reform, it is not just tinkering at the edges, so that is why we have to change the legislation to enable us to deliver what is the biggest reform to this sector since it was first envisioned, and it is certainly welcomed by many across the sector. We had heard from the member for Kew that she felt there was concern in the sector. But reading up on what the Early Learning Association Australia and other such organisations have to say, they welcome this initiative. I was really proud yesterday, I must say, to hear from our new Premier that, for her, this government will be a government that focuses on children and that has children and children's wellbeing at the centre of all that we do. I absolutely applaud that focus, and that is something I will be supporting her 100 per cent of the way to deliver.

Actually, the federal government delivered their white paper on employment recently, and this paper also touches on services for the care of children and the education of children. That paper recognises that if we are to have equal participation of women in the workforce, we need to make affordable child

services available. In 2018, 606 million women around the world said that they were not participating in work because of their unpaid caring duties. This is recognised around the world as an important thing, not just for the benefit of children, not just for the benefit of women but for the benefit of the economy as well. We are glad to have a partner in Canberra that is also working towards this. But we did not wait for Canberra; we did not wait for the federal government. This is a government that has a forward-thinking agenda, that has a vision for our state and is getting on and delivering.

When we deliver services for young children, it makes sense to have them co-located where possible. I know certainly in my community what a great difference that has made from speaking with people who work for maternal and child health, for the local playgroup or at the Jindi community centre in Mernda. They speak with me about having the kinder there and how wonderful it is that they are able to refer between services. So if a family is doing it tough in terms of cost-of-living pressures, if there are issues with the relationship or if there are health issues, they are able to support each other – all of the different services – to really wrap around families. That is what this government wants to do: it wants to wrap around families; it wants to back families to make sure that they are able to achieve the type of life for themselves and for their children that they want.

This is not a government who just pays lip-service to policies. There has been some very fancy footwork from the two speakers so far for the opposition, and I expect that will continue for the rest of this debate. They are too scared to say that they support it, they are too scared to say they are against it, so I think that the thesaurus has had a lot of work today with members opposite trying to find words that sit somewhere in the middle. The seeds of doubt they wish to sow – as if we cannot deliver our kinder policy, when the evidence is all around us that it is being delivered – are frankly laughable. I know in my community of Donnybrook we have got new kinders that are literally being constructed as we speak. One of those is on a school ground; one of those is not on a school ground. At Wallan East we have a new primary school coming for our growing community which will have a co-located kinder as well. Kinders are popping up all over the place like mushrooms, and they will be full, and they will have many happy children in them learning and developing.

It all gets back to the principles that go to why we are doing this, and this legislation amendment also has a change to the principles. They are simple words, but they are so powerful, so if you will allow me, I will repeat them:

- access to education during early childhood is important for the wellbeing of children and their families;
- all Victorians, irrespective of where they live or their social and economic status, should have access to education during early childhood ...

Those simple words, those simple statements, have driven this government to these reforms, which are absolutely life changing for so many young people. We heard from the member for Mordialloc about the impact on student outcomes for young people who have attended kinder. I know from speaking to principals in my electorate it used to be the case that you could tell which kids had been to kindy and which ones had not done the kindy when they hit prep or grade 1. Now we are making it more accessible for people, and we know that that is going to show a straight-up improvement in their outcomes. Imagine – we have just had the best NAPLAN results our state has ever had, but wait till these kids come through. Wait till these kids that have had free three- and four-year-old kinder sit down to do their NAPLAN tests. I know that they will absolutely ace them, and I look forward to the day.

There was a day in my electorate at Orchard Road community centre, where we have sessional kinder and long day care co-located with the community centre – this was constructed in cooperation with the City of Whittlesea – when the staff there did not know that the Premier was coming. We were dropping in on their morning tea. If people wish to say that the staff are unhappy, I will quote to them what one of the workers there said when the Premier stopped at her door and poked his head in to say hello. Well, first she was quite overcome – you could have knocked her down with a feather – and then, when she gathered her senses about her, she said, ‘I never thought in all my life that I would meet the Australian Prime Minister’. I did not disappoint her on that, and I can tell you, every time since

that I have gone to that childcare centre and they have known I was coming they have had wonderful hair and make-up just in case the Prime Minister comes again. They are a great group there at Orchard Road, co-located right next to the Ashley Park Primary School, which we opened in 2019, one of the many new schools in our growing area.

So with a Premier who has children at the focus of all that she does and with a government that has a track record of delivering for young families, of delivering cost-of-living relief, of delivering education reforms that matter and of helping to get people into the workforce that want to be in the workforce, the electorate of Yan Yean and the young families that are there can be confident and reassured that this government is doing all that it can in all the ways that it can to give their children the best start in life. Ultimately, what gives children the best start in life is what is best for our state, so I look forward to the new Minister for Children's further reforms in this area with the full support of the caucus led by our new Premier Jacinta Allan.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (15:16): I rise too to make a contribution on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023, and I think what is being lost certainly on government speakers is that the bill is short and specifically about land acquisition. While it gives everybody the opportunity to talk up early childhood education, which is vitally important – I do not think that there is any disagreement with anybody on the importance of a strong early childhood education; if you get around the state and you get to some of the more underprivileged areas and you see some of the issues where children have missed out on this, even with some of the First Nations groups where they have missed out on this, you know how important early childhood education is – this bill is about the powers of acquisition, the powers given to the minister.

Specifically, this is expanding the state's powers for acquisition, use and development of land for the purpose of early childhood education and care – ECEC – and for purposes of services associated with early childhood education and care and a few other related matters. Of course we have the context behind this. What sits behind this is the delivery of the Best Start, Best Life reforms, which the government has currently packaged at about \$14 billion – and I notice that that has grown by \$5 billion since the 2022 budget and there has been a couple of billion already allocated in the budget to that. So we know we have got this very big program to deliver across the state, and I think there are going to be a number of challenges as the government tries to deliver it and implement it, because implementation is not the government's strong point by any means.

The government currently has the powers of the Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986. If you have a look at the land acquisition powers which currently exist for primary and secondary schools for compulsory acquisition, the Minister for Education must compulsorily acquire land pursuant to the statutory processes contained in the act that I mentioned before, the Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986. So that is already in existence. Now with this program the government have got to work out, if they have not got the land available, what they might be able to do, and bringing early childhood education in line with that is one way.

There were a couple of things in the second-reading speech that I did seek clarification on, because the minister said that this bill specifically expands the powers to acquire land either by agreement or compulsorily – I will make a point that previously it has been by agreement – or to take on and grant other interests in land for the purpose of early childhood education. But the second-reading speech says:

... other services associated –

it is not in the bill itself but the second-reading speech –

... such as maternal and child health services and community spaces ...

So a couple of alarm bells went off to me, saying: well, what are community spaces that you can look to acquire land for? It is a fair question, I would think. The response that I got was that not just maternal and child health but things like allied health, maybe playgroup space, family services, speech and

pathology hubs may be included in those community spaces. It is not acquiring land for an additional park or kindergarten or something like that.

This reminds me of Doveton College. If members have not seen or are not familiar with Doveton College, it is a terrific model that is currently in existence. I know when I was the Shadow Minister for Education and Dan Tehan was the federal Minister for Education, he said to me that this was certainly one to have a look at. Doveton College have a philanthropic partner, the Colman Education Foundation. They offer prep to year 9, but they have wraparound health services for family and children's services. This is a school that has a high number of immigrants and refugee families. It is a lot about how to wrap the whole education and community setting around this new group of families. I think that they had done it extraordinarily well.

What we have got here is a very bold plan about how to increase the number of three-year-old kinder hours but also to introduce the four-year-old program of pre-prep. I am an enormous advocate for a pre-prep year. My daughter did do a pre-prep year quite a long time ago now, some 20 years ago, and it was certainly a feature of a number of private schools and has been for decades. What we have got here are, I think, great ideas and idealistic thinking. They are going to have a lot of challenges as we roll this out, because this government, with their implementation, are known for their cost overruns and blowouts and perhaps planning being done on the back of an envelope. I hope there is a bit more than the back of an envelope here, as we have seen with the camping on licenced riverfrontages and the Suburban Rail Loop.

If you get out there now and you talk to the schools and the kindergartens about what is happening and what they know, well, they do not actually know much. I have got 22 kindergartens in my electorate. I have got 34 government primary schools and seven non-government schools. If we have a look at the number of schools in the state – primary schools across the board – there are 1576, so the process of rolling out a pre-prep year across 1576 schools is going to be pretty enormous. Is it with early education? Is it with the Department of Education? With the primary and secondary schools, where is it going to sit? I do not think the government know, and I do not think they have worked that out, because there are so many different models out there at the moment that the government have not thought this through. Yes, it would be great to co-locate the four-year-old program at primary schools. Not all primary schools can accommodate that space, but can the kindergartens that are already in existence? Well, no, a lot of them cannot. Some of them are landlocked. They all have different models. We have community-based models, where the kinder was built by local families and run as a not-for-profit; we have that. We have got council having more or less outsourced a lot of them, in many areas. The Yarra Ranges have done mostly that. We have combined models, where they have used third-party providers. So there are so many different models out there that the government needs to think through.

One of my other big queries here is how they will use the compulsory acquisition powers that are given. The compulsory acquisition powers, I would think, should be used as minimally as possible, because there is an enormous amount of trauma associated with compulsory acquisition. I speak from the experience of having had land compulsorily acquired by the state Labor government to build that complete dud of a project that was almost \$1 billion, the north–south pipeline. Every time I drive into my property I have to drive over the pipeline. Obviously you cannot see it. I have got a bit of a paddock on it now. But the process that the government went through and how they treated people was really quite alarming.

A member: Not surprising.

Cindy McLEISH: It was not at all surprising, because they do not think about people. We know that the government have a very poor track record on property rights. We know that they demonstrated contempt in that instance of the north–south pipeline. But even just as recently as last month it emerged that during the rollout of the Caulfield–Dandenong sky rail project they acquired homes they did not need. That is where the planning was on the back of an envelope and not strong enough, because you

should not have to acquire homes that you do not actually need. What an insult and a slap in the face it is to those people whose homes you acquired and who you forced out. Now I think they are selling them off. If you have a look at the land being prepared for sale on the government's list, you can see that there are a whole range of properties in that general vicinity which would have been acquired compulsorily and now are not needed. This is something that really worries me greatly – how they will use these powers. There have been examples, as I have said: the north–south pipeline, which was a project of a billion dollars that did not even work – the water is not running out there. We the coalition made sure that that was not going to happen, and the government, I notice, have not moved on that as well.

Whilst the bill is about providing powers to help deliver Best Start, Best Life, that big project that the government have, they are going to face an enormous number of challenges. They need to do some very serious planning around this, because it has not been done yet, and they must use these land acquisition powers minimally and treat people with absolute respect rather than the disrespect which is typical of this government.

Darren CHEESEMAM (South Barwon) (15:26): It is with some pleasure that I rise this afternoon to make my contribution on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023. I must say I have just listened to a contribution that I think was just appalling. The reality is that of course we have a growing state. We have a substantial plan to roll out across this state three-year-old kinder. We want to invest in the very young people of this state so that Victoria has a strong and productive future. That reform plan, that reform program that we have got in place right now, is worth \$14 billion. That is the largest ever single investment into our young people in the history of this state. Indeed the budget handed down only a number of months ago now made to that \$14 billion plan a \$2.5 billion contribution.

I know there are lots of MPs in this place from the Labor Party who are representing growth corridor seats, and there are a huge number of people moving into those growth corridors, including my seat, that are in their twenties and thirties, and they are having kids. We need to make sure that there are arrangements put in place that enable investments to be made that deliver the services and the education that our young people need. The reality is that too often it is difficult to build the very services that our young people need for them to be able to get that great start in life, to be able to get that three-year-old kinder place, and of course with all of the reforms that we have put in place to date, with all of the investments that our government has brought to the table, there is a lot more work that is needed.

When we build new schools in this state, it is our policy that we co-locate, wherever we can, a single point of drop-off so that mums and dads who are taking their kids to education can go to the one spot to deliver their kids for kinder, hopefully for child care and indeed for schooling. It makes sense that we do that. It makes a huge difference to working families across this state to have a co-located facility. Indeed I get around pre-established suburbs in my seat. Just recently I was out at the small township of Moriac, and in that town we have the co-location of a kinder and the co-location of maternal health services. The Surf Coast shire there established that a very, very long time ago. We need to see more of these models rolled out across the state of Victoria.

I mentioned a little earlier that there has been an unprecedented investment into three-year-old kinder and getting our young people in this state the very, very best start to their education journey. We are very, very pleasingly seeing the consequences of those investments that we have been making into our young people through the very great outcomes that we are now seeing through NAPLAN, and I think we can very much use that as a tool to measure the successes of our investments.

I certainly know, and certainly anyone in this chamber that has had anything to do with local communities and planning arrangements knows, that for various reasons it can at times be difficult for governments to be able to deliver on the investments that our budgets provide. I think it is important to understand that these decisions to utilise these powers to acquire land are not things that are taken for granted. They are substantial powers, and they ought to be used appropriately. However, we must make

sure that we are able to deliver on our investment decisions and that we are able to deliver on our plans to get our kids in the state of Victoria the very, very best start to life and to make sure that we have, where possible, co-located educational services and co-located maternal health services, and this bill very much enables us to be able to deliver on that public policy reform and that investment that we wish to make. Our planning arrangements in this state are not necessarily fit for purpose. That is why we are making a lot of planning reform in this state, and it is why we need to add to the statute books the opportunity for us to be able to, where necessary, acquire land to deliver these educational services.

The Allan Labor government has made significant investments in the young people of this state, and we are going to continue to make those investments. What I think we will also continue to see going forward is the Liberal Party, in effect, doing everything they can to frustrate the reform that we wish to put in place and to frustrate the investments that we want to make in the very young people of this state – those very important, practical, local decisions to set up co-located services and to set up arrangements where mum and dad can drop the kids off and drop one off to kinder, drop the other off to school and drop into a maternal health service. This reform will enable us to do that.

We have a very rapidly growing state. Our population is growing. Certainly in the growth corridors that exist in Melbourne and the growth corridors that exist in regional Victoria we see huge numbers of young families buying land, setting up, building their properties and setting up their lives, and we need to make sure that they have local services that they can access to deliver the very best for their families and for their kids. I have no doubt that in the years to come I will be on my feet making a contribution, as all of my colleagues will, on further investments and further reform that are required to make our state the best state that it can be, and I have no doubt that into the future the Liberal Party will continue to come to this chamber and will continue to resist that reform that is important and necessary for our growing communities – the reform that is necessary to get the very, very best start for our three-year-olds and for our young families to make their futures as bright as possible.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (15:36): I was intending to start by talking about the bill, but what I actually heard at the start of the member for South Barwon's contribution was a typical insult to my colleague the member for Eildon. I was waiting to hear an amazing contribution, given how he said that she had made the worst contribution. But that is typical of the kinds of insults we expect from the men on the other side of the chamber to the Liberal women over on this side, and I think it is quite a disgrace. But in saying that, I was shocked at how bad the member for South Barwon's contribution actually was, considering how well my colleague the member for Eildon speaks in the chamber. I was waiting to hear how great his contribution was going to be, but he did not disappoint – it was woeful.

I begin by discussing the purpose of this bill. The bill is to amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to expand the state's powers of acquisition for the use of land for the purpose of early childhood education. This expands the current powers that the state has to acquire land for the purposes of primary and secondary schools. The Shadow Minister for Early Childhood and Education, my colleague the member for Kew, also outlined her concerns very eloquently in her speech at the start of the debate, and I agree with the concerns she shared around acquisition and acquisition going too far and that Labor have not got a great track record of managing projects responsibly. So it is quite reasonable that we reserve the right to address this and move amendments in the upper house.

From a South-West Coast perspective, I think the Labor government have missed the point. Yes, we seriously need to address childcare issues, but the building of new facilities in South-West Coast is not the priority of parents right now. We have actually been promised in the budget papers a facility, in this list of 50, in Portland, and I am afraid all that has been met, by many of the leaders in our community and the parents in our community, with: when and how? There is no money allocated in the budget to that commitment and there is no time frame, and the parents are at their wits' end because child care is in real crisis. We have got no people to do the jobs that are waiting to be filled, we have got no housing to put people in and we have not got child care for when people are able to go back to work. These three issues are really significant issues in South-West Coast. Recently we had a forum

on child care because the families just need something done now, so the promise of something on the never-never with no allocation of funding was not something they were taking kindly to. They need a solution, and they need it now.

I put a motion to the house just today, and I was so disappointed that the motion was not given leave so I could begin this debate, because there are solutions and there are solutions that the parents themselves have put forward. All they are saying is, we need some bespoke solutions that can actually work for families. There is a doctor in Portland, for example, who has young children. She has a practice. She has three nurses in that practice that also have very young children, and she would like to set up a day care centre or a childcare facility or in-venue care, whatever the title is. She wants her children cared for there because she has the facility and she has the demand there. But because of the regulations around child care, things like in-venue care or family day care – there are just really nonsensical regulations. For example, if I am a day care mum, I can set up a practice in my own home, but I cannot set up a practice in my neighbour's home because it just does not fit the regulations. It should make no difference, as long as the place is safe and as long as all the regulations that keep children safe are met. As parents say to me, 'If I'm happy with my child's care, then why is it an issue?' Safety should never be compromised, and nobody is saying it should. But the one-size-fits-all approach is not effective.

When you are a shiftworker, for example – nurses, police and ambulance officers are all saying to me they desperately need a solution that works for them. When a young person gets married and perhaps buys a home and then a few years in perhaps decides to start a family, they need to know that they can go back to work so they can pay the mortgage. When they put their name down for child care at, say, four months pregnant, they do not expect – this is what is happening in our part of world – to be still on the waiting list after two years when the child is over two years of age. That is what is happening. Mortgage stress and the cost of living – being able to meet the demands of living as a family – is putting them under enormous stress. These are the solutions that are available now that families want this government to consider.

When I approached the minister about this some time ago, she said this is not our problem, this is a federal problem. That is why I am calling for the inquiry to look at bringing the federal and state governments together to talk about ways that they can make the subsidy portable so that they can follow a person if they have got a neighbour next door or a grandmother or an older person who wants to help out. We need to find solutions and we need to find them now. By the time a childcare centre gets built in Portland, for example, I can pretty much guarantee that for that doctor and those nurses – the examples I have already used – their children will be at school. Police say to me, and said so at a forum last week, this is not the problem of the father and the mother with the young family, this is a problem for all of us, because we are the ones who have not got enough police on the shift to deal with the situation in the community. We are the ones, the nurses say, who are on the ward, short-staffed, trying to manage patients in an already crisis situation in the healthcare system because our colleagues who want to come back to work cannot.

There are buildings in the regions already available. There are six schools in Portland, for example, and they are not full. They are able to be adapted and made into appropriate childcare centres or even kinders, like we have seen at the Nullawarre school, which I visited recently. What a wonderful school, with a kinder on site. The kids there are really embracing the opportunity to mentor those young kids as well. It was fantastic to see. I thank the Nullawarre school for their time – taking me around and showing me the calves they were raising, all those wonderful things that you get in small schools. Those opportunities really do exist in South-West Coast. We are waiting for this sort of legislation to address an issue that is absolutely paramount – it needs to be addressed today. It will not go away with this bill and the solution that this government has put forward. For the parents who have got children that are three years and nine months of age now, this is not helpful.

I understand that the kinder announcement before the election last year was a wonderful announcement. We agreed it was. But to do it without thought, as this government has done – to bring in a bill now that

tries to facilitate it – has just put further enormous pressure on the system. No-one denies the fact that it is fantastic to get children into kinder and early childhood systems early. Three-year-old kinder is a terrific idea, as I say. If I am a mum at home who is not working and has a three-year-old, I am going to put that child into kinder now because I do not want that child to miss out on what the other children – their peers – are benefiting from. But that just puts more pressure on a system that the government did not design, did not provide training for and did not have the infrastructure ready for. It was an announcement that they thought sounded great, but it has put enormous pressure on kinders and the childcare centres, particularly in South-West Coast and I am sure right across the state.

I find this bill to be a real miss-the-mark bill. There are solutions today. I introduced the motion for the minister and her department to urgently conduct an inquiry, and that has been turned down. We need greater flexibility, which is what the motion spoke to, which acknowledges these bespoke situations that I have talked about – for example, that the doctor put forward. For the government to deny this just tells us that they are really not interested in addressing the problem. Those current childcare regulations through the federal government that they have to reassess childcare regulations and to increase access to family day care, in-venue care, long day care, occasional care and outside-of-school-hours care and improve flexibility for families without compromising child safety are a real opportunity. The minister cannot state that this is solely a problem that the federal government has to deal with. There is an opportunity for them to act and act urgently. If they take it, the opportunity is there. As I say, the situation is not one-size-fits-all, and having been a shift worker most of my life, I know that very, very well.

So there are answers, and I think if the opportunity exists, I would ask the minister to reconsider the motion that I put before the house today and set this inquiry up so the answers are there and the parents understand what they need for their children and the families understand. They are under enormous stress due to the cost-of-living crisis, and they cannot get back to work, and the doctors, the nurses, the police officers, the teachers and the retail staff are all needing more child care. Waiting for buildings to be built and land to be acquired is one answer; it is certainly not one that is going to work for today, and that is what the parents of today need.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (15:46): It is a pleasure this afternoon to rise and speak on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023. To put it really simply – I mean, this is a pretty simple bill – it is a bill that allows us to deliver on our commitment made prior to the 2022 state election to support the largest and the boldest reforms in early education that this state has ever seen and frankly that this country has ever seen; I understand that we have partners in the New South Wales government doing the same thing as well. These reforms are not just the largest and boldest that we have seen in terms of financial investment – \$14 billion to be exact – but the largest and boldest reforms that we have seen in terms of pre-prep, in terms of three-year-old kinder, in terms of the start that we can give our kids in life, and I will have a little more to say on that a bit later in my contribution.

As has been said by previous speakers, what this bill will do in its essence is allow the minister to acquire land to deliver kindergartens and 50 government owned and operated early learning centres. That will expand on the existing powers that the minister already has to acquire such land for both primary and secondary schools and will allow us in many instances, as the member for South Barwon said, to really provide what I would describe as a wraparound educational service to people in our communities. It will give this government the opportunity, as is already happening in many of our communities – indeed happening in several different locations in my electorate of Tarneit – to build facilities where there are a kindergarten, a primary school and a secondary school all right next to each other. Not only does that help young people with what can be the very tricky transition between early education, primary education and secondary education, but it also makes it far easier for families in terms of drop-off and pick-up, which will really help ease some of the congestion that I know happens around those times on our roads. This change will support the minister in delivering the infrastructure required for this government's fantastic Best Start, Best Life reforms. Providing affordable child care to communities that need it most will allow kids across Victoria to have the best start to life.

I think it is fair to say that children are the backbone of every society – indeed they are the future of every society – so making sure that every Victorian child has access to world-class early education facilities is a top priority for this government. Early education is not just a pathway to better academic outcomes for young people but also a pathway to better lives, to better communities and to a better society. We can speak until we are blue in the face about the academic outcomes that will be delivered and that will be improved through the reforms that we made prior to the 2022 election, but what cannot be lost on us in this debate, particularly in current circumstances, is the cost-of-living relief that this policy also helps deliver to every single Victorian who chooses to put their three- or four-year-old into free kinder.

For somebody like me, who not too long ago went through the experience of having children in three- and four-year-old kinder before these reforms came about, I am acutely aware of the financial burden and pressure that education can put on families, particularly families that may be doing it tough already. I am also a representative of a community that is in the top 10 communities in Australia in terms of residents that spend their entire pay cheque every single week. What these reforms mean to my community in terms of cost-of-living pressures is absolutely enormous – absolutely enormous. There is not one parent that I have spoken to in Tarneit or Hoppers Crossing that is not just absolutely and entirely supportive of the reforms that the previous Andrews Labor government made prior to the last election.

So our Best Start, Best Life reforms are rooted in the fundamental belief that every child in Victoria, regardless of their background, deserves a fair and equal start to life. My community of Tarneit and Hoppers Crossing has a number of kinders that have registered as free kinders now that are providing this service. As I said earlier, being a member of Parliament for one of the fastest growing areas in Australia, that means because of our commitment to education we are delivering new schools and new educational facilities every single year. I had the pleasure of opening two new schools just at the start of this year, both of which have a kindergarten next to them. I will also have the pleasure of opening two new schools next year. One will be a secondary college next to the primary school and kindergarten that already exist, another one will be a primary school which will have a kindergarten next to it. It is an incredible privilege to be able to go to those events to open those schools and to see exactly what they mean for families.

I have also had the privilege of visiting many of these kindergartens over the last – what are we at, 11 months? – 11 months: facilities or kindergartens like Mossfiel childcare centre and the Grange kinder, both in Hoppers Crossing, and the Tarneit North kinder, which is smack-bang in one of the fastest growing areas of my electorate, which as I said is one of the fastest growing areas in Australia. What I saw when I visited those kindergartens was amazing: children learning in an incredibly supportive environment, incredibly appreciative and happy parents because they have the cost-of-living relief that they do, happy management staff because their kinders are now at capacity – and that is why we are building more, by the way, which is what this is all about – and incredibly happy staff as well.

Studies around the world have demonstrated that children who receive a quality early childhood education are more likely to succeed in school, less likely to turn to crime and more likely to be productive members of society. In fact for every dollar invested into early childhood education, Australia receives \$2 back over the course of a child's life through higher productivity, higher earning capacity and reduced government spending on health and welfare. The self-proclaimed economic geniuses that we have over the other side I would have thought would have done some research into that before coming in and trashing what is quite frankly one of the most significant reforms for Victorian families that I have ever seen in my lifetime. As I said in my opening remarks, that is why we are more than happy to make the \$14 billion investment to transform early childhood education right across Victoria, and this has included funding for both three- and four-year-old kinder. It is an absolute pleasure, as I said, to stand up and speak on these important reforms, and it is an absolute pleasure to represent a community that this means so much to, and I commend the bill to the house.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (15:56): I have listened with interest to some of the contributions from the other side.

Dylan Wight: No, you haven't.

Peter WALSH: Yes, I have actually. I have listened. And I will come to you, member for Tarneit. I will come to you, so just you wait your turn. The lead speaker, the member for Kew, on behalf of our side of politics made it very clear that we are not opposing this legislation, so I would have thought some of the speakers on the other side might have rewritten the cheat sheet to reflect the position that the Liberal and National parties have on this legislation. We are not opposing it. We are not opposed to child care. I know in my electorate we have a childcare desert, and I will come to some of those communities there that just do not have child care and the reasons for that.

The member for Tarneit talked about the cost of living. It has been a wideranging debate. This legislation is particularly around compulsory powers to acquire land for early childhood education and to enter into leases or grant leases around that; that is specifically all this legislation is about. But the contributions from particularly the other side are about how we may or may not have trashed something. We support child care. We support getting on with it.

If you look at this program, it is over a decade. That is another thing that has happened in politics in recent times. At one time budgets talked about the next year's spend, and then everyone started talking about the forward estimates over the next four years and what they were going to spend on particular programs. Now we have this stretch that everything that is announced is about a 10-year program. So if you take a community at the moment that have not got child care, have not got an early education centre there and are not on the list for the first 50, it could be another decade before they get it. To say that this is going to solve issues for communities – when you look at the fact that there are only 50 to be built here by 2028, that is not going to solve the issues for a lot of communities right across Victoria and particularly across regional Victoria. Yes, there is a lot of money across a 10-year period, but if you look at the next few years for families that will be looking for services, they are not going to be delivered by this particular piece of legislation if you go to the second-reading speech.

It is a long, big announcement, as a lot of the former Andrews government, now Allan government, announcements are. They are big. They are a long time, but are they ever really going to be delivered? That is the issue I find. For a family now that are looking for early childhood services, their kids will be in high school before something happens out of this particular piece of legislation. I think, to those speakers on the other side who keep saying how this is going to deliver for families, it is going to be a long, long time before most families actually have a benefit out of this.

As I said, the legislation is principally around the minister's power to compulsorily acquire land, the same as it is for education projects, for higher education projects and for training projects. So it puts those same powers back for early learning there, and it is about how it can enter into leases – for argument's sake, for a local government to run a childcare facility on an education precinct: all good things to do. But if I go back to what I talked about, the fact that my electorate has a childcare desert, nearly every community is crying out for child care there. The classic example that I want to bring to the house's attention in this debate is the town of Cohuna. Cohuna does not have any child care. There has been a community program there that has been driven now for a number of years to try and get a childcare facility in Cohuna, and I pay particular tribute today to a lady called Tenielle Edge, who has helped drive that community. She understands that by the time something happens her children will be in school and it will not be an issue for her, but she knows if she does not do it, the next generation and the next generation will not benefit from it.

One of the challenges with kindergartens and early child care is that the first role in public life that someone has is in trying to get a service for their children, and then they move on to the school committee or the school council or whatever. They are not there for a long time. So getting some continuity to have a program and a campaign in a community to get a service takes someone making

that special effort after their immediate needs have moved on to another part of the education system. Tanielle and her husband when they started this program were actually job sharing. She is a teacher; he is an electrician. Except for when their parents were available to look after their children, one or the other could work and the other stayed home to look after the children. So they knew the need for that service in Cohuna.

If you talk to the school principal, they know they are struggling to get enough teachers and would have more teachers in the town if there was child care. If you talk to the hospital, they know they would have more health workers if there was child care in the town. You can talk to some of the major private enterprise employers. Mawsons quarries, one of the big employers in the town, is 100 per cent behind having a childcare centre, because they know they would have more workers in their business there. This is a vital service for every community right across Victoria. Whether it be in growth areas like the member for Tarneit mentioned or whether it be in more established communities across regional Victoria, we do need child care for the reasons that I have set out.

The other thing I would like to touch on is this issue of compulsory acquisition and when compulsory acquisition is appropriate to be used. I suppose in this case I think there is a strong argument for that to be the case. The member for Eildon talked about the north-south pipeline and the compulsory acquisition of land to build the north-south pipeline, which was just a very blunt instrument – a sledgehammer to crack a nut – to build that particular pipeline that has cost Melbourne Water users nearly a billion dollars and has never ever been used. Was that a good use of compulsory acquisition powers? No, I do not think it was at that particular time.

If you look around my communities and the communities that the member for Mildura represents, the member for Lowan represents and the member for Ripon represents, there is talk of compulsory acquisition powers for easements for the VNI West powerline. People are very, very perturbed about what compulsory acquisition might look like for those particular people in those communities. Is it appropriate for the heavy hand of government to come in to compulsorily acquire easements across private property and across farming properties that will actually destroy their ability to farm into the future? I have one particular farmer who has a number of lateral move irrigators. The powerline route at this stage is proposed to go diagonally across his property with his lateral move irrigators, and he effectively will not be able to irrigate that property in the future. Is it appropriate to have a compulsory acquisition power to put him out of business? Even if he gets compensation, it is not the same as being able to farm for generations. This particular farmer is from the fourth generation. His boys that are farming it are the fifth generation of that family that are farming. His son's children are going to be the sixth generation that will be farming in the future. Is the use of compulsory acquisition powers appropriate for that? I do not think it is.

We have got to be very careful as legislators in this state when we start talking about the benefits of compulsory acquisition and whether we should be using or whether we should not be using it. That is why this bill needs to be treated with caution – to make sure it is not used inappropriately by a minister in the future. In that case I do not believe we should have compulsory acquisition powers for the VNI West powerline. It is not appropriate. They have not talked to the community, and there are other options available, like upgrading the existing major lines in north-west Victoria, which could be done on the same easement rather than on a whole new easement across a whole heap of productive agricultural land. So I would caution this government as to whether they bring in legislation to do things like the VNI West powerline in the future, which could be a major disadvantage for the communities that I represent.

What I would like to see, instead of the towns that are listed, is expanding the number of towns the government talks about. If they have got a 10-year program to bring early childhood centres to a whole heap of communities across Victoria, why not speed it up? Why not do it in five years? Why not make sure that the township of Cohuna, for argument's sake, could have child care a lot sooner than maybe in a decade? By the time that decade goes past all the families that are there now looking for early childhood services will have their kids in high school. So I would urge the government to stop with

the grand announcements, stop saying you are going to take 10 years to do something and actually talk about what you are going to do over the next three to five years so people can make some real plans about how they can achieve the services that they need for their families.

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (16:05): I also rise to speak on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023 and start by saying that it cannot be denied that Labor governments are doers. This is the case with our Allen Labor government and the commitment and single-mindedness that we have when it comes to delivering our package of reform and services, in this case the Best Start, Best Life. Our government has a vision, a plan for the future, and this is about our youngest Victorians and families in futures to come. The previous speaker from the opposition seemed to be suggesting that if things are not being done straightaway then we should not be doing anything at all, but of course we need to plan for the future as well as for the current day. I will go through a little bit later some of the work that has already been done for the now and is building our capacity for kindergarten in the electorate of Thomastown.

On the issue this bill addresses, which is around the minister's ability to acquire land, of course when it comes to compulsory acquisition it is a last resort, but there needs to be a way. Projects and the future of Victoria cannot be held up by an individual or two. I know the example that residents have in the electorate of Thomastown is where a major road was delayed for a considerable period of time because the landowner wanted to make a super profit out of selling that land. It was only through a threat of compulsory acquisition that allowed a proper and responsible negotiation and the proper and responsible payment of Victorians' money that something was able to be resolved. It is really good to see that that road now has been built, but much, much later than it should have been. So we need to balance the needs of the community, the needs of the collective, with the needs of individuals and their right to have fair compensation or other avenues explored. But when we are looking at a program as huge and big as the Best Start, Best Life program, which is to provide bigger and better kindergarten services and early education for our youngest Victorians, we cannot let anything get in the way.

The research is very clear that the best chance for all children to have a good life is to have the right environment during the most active period in brain development – up to the age of five. Further research also uncovers that for every dollar invested in early childhood education, Australia receives \$2 back over a child's life through higher productivity and earning capacity and reduced government spending on health, welfare and crime. And it expands opportunities for women to pursue paid work without the prohibitive cost of child care, which again the opposition was talking about when this in fact is a program to address that issue as well.

Families do want high-quality early-years education for their children. This is evident as the overwhelming majority of children attend kindergarten, both three-year-old and four-year-old, even though it is voluntary. This is also the case in the Thomastown electorate, although perhaps not as high as attendance in other electorates, and this is something that we hope to change. The Allan Labor government program is to provide 15 hours of free three-year-old kindergarten and progressively introduce up to 30 hours of four-year-old kindergarten over coming years. This requires a massive building agenda both in established areas to cater for the increased hours and a younger population moving into the suburbs like Lalor, Epping and Thomastown as well as to provide for the massive growth in population in the newer suburbs in the Thomastown electorate such as North Epping and Wollert. Therefore something needs to change. The current system is not working. Currently local government is responsible for building, identifying and overseeing kindergartens, but a quick look at the enrolments in some of the local kindergartens in the electorate of Thomastown show 30 approved places; no vacancies at Barry Road Pre School; Lalor East, no vacancies; Jacaranda Preschool, no vacancies; and Vasey Park Preschool, no vacancies. So we need to do something about this. This is what this program is about, and this is why we need this legislation – in order to be able to acquire land if necessary so that the building of the kindergartens is not inhibited unduly.

If you look at the Labor government's record in the seat of Thomastown, already this program has begun in terms of building kindergartens. Again, when the opposition talks about having done nothing

now and that everything is on the never-never, that is just not true. For example, just recently, last year, I attended with the former Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep, Minister Stitt, the opening of Lalor Primary School Kindergarten, and that was a great event, with a whole lot of happy families ready to enrol their children. We have also built and opened the Barrawang Primary School Kindergarten, the Kirrip Kindergarten in Wollert, the Thomastown Primary School Kindergarten, the Galada Kindergarten and the Korin Korin Wollert kindergarten. There are something like 10 kindergartens that have been built and are either taking children and teaching them now or are about to do so in 2023, with further programs on the agenda.

It is also exciting for the more established areas to have received the election announcement from our government that one of the 50 government-owned-and-run kindergartens will be established in the Lalor area. As I said, this is an established area, and we do not have a lot of spare land. It would be terrible and I know residents would be absolutely horrified if they thought that the kindergarten that was promised in Lalor could not be built because there was an inability to find any land suitable to build that kindergarten and start teaching our children, which is so important.

Recently I attended a number of kindergartens just to do a round-up of visits to see how things are going and talk to them a little bit about what they see as the future of early years education. I have to say they were extremely excited about and welcoming of the government's announcement, as were many of the parents that were there – I was there during pick-up and drop-off in many cases and was able to talk to a number of parents who had their children at the particular kindergartens. I must say none of them were complaining or unsupportive because their children might miss out because they will have grown up by the time the full extent of this program is realised. I do not think most people think like that. They of course want good programs and good services for their children and families, but they also understand that when you look at massive visionary programs there are things that we need to ensure for our future children and littlest Victorians as they continue to grow, and we need to continue to nurture them.

Epping North YMCA kindergarten is another one that was built by our Labor government in recent years. This is a kindergarten that is right next door to the Harvest Home Primary School. Of course they also talk about how important it is to have that there and avoid the double drop-off, because as I said earlier today, the Thomastown electorate does have lower rates of attendance for kindergarten in some cases, so we want to make sure that all barriers are removed to encourage as many children as possible to go to kindergarten. Having kindergartens based in primary schools means that parents do not have to drop their children off at multiple locations; they can all be dropped off at the same place but in different buildings to get a really fantastic education from the early years educators that are in our preschools and kindergartens.

When I was visiting I think many of the educators were really excited about the Big Build program for kindergartens, both for the building of them and the increase in hours. They all acknowledged how important it was for children to have that ability to interact and socialise with other children. It is the time when children can be identified if there are any particular special needs that might be required, so that intervention could be early. I did not really hear a bad word about the government's program on kindergartens, and this is an important part of it.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (16:15): I also rise to address the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023, and in doing so I wish to acknowledge the contribution of the member for Kew, the newly appointed Shadow Minister for Early Childhood and Education, who only just over 24 hours ago was appointed to that position and did a stellar job in leading the opposition's contribution to this debate earlier today. As previous speakers have mentioned, the purpose of this bill as part of the government's \$14 billion Best Start, Best Life initiative is to expand access to early childhood education and care, and the Labor government will need to build new state-owned early childhood infrastructure across multiple sites – and I will come to some of those sites later in my contribution. The bill seeks to amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to

extend the Victorian government's current powers to compulsorily acquire – that is a tough word to say, isn't it – land for schools to cover state-owned kindergartens and childcare centres as well.

At the outset I think it is important to note a couple of things. Firstly, every member of this place wants children and young people to have the very best start in life that they can. As a parent myself, I want my two children to have the very best start in life that they can have. There is no one thing, one common thing, that unites parents in not only this state and this country but I suspect the world over more than the aspiration to want the very best start in life for their child, and it is the responsibility of people in this place to do everything they can to assist in providing that best start in life. Of course this does not happen by accident. It happens because of the dedicated work and the contribution – the vocation in fact – of many amongst us who have chosen to be educators in the early learning and kindergarten sectors. I want to pay a special tribute to those often young people in our communities and amongst us who do choose the vocation of being an educator in our early learning settings. They are indeed special people: very special people, dedicated people, loving people, people who give the very best of themselves for the benefit of some of the youngest people in our community – my kids as well. So to all of those educators in Victoria I think it is important to acknowledge their significant contribution to the education of our young people. Study after study tells us that these young people in their early learning years take on so much and learn so much that sets them up and prepares them to make a contribution in their primary school and their secondary school years as well.

In 2022 the then Andrews government promised a \$14 billion investment in early childhood education and care, including free kinder, universal pre-prep for four-year-olds and the establishment of 50 government-operated childcare centres. As previous speakers have identified, in that October 2022 announcement there were 50 government-operated childcare centres that would be, in the government's view, up and running by 2028, with an initial estimated cost of just over half a billion dollars – \$584 million – and locations for 30 of the 50 were identified at that time. If you fast-forward 12 months, there is an issue that the opposition have, and that is that to date the government has identified land for only four of the 50 childcare centres that it promised in October 2022, so 12 months on: 50 centres promised, land for only four identified. Again, we support access to child care for as many Victorian families as possible who need it, but we do have concerns, as previous speakers and as the newly appointed shadow minister identified, with the government's inclination to bring about these changes through land acquisition. We do have these significant concerns because of the government's track record when it comes to land acquisition and compulsory land acquisition.

Some may say that Labor have demonstrated a contempt for property rights, one of the foundational principles of our community and one of the foundational principles on which our country is built. Just last month during the rollout of its deeply unpopular Caulfield to Dandenong sky rail, the government actually acquired homes it did not need in order to complete that project. So we have seen examples just in recent times where the government has used powers to compulsorily acquire land, which it ended up not needing. They would argue, I am sure, that there was a process that was undergone, that owners of that land were compensated appropriately and within the letter of the law, but I dare say that those families that were affected in those homes that were acquired by the government through the guise of this sky rail project would have been much better served if the government in fact did not need the land – to stay put and to stay where they were. In that particular case the government acquired more homes than was absolutely necessary, having an impact on communities.

This goes of course to a broader point of critique that I have and that we have with the government, and that is their inclination to do things without reference to communities, without a complete understanding, or even a partial understanding for that matter, of the impact that some of their decision-making has on communities, and their inclination to say they are consulting about things when in fact their version of consultation is assuming what a community thinks, far removed from the realities of that community. If I can give one assurance to the house it is that in three years time, when there is a change in government and when we will have the opportunity to govern for all Victorians and not just say that but actually do it and mean it, we will listen to Victorians when it comes to making decisions

that affect communities. That is a guarantee which I am very prepared to give, even with three years of sufferance under this government to go. The 2023–24 state budget includes provision for \$2.2 billion to build state-owned early childhood infrastructure. Does this budget allocation include the cost of acquiring land for these centres? It is a question which we pose and which we hope some of the government member contributions will be able to respond to.

In the time that I have remaining I just think it is important to go to a broader point to address the importance of access to child care in communities, especially in regional communities. Child care is not just a thing that is a nice thing to have. For many families, as our communities face increasing cost-of-living pressures, it is an absolute necessity. It does not just enable mums but also dads to return to the workforce; it enables them to contribute to their communities and contribute to their families – to restore within themselves a sense of purpose, a sense of direction, a sense of contribution not just to their own communities and to their own workplaces but to their own families as well. We should be doing everything we can to be making child care as accessible as possible to get people back in the workforce to contribute to our economy, to help grow our economy and to give every family and every single person with a child the opportunity to contribute back to the community in which they live. That is why access to child care is so, so important. The next opposition speaker to make a contribution is the member for Lowan, and I am desperately looking forward to her contribution and her personal reflections on the lack of access to child care, specifically in her electorate of Lowan. I suggest the house pay attention to that contribution.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (16:25): I am afraid the house will have to sit through my contribution first. It is a pleasure to rise and lend wholehearted support to this really important bill, the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023. Investment in early childhood education has been a central tenet of our government's entire reform program since 2014, but just this week the first Allan ministry also and again put children at the very heart of our government's policy agenda, with the newly appointed Minister for Children – who I am delighted to work with in her other capacity as Minister for Disability – responsible for all aspects of service delivery that wraps around children. Families and children do not live their lives in disparate silos. We as a government need to optimise the impact of government services, whether it is in the realm of child protection or in early years education, and the new minister's leadership across all of these domains will help us get to the point of optimisation.

Of course this bill, as we have heard through the debate, provides the Minister for Education and the Minister for Children adequate and appropriate powers to acquire and develop land to implement our expanded \$14 billion Best Start, Best Life program – nation-leading reforms that will see that investment of \$14 billion over the next decade to completely transform early childhood education and care in Victoria. The bill will amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to expand the minister's power to acquire land for early childhood and other associated services. It is the co-location of services that I think is a particularly important dimension of this bill and of this government's approach to early childhood education and social policy more generally. I am going to return to the importance of that co-location later in my contribution, but I first just want to touch on why our government's \$14 billion investment in early childhood education is so important – so important for children, for families, for parents, for productivity and skills, for our economy and, above all, for enabling every young person in Greenvale and every Victorian to thrive and to live the best lives they possibly can.

The Best Start, Best Life reforms that we have brought to this place and implemented across Victoria are driven by a very simple moral imperative: every Victorian deserves the opportunity to thrive throughout their life, and too many have been held back. One in five Victorian children start school behind. They are not getting the best start in life, and that has lifelong consequences. Unfortunately, a child's family circumstances and their postcode matter. Geography, postcode and socio-economics do matter to outcomes. That is why this bill is so important. It provides the Minister for Children with the levers that she needs to ensure that vital, cost-effective interventions to improve early childhood

education can be delivered in the communities where they are most needed. In 2018 more than one in five Australian children started school vulnerable, according to key measures of holistic development, including social, emotional and communication skills and cognitive ability. These vulnerabilities can translate into lifelong negative consequences for individuals, for families, for communities and for governments. Not getting the best start in life and arriving at school behind peers is extremely difficult to overcome. It is not impossible of course, and every single day the wonderful teachers across our education system are working to confront that educational disadvantage and to overcome the barriers that too many children arrive at school with. But extensive research does show that the effect of developmental vulnerability at school entry can persist throughout life, and it does impact children's ability to succeed at school and thrive throughout their lives. In effect, the compelling research, the unequivocal research, tells us that children who start behind tend to stay behind.

We have led the nation as a government in investing in the capacity and capability of Victoria's school system through a massive school building program and all of the evidence-based components of the Education State reforms. The many reforms and initiatives that constitute that program and that have been implemented across our school system since 2014 are all about enabling every young person in our state to thrive and to assist those who started school behind to catch up and to reach their potential. But there is more work to be done, and that work is especially important in the earliest years, where policy reforms and interventions can make the most profound differences.

I am reflecting in this debate on my own experience as a teacher in regional Victoria, and the deep and abiding frustration and in a sense the shame that I felt as a teacher seeking to differentiate my instruction and support every single student in my classes when I could not do enough for the children in my classroom who were in effect functionally illiterate, who were developmentally delayed, who had not had the early childhood support that they deserved and needed to ensure that they were not behind their peers. When you are seeking to teach a class of 25 to 30 students and to support each of them, it is a really difficult job in a practical sense to provide the best level of education and care that you can for every single student when they do not have the foundational building blocks in place already. That is why there is, as I say, that moral imperative to do more in the earliest years in those first thousand days and to give every student the opportunity to thrive before they get to school, to augment and support the work that parents do in a loving home and to ensure that every community across the state has access to great early childhood education. The minister needs these powers because that location dimension does matter – we need to be investing in early childhood education where it is needed most.

Children from all backgrounds can have vulnerability in key areas of cognitive, social and physical development, but some children experience far higher rates of vulnerability than others. Family socio-economic status is the most significant factor determining whether a child enters school developmentally on track. In short, across Australia and Victoria, a child's family circumstance can play an unacceptably large role in determining their outcomes, well before they get to the school gate. As somebody motivated to enter Parliament because of my experience of educational disadvantage and the gaps in opportunity that are based on geography, and with a commitment to addressing and redressing those barriers and ensuring economic and social justice for all Victorians, I am incredibly supportive of empowering the minister to be able to situate new early learning centres in the communities where they will have the greatest impact. I am proud to be part of a government that has an unstinting commitment to equitable access to high-quality early childhood education.

I want to also thank each and every one of the early childhood educators, as the member for Sandringham said, who do a fantastic and tireless job in providing education and care for the children they work with and care for. It has been such a pleasure to visit kindergartens and playgroups across my electorate, to read stories and deliver kinder kits, and I have seen firsthand the wonderful work of centres like Kool Kidz in Greenvale, Pelican Childcare Fairways in Craigieburn, Goodstart Early Learning in Meadow Heights, Learning Nest Early Learning Centre in Meadow Heights, Good Samaritan in Roxburgh Park and so many more.

I do want to talk about the kind of co-located services that exist at Good Samaritan Roxburgh Park and at schools like Bethal Primary School in Meadow Heights, in which this year's budget invested \$10.5 million to comprehensively modernise and upgrade. The co-located kindergarten that is already on that site was delivered by the previous Andrews Labor government, and the Allan Labor government will be continuing that investment in the school precinct. The presence of the kindergarten at the school enables families to have really high-quality education all the way through from the earliest years and enables the single drop-off. It is co-located with a community hub that provides services like job support and English language skills for recently arrived migrants, and it brings together the complex system of social services that provide education and family support across our community. It is what co-location, to me, is all about: enabling families and school communities to be the hub and to provide that great level of support for the families they care for.

The \$14 billion that we are investing over the next decade matters immensely. It matters because a child who has attended two years of quality kinder will on average have better cognitive, social and emotional skills when they start school. It matters because that child will on average have more developed social and emotional outcomes at age 18. It matters because those years of early childhood education will help provide that child with better development in language, pre-reading, early number concepts, non-verbal reasoning, independence, concentration and social skills.

This is a government whose approach is guided by evidence and focused on outcomes. We have heard that 90 per cent of a child's brain develops before the age of five, so early education has profound effects on the way that children develop. We have also heard about the economic dimensions of these reforms. Every dollar invested in early childhood yields a \$2 dividend back over a child's life through higher productivity and earning capacity, reduced crime and lower levels of government services being called upon. This is not just positive social reform, it is a landmark macro-economic reform that will set us up for the future, and I commend the bill to the house.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (16:35): I too rise to speak on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023. I have got two kids in early learning at the moment and one in prep, so I am in the phase of my life where kinder, child care and primary school are a very big part of our life and a big part of our community. So I very much have a lot to do with our local kinder in particular and understand the huge value it has and role that it plays, not just in our kids' lives but in the broader community as well.

On this bill, our education spokesperson, Aiv Puglielli in the other place, will go into further detail in the upper house on our position and what this bill actually means in terms of the acquisition, use and development of land for early childhood education and care. I will leave a lot of that detail to him. We will not be opposing it in this house, but I wanted to make a few short remarks about some things that are part of this bill. Something that we hoped this bill, or the government, would address that has not quite been acted upon yet, but still could be, is the need for Victoria's first government-built-and-run early childhood centres – this is what it is about – to be in the areas of most need in Victoria. This bill is in part delivering on an election commitment by Labor to build 50 government-run early learning centres across Victoria, particularly after there was some quite influential research that came out that showed there are many childcare deserts in Victoria – areas where early learning is extraordinarily difficult to access, if it exists at all. We know of course – and as other speakers have talked about – that research shows that those first three to five years of a kid's life are absolutely integral in setting the foundation for a healthy and happy life. If we invest in kids in those first three to five years – if we invest in their learning and their education and care before school – it pays huge dividends later in life, not just for those kids and their families but for all of society. Kids who are supported in this part of their life are more likely to be healthy, happy, have less health problems, less contact with the justice system, better educational and employment outcomes, better opportunities – you name it.

The gold standard for providing this kind of care is actually integrated child and family centres – so not just childcare centres but centres where families can access all kinds of supports and services; we know this – where families can go through one door, whether they might be accessing maternal and

child health services, early learning or perhaps the library, they can then come in that door, access that service and then get connected to a whole bunch of other services they may need. They may need housing, or they may need family violence services or other health services. Having a place that can act as a navigator of all those government services is really influential and is really the gold standard. At this time in a young kid's life, even for people who really understand all the services that are available – you are on no sleep and you are trying to figure out how to care for a child – it is a very busy time of your life and a time of juggling. It is hard to work out the services at the best of times, let alone if you are facing additional barriers or additional needs. This model of integrated centres is absolutely what we should be aspiring to.

I have seen the impact of those centres in my own electorate. We have an absolutely terrific one in Carlton called Our Place Carlton Learning Precinct. It is an early learning service co-located with Carlton Primary School and with maternal and child health services and other services as well. It does that really incredible holistic work of supporting families and their kids, particularly for people from a disadvantaged background. We are incredibly lucky to have that in our community.

Before the last election the Labor government made an announcement that it would build 50 early childcare centres. The locations of some of those have been announced but 20 have not been. I would advocate, as I have said, for all of them to be integrated centres, but I think something that hopefully everybody in this place would agree with is that at the very least they should be in the areas that need them most in Victoria. Unfortunately, with the first group of centres that Labor announced, all of them were not really in the areas of greatest need objectively. Social Ventures Australia has done some important work on this. They did a report mapping Victoria's need for integrated child and family centres. They found, for example, Carlton and Melbourne CBD north are both areas of need in my electorate. Their research identifies 132 geographic communities, out of more than 400 in Victoria, that are experiencing high levels of disadvantage and child vulnerability. Within these 132 communities more than 21,000 children aged zero to six years are currently experiencing high levels of disadvantage. Some of the communities topping the list are Morwell, Meadow Heights, Campbellfield, Coolaroo, Broadmeadows and Fawkner. But out of the 30 locations that the government have already announced for their new early childhood centres, only 13 of them – so that is less than half, 13 out of 30 – are even in the top 50 list of disadvantaged communities. We have 20 pre-existing centres across Victoria, many of which are also not in that list of the highest need areas. That will add up to hopefully 70 centres across Victoria, but that is still not giving the coverage that every kid, and every kid in a disadvantaged area, needs. So not only do we need to do more and build more of course, but surely the minimum should be ensuring that the centres that Labor has already announced and the ones that they are about to announce the locations for are located in the areas of greatest need, not the areas where perhaps some politicians need some more votes. It would be better to do it on the objective data of where kids actually need them.

Something else that has been coming through when I have been talking to stakeholders and families in this area is that they are describing a really fragmented system of early childhood support in Victoria, and everyone who has had a baby in Victoria probably knows exactly what I mean. You usually have a baby in hospital – perhaps at home or in another location supported by a healthcare worker, but most babies in Victoria are born in hospitals – and then you may or may not, when you take your baby home, receive a visit from a hospital midwife in your home. Then you are connected with, in an ideal circumstance, your local maternal child health service. You go to them and you attend a series of visits until your child is about 3½ years old, as your baby grows. Then you may eventually, if you choose to do so and if you are able to access it, transition to an early learning centre or perhaps a kinder and then on to a school. So there are several transitions here from hospital to maternal child health to early learning to kinder to school where we do not actually have good visibility of what is happening with kids and how many are falling through the cracks. If your child needs special support – say they need a speech pathologist or a specialist doctor or a physio or behavioural support – well, good luck getting an appointment anywhere, really, unless you are happy to wait a very long time or pay a lot of money, and

even then you might not get one. My own daughter has been on the waiting list for a specialist clinic at the Royal Children's Hospital for four years now, with no appointment in sight.

During and after COVID things really got worse in this area as well, so many parents were forced to leave hospital quite early – or earlier than they otherwise would have – due to a lack of nurses and midwives and a lack of investment in that maternity care system over a long period. Many then did not receive home visits because of the shortage of staff. The government pushed many of those early postpartum services to maternal health nurses. They said, 'Okay. Hospital midwives, we don't have enough; they can't visit you in your home. We'll get maternal child health services and nurses to do that.' They took those on the best they could, but they were also understaffed, so other maternal child health services and visits were dropped, and parents were generally receiving fewer maternal child health checks over that first 3½ years of their kid's life. I have had experience of this with my own children. My third baby was born just after the COVID lockdowns. We missed some maternal child health appointments, as you do when you are busy. That was our own fault, but we did not get any follow-ups. No-one followed up to check if we were going to come to our appointments when we missed our appointments. When I called the line to try and rebook, they were booked out for weeks and weeks and weeks, and I ended up just giving up. Now, that is on me, and we are lucky he is the third child; we know that he is healthy. But the thing that it made me wonder is: are we not getting followed up because the maternal child health nurses have looked at him and thought, 'They're fine. He's fine, he's healthy, he'll be okay,' or is there actually just no system to follow up kids who miss checks, and are there a lot of kids who are falling through the cracks who really should not be? So a lot of stakeholders and families in this space are telling us that we need a new system – and we could have a new system. We have an opportunity here to do it better.

I was really pleased to see now that there is a children's portfolio and we have a Minister for Children, and that portfolio has been elevated in this new government. I think that is a really exciting opportunity to look at how we do this system of early childhood better and not just look at it in terms of the sound bites of free kinder, which is fabulous, but actually look at the whole system, as I mentioned, from hospital right through maternal and child health, early childhood learning, kinder and school – that whole first five or six years of a kid's life. Can we integrate those services better? Can we have a holistic system that follows children through all those transitions and makes sure none of them are falling through the cracks and makes sure that every child in Victoria is getting the support that they need to grow up healthy and happy and having great opportunities? I very much commend the elevation of the children's portfolio. For the final centres that Labor has not announced the locations for yet, I very much hope that Labor looks at the research into areas of greatest need and that those centres are located there rather than in areas that might be convenient or in fact politically convenient.

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (16:46): It is a pleasure to rise in favour of the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023, a key piece of legislation as we continue in our mission to ensure Victoria is the Education State. It is more than just a slogan; it is a statement of fact backed by NAPLAN and VCE statistics. From our youngest Victorians in kinder through to students and apprentices at TAFE, I am proud to be a member of the Allan Labor government that is making the bold policy choices that are setting our state up for success.

As a government we know that great futures for Victorians start with world-class early education. It is not just our political belief, it is the science, because we know that 90 per cent of a child's brain development takes place before they turn five. On that, I would just like to wish my little one a happy fifth birthday tomorrow. It absolutely makes sense to invest in our youngest Victorians, setting them up not just for academic success but success in life more broadly. It is not just the science that tells us this, it is also the economics. For every dollar the Victorian government invests in early childhood education, \$2 of value will be returned to the Victorian community in productivity benefits over that child's life. Investing in early childhood education stacks up financially and scientifically, so the Allan Labor government is committed to doing it well with our bold \$14 billion Best Start, Best Life kindergarten reforms. Because when the Allan Labor government wants to make meaningful policy

change in the state, we are bold and gutsy, not just in the space of education but across climate, transport, housing, energy, health, social justice and so much more.

Our Best Start, Best Life reforms are truly game changing. Firstly, we are making kinder free for three- and four-year-olds in Victoria. Starting this year, families across the state are benefiting from savings of up to \$2500 per child per year thanks to the Allan Labor government, and their young ones are getting a world-class education. With my young daughter in free kinder this year I can see firsthand the benefit of our Best Start, Best Life reforms. Families are saving money and kids are getting a great start to their education, and it allows parents across the state to have the freedom to return to work should they choose. But we are not stopping there. Over the next decade we are steadily increasing the number of hours of free kinder, transitioning to 15 hours a week for three-year-old kinder statewide by 2029. And by 2032, four-year-old kinder will transition to 30 hours per week of universal pre-prep. It is a hard to oversell the positive impact this has on our kids' learning, on Victorian household budgets and on the journey towards gender equity, when no Victorian will be forced to stay out of the workforce against their will because they have to provide child care. It truly is a win-win, and the Allan Labor government is proud to be getting on and making it a reality under the leadership of the newly minted Minister for Children in the other place. I would like to take this opportunity to wish her the very best in this exciting new role.

Reforming a system from the ground up also means growing the workforce from the ground up, and that workforce component is a critical element of our Best Start, Best Life reforms, because our vision of a Victoria where the next generation gets a great kindergarten and pre-prep education will only come about if there are even more world-class educators. That is why I am proud to say the Allan Labor government is investing \$370 million in this space, attracting and retaining an early childhood workforce that is truly world class, because we know our youngest Victorians deserve nothing less. We know that with anything in this state it is not just about a quality education and recruitment but also about supporting the workforce development and retention once educators begin their careers. It is the reason why we are removing the once-in-a-lifetime limit on our flagship free TAFE courses, and we are extending these efforts with new early years learning networks, coaching and mentoring experiences, establishing communities of practice and running conferences for our first-year educators.

To make all that possible – the free kinder, pre-prep and workforce development – we need to invest in the physical infrastructure. Across Victoria dozens and dozens of kindergartens are being upgraded with major capacity expansions across the city, the suburbs and the regions. Take, for example, Bambou Early Learning Centre in Glen Waverley. It is a terrific kinder providing great local education, so I am thrilled to see it being expanded when I drive past it every day.

It is not just about upgrading existing kinders, because we need to build brand new kindergartens too. That is exactly where the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill comes into the picture. Currently under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 the Victorian government has a range of powers to acquire land for the purposes of creating educational facilities for school-age Victorians and older. While those opposite did not use those powers too often, on this side of the house the Allan Labor government is getting on and building new schools at a cracking pace. One hundred new schools will be done by 2026, with 84 new schools already open or funded and another 12 coming online in 2024. In fact we have used our time in government to invest \$1 billion to acquire land for new world-class schools. The scale of it is truly impressive.

While these powers have been well used to establish new schools, the current version of the act does not give the Minister for Children the powers to acquire land for new kindergartens, and that needs to change. We are not just making kindergartens free, we are investing in the world-class facilities our students deserve, which matches the quality of teaching early childhood educators deliver every single day. That is why the Allan Labor government is building 50 new state government-run kinders across the state where they are needed most: in areas with low access to existing kindergarten facilities and where possible co-located with schools, TAFEs and major employment centres to end the tedious double drop-off.

To get on and make these 50 government owned and operated centres a reality, the minister requires a suite of legislative powers to acquire land for the purposes of early childhood education. That is exactly what this bill is about: getting on and doing. It takes the efficient and effective acquisition powers from the existing Education and Training Reform Act and extends them to the Minister for Children. How do we know that they are efficient and effective? Well, one only has to look at our bold school building agenda to see the outcomes firsthand. The impacts of these 100 new schools are nothing short of delightful for students and families. I am sure that is especially the case for members in this place who represent the growing communities in our outer suburbs and beautiful regions. I am excited because the benefits of the government's Best Start, Best Life reforms will be on a whole new level. I have seen it myself with my daughter, one of the many Victorian kids enjoying free kinder, and I know I am not the only member of this place with a kinder-age child benefiting from free kinder.

Since being elected as the Labor member for Glen Waverley last year, I have also had the great privilege of visiting our terrific local kinders to meet with our educators and their students. A shout-out to the Waverley Kidz Children's Centre, Bambou Early Learning Centre, Syndal Preschool, Tally Ho Preschool, Barriburn Preschool, Petit early learning centre Forest Hill and Burwood Heights kindergarten. I have not just met with them onsite at their kinders, I owe a shout-out to the terrific Birralee Preschool community in particular, who I joined at a sausage sizzle at Vermont South Bunnings recently too. At all of these great kinders across my electorate the impact of our government's Best Start, Best Life reforms are clear to see. This government's policy is truly a once-in-a-generation reform, but I think Best Start, Best Life and indeed the education and training reform amendment bill before us today speak to something greater about this government, because when we get on and do something we are not just about tinkering around the edges, it is about bold and gutsy reform. Whether it is health, education, public transport, climate change or energy policy, we have the guts to do what matters.

On the theme of today's bill, education, we are committed to positive reform across the entire system, and the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023 goes a long way to achieving and putting our Best Start, Best Life reforms into motion. But make no mistake, our Best Start, Best Life reforms are just one part of our sweeping reforms to make Victoria the Education State – multibillion dollar investments in school upgrades, transforming our specialist schools, the expansion of our free TAFE program, co-locating early childhood facilities at new schools and making it free to study nursing and secondary teaching. By making these investments we are putting our money where our mouth is and ensuring the quality of our school buildings and programs matches the quality in teaching our educators deliver every single day. When combined with the Best Start, Best Life reforms that this bill helps usher in, Victoria is absolutely a nation leader, because in Victoria we are proudly the public education state. In the name of my daughter and every other young Victorian who will benefit from free kinder, I am thrilled to commend this bill to the house.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (16:56): It is always fabulous to contribute to debate in this place but particularly in an area that I am so passionate about. I note the comment from the member for Melbourne and her contribution about what it means to be a parent in this place and having children in early years learning and child care and having a child in primary school. I am exactly in that same category. It is fabulous because we need parents – it does not matter whether you are a mum or you are a dad – in this place who can represent the views and the challenges that there are when it comes to accessing child care and kindergarten, particularly when you live in rural and regional Victoria.

We have heard so many times in the past in this place about the childcare deserts which are putting enormous pressure on families in Victoria and in rural and regional Victoria in particular. In my electorate of Lowan vast expanses of our region are childcare deserts; in fact I think all of my electorate is a childcare desert. Given that I represent about 20 per cent of the state by landmass, there are a lot of people who simply cannot go to work in those areas which they are trained to do to fill some of the job vacancies we have got in our local area and deliver the services that local people need. I have spoken to so many parents who are extraordinarily frustrated that they cannot access child care, and

these are particularly people who are going to fill those jobs that we desperately need. There are so many nurses who are trained up in emergency medicine or intensive care or even maternal services that cannot go back to work and that cannot work full time simply because there is not child care available. It is not just people who work in health. We also have experts in agribusiness and experts in so many areas – I know of a valuable SES worker – and people who have jobs in small businesses. And it is not just the mums and it is not just the women, it is also the dads. I have got a couple of examples of really fabulous young parents who are doing their best to put food on the table through this cost-of-living crisis, but they cannot both have a job to pay their bills, to pay their mortgage and to keep up with the escalating cost of their grocery cart, because they cannot access child care. I know of parents who are builders who have had to cut back on the number of days a week that they can work or where Mum is looking at working night shift in a hospital and they never ever see each other. We are creating imperfect environments for parents to raise their children simply through the lack of access to child care in rural and regional Victoria.

There are a couple of different challenges around this. It is not just around infrastructure, but infrastructure is very, very important. I was very proud to announce in the lead-up to the last election that the Liberals and Nationals, if in government, would commit to building the Dunmunkle childcare facility in Murtoa. It was fabulous that Labor, who do not have a strong presence in my electorate – and I am not kicking them about that; it is just the fact of the matter – recognised that I am a strong voice for our local region and I know where we need our funding delivered and where we need to invest in our community and quickly followed suit. I am pleased that has been announced in the budget this year, and I look forward to that delivering childcare support for people who live in that local area.

But is not just the Dunmunkle region where we have a critical shortfall of either infrastructure or childcare workers in our local area. We know that right across the electorate there is a critical shortage of these experts that know exactly what our children need to get them to the next level and to make sure that when they reach primary school age they are ready to learn, they have got those basic foundations of learning, they are delightful children on the way through, they are respectful and they know how to work with others – and all those other goals that we get regular updates on from our childcare operators.

In Horsham there is a massive waitlist for children who want to access child care. I know of a family who signed up when they first found out they were pregnant, early in the pregnancy, for a childcare place. They knew that they would need child care because both parents worked. They are still waiting for child care. I think they have been offered one day a week. It is now two years down the track. They are never going to be able to access full-time child care in the local area. They are never going to be able to access that. That is what puts women and the gender pay gap behind more and more every time, and unless that is being delivered, unless we are seeing more childcare workers delivered in country areas in particular, we are never going to increase access to child care.

I know that what we will hear from the next speaker from Labor is, ‘We’re doing so much. We’ve got free TAFE. We’re doing this and fixing this problem.’ It is not fixing the problem. We are not getting the output of the number of childcare workers we need in the system to be able to deliver all of the childcare support that is required across the state. There are massive gaps. It is not delivering the number of workers we need.

I have got a three-year-old daughter. She will be in three-year-old kinder next year. She will be the first generation who will be in four-year-old kinder, now renamed ‘pre-prep’. We do not know whether she will be able to access the full program because there is such a critical shortage of childcare educators in our region. While it is good that we will have more access and more hours of kindergarten, if there are not the workers available to deliver those additional hours, then kids are going to miss out. There will have to be a cutback of childcare availability. We need to see an outcome of more childcare workers. We do not just need to see the policy. We do not need the number of how much money we are putting into it. We need to get those jobs filled as soon as possible.

At this point I would like to give a pat on the back for all of the early years educators right across the state. I would particularly like to acknowledge Mel and Jodie, who are the childcare operators at Ella's child care; Naomi, who is doing a fabulous job – she is responsible for delightful Miss Ella, who can sometimes be a threenager; and Margaret as well; and everybody who is in that learning space 3. They do an amazing job. They understand each and every child and know how to bring out the best in them and give them the best possible start to life.

I would also like to give a bit of acknowledgement to another program, another initiative for early years education in my electorate, which is the By Five Wimmera Southern Mallee Early Years Initiative. This is an award-winning program that does an incredible job in providing additional support to families to make sure that they are best equipped to give their kids the best possible start to life. I have used their resources before, and that was around getting a child to sleep and stay in bed all night – something that comes up for every single parent at some point in time. There are other aspects, which are around making sure that every child and every parent is fully equipped to make sure that they do have a fabulous start to life. And we know that key role takes place in those first five years, which is why it has been called the By Five program. I would like to acknowledge Jo Martin, the CEO of By Five. I have known Jo for years and years and years. She is absolutely fabulous and is truly committed to making sure we have fabulous health outcomes and educational outcomes in our local area, also supported by great staff. Cara Miller, Emily Smith, Hannah Purcell and Tracey King – you all do a fabulous job. Thank you for your hard work and support.

As I said, there are a number of areas across my electorate where there are childcare deserts, and I would urge the government to look at focused programs to address those childcare worker gaps. In Hamilton and Dunkeld there are massive gaps in the number of workers, and they are impacting on the access to child care and early years education but also impacting on parents and particularly mothers in being able to return to work or work full time. Also, I know over in the Edenhope area there have been critical issues when it comes to child care for a long, long period of time. They urgently need to be addressed.

I would like to just acknowledge the leading work that the Nationals have undertaken at both a state and federal level when it comes to closing the gaps on access to child care in rural and regional Victoria and Australia. At state conference earlier this year and at federal conference just a few weeks ago, the Nationals unanimously supported a motion from Victoria which was around urgently addressing the infrastructure gaps, the worker gaps and also looking at regulatory changes that would make sure that we do not have some of those issues that come up with family day care, long day care, after-school care or out-of-school-hours care – all of those different arrangements have got different rules, and they do not always mesh well. It means that, particularly in regional areas where you need greater flexibility, we have got simply too much regulation which is restricting access to child care, while obviously we do not want to put children more at risk. For example, at Donald, where there was a new childcare facility opened that had room for two family day care operators, the regulations say you can only have one at a certain address. They are simple changes. They can be made at a state level. I urge the government to look at all of those ideas to make sure that we can open up access to child care for all Victorians.

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (17:06): I rise to support the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023. We know that 90 per cent of a child's brain development occurs in the first five years and kids that start kinder at three get a real head start in life. Early education is as important as primary and secondary school, and this bill updates our legislation to recognise this and to ensure we can build facilities where they are needed. I would really like to thank Minister Hutchins and Minister Stitt for their dedication to early childhood education and care and their incredible work and dedication to these portfolios. It has been really wonderful to visit so many schools and kinders with them both, and the support from their offices to make sure the kids in Broadmeadows get the best start in life and the very best education has been outstanding. I really look

forward to continuing this work with Minister Carroll and Minister Blandthorn under an Allan Labor government, which is good to say. I know their dedication to these portfolios will be just as strong.

In almost nine years of government, Labor has demonstrated our commitment to early childhood education and care and ensuring that every Victorian gets the best start to life. We know that for every dollar invested in early childhood education, Australia receives \$2 back over a child's life through higher productivity and earning capacity and reduced government spending on health, welfare and justice. From tertiary to the early years, Labor is doing what matters. We have delivered an over \$14 billion transformation of Victoria's early childhood sector through our nation-leading Best Start, Best Life reform. It is the biggest investment in the early years in our state's history and a huge step towards a brighter and more equal future for every Victorian family. Over \$14 million has been invested into kinders in my electorate recently, including \$1.7 million for the Lorne Street Kindergarten at Fawkner Primary School. It was great to visit there with Minister Hutchins when we turned the sod on the \$7.8 million investment at Fawkner Primary School. To have those co-located makes a real difference to kids and families in that area.

We have invested \$1.6 million for the Glenroy Hub Children's Centre, and that is a hub model. When I was on council, we purchased the land to set it up. It is a library, childcare centre, health centre and maternal and child health centre, and it also has the neighbourhood house in the same facility. So people go in there, they get all the services they need, all the support they need, and it is also a great place to meet other families.

We have invested \$1.6 million in Will Will Rook Preschool. The Premier visited there along with Minister Stitt and me, and we saw the wonderful work they are doing. They are situated on the Ballerit Mooroop site, and they have a really wonderful bush kinder program as well. We invested \$1.47 million in the Upfield Kindergarten at Dallas Brooks Community Primary School, and again I visited there with Minister Hutchins when we delivered the 25 millionth school breakfast through the school breakfast program. So to say that we are not investing in the areas we need to for early education is just completely untrue. My electorate has some of the most disadvantaged pockets, and I have had so much investment in the electorate in early years and in schools.

We have invested \$1.4 million in York Street Kindergarten at Glenroy West Primary School, and Minister Stitt, Minister Blandthorn and I really enjoyed our visit there. We read a book together to the kids, which was lots of fun. We invested \$1.4 million in the Glenroy Central Kindergarten. That is a really good spot. You avoid three drop-offs there. You have got the secondary school, the primary school and the kindergarten all in one spot, and it is exactly what we are trying to do – make those hubs of education and learning. Kids are then comfortable to move from kinder to school and on to high school, and it certainly avoids unnecessary travel and traffic for parents, because as we know, that kinder year can be a bit of a killer when they start at different times and you are trying to get from one place to the next. It is really hard.

A member interjected.

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD: Yes. We invested \$793,000 for Meadows Primary School Kindergarten, and that is where I first came across community hubs. They started in Broadmeadows, and Community Hubs Australia were set up to get families, particularly new arrivals, comfortable with the idea of going to kinder. So they come along, and they are often places where new mothers will learn English. They can see their kids, but they are being cared for in a room next door. It gives the families that confidence that their kids are safe, they are in a safe place and they are learning skills. It also helps with that transition to school, because for a lot of families, particularly newly arrived, kindergarten and school is the first time they interact with families that are outside their immediate family. So it is really important, and the community hubs model is an incredible model for families.

We have also invested \$640,000 for Belle Vue Park Kindergarten, \$524,000 for Dallas Kindergarten at Dallas Brooks Community Primary School, \$479,000 for Broadmeadows Preschool and 33 extra

spaces at Oak Park Kindergarten. That was part of the announcement I made with the member for Pascoe Vale and Minister Stitt. That was part of 11 upgrades we are doing in the Merri-bek area for early years. So there have certainly been lots of investments in our areas to look after the early years and make sure all of our kids get the best start in life. We have got investments for Fawkner Kindergarten, Campbellfield Preschool and Westmead children's services centre and \$641,000 invested for Gowrie Broadmeadows Valley, plus an expansion to double their size. It was wonderful to announce that with Minister Stitt. We went along there, and they do some really amazing things at Gowrie Victoria. They have one of the first Indigenous education programs, and they have got a First Nations cultural adviser, which is groundbreaking.

I could not be prouder of this Labor government's nation-leading free kinder program, which started this year and saves families up to \$2500 per child per year, with Labor introducing a new year of universal pre-prep and 30 hours of play-based learning, fully funded. That will make a huge difference. It is 30 hours of pretty much free child care so that parents can get back to work, get their kids into early education and have all those benefits that that has. It is 30 hours of free child care for every four-year-old – a critical step for parents who want to go back to work but cannot afford the childcare fees.

As promised, we are delivering the 50 new affordable government owned and operated childcare centres and early education centres in areas that need them most. I am really fortunate to have two of those centres in my electorate, one in Glenroy and one in Fawkner. The one in Fawkner, at Moomba Park, is actually going to be completed by 2025. It will be one of the first built, will be licensed for up to 130 kids at a time, will have community meeting and playgroup spaces and will be conveniently co-located with maternal and child health services, because every family deserves access to high-quality education and care no matter where they live or how much they earn.

For many families in my electorate, kinder is often the first time they interact with other families. It is also a really important place to make friends. I certainly loved my kinder time at Glenroy kinder, which is now the Hope Centre. I caught up with the pastor there the other day, and they are still interested in doing early childhood education there and have put a lot of investment into making it an open space where often parents groups will meet up. But for my kids, the friends they met at kinder and the friends I made with other mums and parents at kinder have been lifelong friendships. I still catch up with Veronica, Sophie, Patrick, Liz, Joey, Kat, Donna, Thalia and Georgie. That was when we really supported each other as parents, and I am sure a lot of other parents are in the same boat. It is a time when the kids can play together, you are not too constrained by nap times and you can really have a supportive family around you. That is what it is – well, that is what it was for me, so I was very lucky.

I want to shout out to the teachers that I had as a little kid but also the dedicated teachers and educators my girls had at kinder. They were so welcomed and so warmed and so loved at kinder. They had such a wonderful time, and I just want to shout out to Viv, Angela and Tania for the difference they made to their confidence, their going out into the world and all that they taught them. I am really pleased that some of those teachers have stayed on and are now at the new Glenroy Community Hub. I am really proud of this government's \$60 million investment in the Broadmeadows centre of excellence for learning, which will train a new generation of teachers.

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (17:16): I rise today to speak on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023, a bill that we do not oppose. This bill will essentially aim to make it easier for the state to acquire, use and develop land for the purpose of early childhood education and care. This will primarily be achieved by amending the Education and Training Reform Act 2006.

With a desperate need for more childcare providers, particularly in regional areas, this bill has the potential of being a step in the right direction. However, at the moment it is very much just a potential, as many of us have become accustomed to disappointment when it comes to this government. These changes to the ETR act will allow additional and compulsory land acquisition powers that are comparable to what currently exists with schools. The ETR act as it stands only provides the minister

with limited powers to acquire preschools, which are regarded as purchased via agreement. This government has stated that the intent is for the provision of new kindergarten capacity, not to replace capacity that exists elsewhere. Let us hope this is true.

As things currently stand, regional Victoria is in dire need of more child care. The idea that child care is becoming increasingly unobtainable has been backed by data, in particular in the Mitchell Institute's 2022 report on childcare deserts and oases. The report categorises deserts as where there are less than 30 per cent of childcare places per child aged four and under in the region. Sadly, there are several of these deserts in my electorate of Euroa. Kilmore, Broadford, the Benalla region and the Seymour region are all classified as childcare deserts by the Mitchell Institute. These are major towns, not inaccessible backwaters, that are being placed at a disadvantage when child care is so rare. This is a real handbrake on our regional communities. The lack of childcare options is placing a significant hurdle in front of young people who want to raise their family in the country. In some areas we have got incredible local childcare providers, but in most of these places there are up to six kids competing for one place. It is simply not sustainable.

As part of the government's rollout of new early learning centres, it was pleasing that Seymour was included to alleviate some of the strain on the system locally. Sadly, there has been a clear lack of urgency when it comes to the establishment of this centre and many others in our regional communities. Just four out of these 50 centres have been confirmed in the first round, with three of them being found in Labor seats. From current timetables, it looks as if the Seymour facility will not be built until beyond 2028, despite there being an urgent need for it right now. Sadly, the issue goes beyond Seymour. The early childcare centre promised for Seymour will not be built anytime soon, after this Labor government chose not to include it in the first round of centres being established. After the community was promised that a new early learning education centre in Seymour would be built, there was some sense of excitement, as residents have been stuck with two-year waitlists across most of the region. After I raised questions on notice to the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep asking for an update on the new centre, it was revealed that the government did not intend to follow through with this commitment until at least 2028.

This government has a clear track record of overpromising and underdelivering for Victorians. I have serious concerns that the Best Start, Best Life initiative will add to this ever-growing list. An initial estimate for the cost of these 50 childcare centres was tabled at \$544 million. So far land has only been located for 40 of the 50 childcare centres. On top of that, no-one knows where 20 of these 50 centres will be located, including this government. The government originally said it would co-locate the new childcare centres on existing state school land, but now it says this will not always be possible or appropriate. This is an expensive and likely very flawed plan. Kindergartens across the state are nervously waiting for any scrap of detail. How are they expected to meet the expectations of this government? Will they have to double the hours for four-year-old kindergarten from 15 to 30 hours per week or find more staff in a field that is already dealing with extreme shortages?

As usual, the government has failed to adequately consult with stakeholders, with kinders and childcare centres finding out about the so-called free kinder reforms and the new funding regime mere months before being expected to operate under the new arrangements. Of our local providers, not one was consulted on this whatsoever. Can we really expect the government to deliver these 50 centres within a reasonable time period, let alone without outrageous cost blowouts, like so many of their other ambitious projects? We have seen how the Commonwealth Games, or lack thereof, embarrassingly ended. We have seen the blowouts involved with the Big Build and multiple other infrastructure projects. Now we are expected to trust this government to implement this project without issue, on time and under budget, but they have not earned that credibility.

Towns like Nagambie and Avenel were not even included in their announcements, despite serious problems finding local child care in those areas. I hold out hope that these towns will be considered. However, with the time lines and lack of responsiveness we are seeing, it is hard to get excited. Avenel has a catchment population of nearly 2000 people, and in recent years this has included many young

families, with many more set to join the community in the coming year with the completion of a local housing development. With the neighbouring towns like Nagambie also struggling with extreme waitlists, it is imperative these towns have the facilities needed to provide child care locally to parents who need it. There is still plenty of work to be done for even smaller communities like Murchison, Rushworth, Tooborac and Redesdale, who have no child care at all.

I recently set up a survey for young families in my community to fill in, and sadly it highlighted the dire state of child care in the region, with responses from all over the electorate sharing similar concerns. The survey, which was launched in June, asked members of the community several questions about their experience accessing child care. Responses have been received from major towns across the electorate such as Avenel, Benalla, Broadford and Rushworth, as well as other smaller towns in the region, and I thank every parent who took the time to take my survey. The survey was created so that impacted members of the community would be able to have their voice heard, as under this government many of these towns have been ignored. The results simply show there are far too many people in our community who are struggling to access child care.

Some of the issues raised in the responses included multiyear waitlists, a lack of childcare providers in their town and families relocating to other areas to access better child care. One hundred per cent of respondents shared that the limited childcare options have resulted in them being unable to get back to work or training to a level that they would like. Of those that were working, the responses highlighted a significant reliance on family and friends for child care due to limited options and excessive waitlists in the area. Fifty-four per cent of respondents relied on family and friends a great deal, while 85 per cent were relying on family and friends in some form.

My community is not the only one suffering with these issues. I know several of my regional colleagues receive similar concerning messages from constituents, and I am sure many city-based members do too. Having spoken to experts on the matter such as Social Ventures Australia, who have done extensive research on the topic, it is clear that too many Victorian children are being put at a disadvantage due to a lack of child care. They tell me that 132 out of 433 communities in this state are experiencing high levels of disadvantage and child vulnerability. Nearly 22,000 children under the age of six are experiencing high levels of disadvantage. This must be addressed. We cannot sit on our hands waiting for this government to slowly roll out an inefficient program that will likely struggle to address the full scope of this issue. All year, kinder has been mentioned so many times in press conferences by this government and in motions and bills, yet when it comes to action we have seen very little.

While speaking on this topic it would be remiss of me not to mention the fantastic work that all the childcare staff do in the Euroa electorate. Without enough funding, staff or support, you still consistently do an amazing job looking after our children when it is so desperately needed. Thank you for all that you do. I would also like to personally shout out to Yia Yia, my daughter Quinn's teacher, who has a remarkable ability to manage our little pocket rocket. I would also like to thank my mum, who steps in because we have been on a two-year waitlist for further days, like many families. To all of my son Arthur's teachers: thank you too. You are miracle workers for never tiring of his unwavering commitment to trucks and car races. Thank you for all of your help. We truly could not be here without you – quite literally.

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (17:26): I am happy to rise to speak on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023. My head is about to explode. I have been sitting here for most of the afternoon listening to an incredibly wideranging debate, probably far too wideranging, in my small opinion. I listened to the member for Eildon, who started off by saying that not many people on this side of the chamber were actually talking about what the bill is about. Well, I am going to break that mould and hopefully talk about what the bill is about before then branching off and going slightly wider. I would also like to say the member for South Barwon very eloquently painted a picture of why we need this bill and how it will positively contribute to our society, our community and obviously our children.

This bill amends the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to make further provisions for the acquisition, use and development of land to support the expansion of the Best Start, Best Life early childhood reforms – fantastic reforms. A lot of people have spoken about them, and I will mention them again later on. This bill ensures that we can acquire and develop land to provide early childhood education and care and strengthens the importance of early childhood education and the state's role in supporting its provision. A lot of people have talked about the fact that we are not building enough kindergartens or that there are not enough kindergartens in the community, and we all agree with that; we all want to build more. But this bill is not about that; this bill is not the golden bullet that is going to do that. This bill, once passed, will enable the minister, if need be immediately, to acquire land to build a kindergarten. That is the point of this bill, so I would like to focus on that.

As it stands now, the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 provides for the acquisition, use and development of land by the state for the purpose of early childhood education and associated services. However, the current act limits the powers to the purpose of school-based education, vocational education and training and higher education, and land for preschool programs can only be acquired by agreement. There are various changes to the clauses and indeed to many separate subsections within the 2006 act, but the main purpose of the changes is to provide that an additional purpose of the act is the acquisition, use and development of land required for the purposes of the act. The 2006 act currently contains certain powers for land acquisition, development and use; however, the 2023 bill expands those powers.

One of the new additions to the 2006 act will make it explicit that the act makes provision for early childhood education and care and services associated with early childhood education and care. The current 2006 act focuses on school and post-school education and training, with limited provision for early childhood education. This bill will therefore expand the state's power to acquire and develop land or to take on or grant other interests in land for the purpose of providing early childhood education and care and other associated services. It is an enabling piece of legislation that will give the minister powers to acquire land and/or to lease land to build the kindergartens and early learning centres that the communities right across our state need and that many in this chamber have said they want. To that end there are many amendments and additional definitions to the 2006 act, such as:

- **Early childhood education and care**, which means education and care provided by an education and care service other than –
 - education and care provided by a family day care service;
 - education and care provided by any other prescribed education and care service ...

Another new definition is for 'kindergarten program', which means:

... an educational program delivered by a registered early childhood teacher as part of an education and care service to any child who is of or over the age of 3 years and under the age of 6 years in the year that the child takes part in the program ...

The definition of 'preschool program' is now repealed, and this is an important fact. In fact the term 'preschool program' is replaced by the term 'kindergarten program' throughout the 2023 bill:

Replacing *preschool program* with *kindergarten program* seeks to ensure there will be no confusion between the use of the term "preschool program" in the **Education and Care Services National Law (Victoria)** and the term *preschool program* in the Principal Act, noting the term is currently defined differently in both pieces of legislation. The new definition of *kindergarten program* is better tailored to contemporary early childhood education programs offered in the 2 years before school in Victoria than the existing definition of *preschool program*.

These changes better define what can constitute a service associated with early childhood education and care and provide more flexibility around those services. This also gives the minister the ability to acquire land when need be by clarifying all these points.

I also note that clause 6 amends section 1.2.1 of the 2006 act by inserting two new principles – I love my principles – and clarifies that these principles apply to the 2006 act as amended. They are that:

access to education during early childhood is important for the wellbeing of children and their families;

And that:

all Victorians, irrespective of where they live or their social and economic status, should have access to education during early childhood ...

These principles represent the Labor government's ongoing commitment to early childhood education, which of course brings me to Best Start, Best Life, which really is what this bill is all about. Giving your child the best start to their best life is all that a parent can hope and dream for, and that is exactly what this government has done and is doing. We are investing over \$14 billion to give children a host of opportunities and programs that will ensure kids are not left behind and ensure that every child has access to early education no matter who their parents are or how much they earn. I know some people in this place think \$14 billion is an enormous amount of money – and it is. However, surely we can all agree that providing children with increased educational opportunities and greater access to kinder and providing a skilled workforce to teach our children is 100 per cent, absolutely worth it.

Evidence has shown that investment in early childhood education has incredible benefits, not just socially but economically as well. To put things in perspective, and others have already mentioned this, for every one dollar that is put towards early childhood education, society benefits by receiving \$2 back over a child's life. This is through prior higher productivity and the ability to earn more whilst reducing government spending on things like health, crime and welfare, because when you provide better options for positive outcomes, you get positive outcomes. This is why this government's continued reforms will benefit Victoria for decades to come.

A lot of people have already talked about these points, and I really will not go through them, but I will mention we have got our free kinder, which is an amazing thing; we have got our pre-prep, which will be 30 hours a week by 2032; we have got our three-year-old kindergarten; we have got our early learning centres and are establishing 50 government owned and operated early learning centres; and we have got our kindergarten infrastructure and kindergarten workforce. This government has listened and is doing what matters.

As mentioned previously, this bill is seeking to allow the minister to acquire land so that the government can co-locate early childhood services at kindergartens and schools to help parents by eliminating the drop-off and providing an easily accessible streamlined service that requires less travel for the community to access them. Reassuringly, all efforts will be made to ensure that these new facilities will be situated on government school sites, government land or partner land before we seek to acquire land. It is the government's intention to centralise early education places and associated services, such as maternal and child health practices, where they are best suited – at kindergartens where parents will already be dropping off their kids. As an example of need, in Tyabb there is a new housing development that has just been finished. Over 150 houses have been built, and those people have moved in. There will be another development starting soon with another 150 houses. In all, in a couple of years time we could have 300 families with kids all wanting to go to a kindergarten. We do not have one that will accommodate that. If need be, this bill will ensure that all those children will have access to the education they deserve. That is the point of this bill. I commend the bill to the house.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (17:36): It is with pleasure that I rise today to contribute on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023. Coming from a rapidly growing area of our state, I am pleased to see the government taking action to address the critical shortfall in early education facilities. I will start by thanking the department for the briefing that they provided and the clarity on the bill. I know the members of the coalition were grateful for this. I am pleased the government has put this bill forward, and as previous speakers before me have noted, we do not oppose this bill – not one bit. It is nice to come into the chamber this week and see three bills in the chamber and not a whole heap of motions that we just debate to fill in time. This is a good bill, and it should benefit all Victorians.

What my concern is at the moment in my electorate, and I have said this many times in this house, is that I am in the fifth-fastest growing area of Victoria. I do understand there are another 20 locations to be released yet, but when you look at my electorate and you look at the towns – and you might know some of these towns, Acting Speaker Crugnale, being that we are neighbours – of Bunyip, Longwarry, Drouin, Warragul, Trafalgar and Yarragon, which are the major towns in my electorate, I have not seen one of these towns on this list. That is not even to mention all the other smaller communities. I mean, my electorate is nowhere near as big as the member for Lowan's. It is 4500 square kilometres. I do have a lot of other smaller communities in there, and this growth is going into those areas as well. The member for Hastings actually said it quite well – that this should be for the benefit of all Victorians and their children. What I would like to see in the release of the next 20 locations is that I am hoping to see at least one in my electorate – just one. At the moment there are zero in my electorate. I do know the major towns of Warragul and Drouin at the moment are short four to five kindergartens. That is before we get extra growth, and this runs out to 2028. What I would like to see the government do for my community is focus on the growth of my area and to make sure the families in my area get that benefit.

It was interesting that the member for Glen Waverley, I think, stated we are putting our money where our mouth is. I would remind the government that what they are doing is putting the taxpayers money where their mouth is. This has been a big problem with this government when it comes to promises and continual budget blowouts. When you start talking about taxpayers money, and I have said this many times in this chamber, you must look for the best bang for your buck when you are spending taxpayers money. I would not go out on a spending spree. The government should be very, very calculated and smart about how they do this.

When we talk about compulsory acquisition – and I understand the land will need to be acquired to deliver this – be very, very careful when approaching people. People generally do not like compulsorily acquisition. It makes them nervous. It could be a family home next to a school that needs to be acquired to build a kindergarten or early learning centre, so be very, very careful with this. I encourage the government to do extensive consultation and extensive research before you just say 'That's a location'. Be very careful how you do this because it always upsets people. No-one wants their land taken from them by government. They automatically get cranky. The hairs go up on the back of their neck. But I do understand why the government is doing this; it does need to happen.

Probably my biggest criticism of the government is, again, you have left your run too late. You did it with housing. You did not do anything until 2020. You have been in government now two terms plus we are a year into this term, and now you come out with this. We all know Victoria has been growing. It has been growing for years and years and years. It is tipped to outgrow Sydney in I do not know what year, but I have heard it preached in this place many times before. My criticism of the government if I have to criticise is that again you have left the run too late – again you wait until it is at crisis point.

The member for Euroa touched on this earlier, and I have spoken to kindergarten providers in my area. When you announed the three-year-old kinder everybody had to gear up very quickly. The problem they have got now is a lack of staff. We have a lack of placements for child care. My area is like most regional communities where people are trying to get on waiting lists and trying to get their kids into child care. But what has happened now, and it is probably an unintended consequence of the three-year-old kinder policy, is people that cannot get their kids into child care are now putting them into kindergarten. What is happening there is the kindergarten providers do not have the staff to deal with it. They just do not. We have a massive shortage of early educators in our state.

And talking to Jackie Sceney – and I have known Jackie a long time from Warragul and she has been in this industry for 20 years, so she is not someone that has floated in; she has a lot of experience in this field – she said to me, 'Wayne, the problem is instead of being a kindergarten, now we are feeling like we are a childcare centre'. They are changing nappies, and they are doing those things that childcare centres should have done. I do not knock the government for free three-year-old kinder – not at all. I support the policy. It is a good policy, because I recognise early education is extremely important for our young developing kids. It is also important for people to be able to get back to work,

and with cost-of-living pressures now, it is even more important that households can get back to work but then actually see each other at night. As was pointed out earlier, I cannot remember the member that said it, but someone was working a night shift and looking after a child, so I understand the benefit of this, and it is a benefit. But what we need to do is we need to invest heavily in educating people to work in these facilities. We really do. It is one priority to build the facility; it is another priority to have the people to be there to support that.

I do not have a problem with this figure at the moment. If this figure blows out, yes, this side of the house is going to have a problem with it. There are no worries about that. We will call the government out. But we need to invest in the education. We need to invest in the education at both levels. We need these educators in these facilities so they will work.

It is a good bill. I think there is one part of this though that the government could look at. I might have missed it in the bill briefing, but what we have to look at is existing centres as well and maybe expanding them. For example, the existing centres in my towns of Warragul and Drouin have been there a long time, like 40 or 50 years, and they are actually part of that community. I can remember the kindergarten that my kids went to – Grace Berglund in Warragul. We parents would be down there on a weekend, and we would build a path or a sandpit. Being a builder kind of sucked when you had your kids at kinder because you always got dragged into everything, but they were communities. I do not want to see those communities go, because they are part of our community. I would encourage the government to look at existing centres. If you have to compulsorily acquire some land next door to expand that centre, look at that and then look at refurbishing that centre, because I know the centres in my electorate have not had a lot of money spent on them. I understand that centres are generally a council responsibility, or in the past they have been a council responsibility, but the government has put its hand up. If the government is going to put its hand up, I am going to encourage government to look at existing centres as well. Do not dismiss them. Refurb them, expand them and get their numbers up, so we have the facilities in regional Victoria.

It is a problem in regional Victoria, and it happens all the time. I did look at the list. I did not go through the whole list and put which seats they are in, but it does look like the lion's share at the moment is in Labor seats. The government have said 'We want to do this for all Victorians.' Then please, do this for all Victorians, especially for the people of Narracan. I will say it again: it is the fifth fastest growing region in Victoria. Just in closing I would like to shout out to all our early educators. They do a fantastic job with our future – our kids – and I think that should be applauded every day of the week, because I know the ones that looked after my kids did a fantastic job. So congratulations to the government. I commend this to the house.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (17:46): It is always a pleasure to follow the member for Narracan. I rise to support the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023. The bill seeks to expand the state's powers to acquire and develop land for the purposes of providing early childhood education, care and other associated services as part of the government's Best Start, Best Life reforms. Specifically the bill will amend the act to expand the minister's power to acquire land either by agreement or compulsorily or to take on or grant other interests in land for the purposes of providing early childhood education, care and certain other services, such as maternal and child health services and community spaces, and the bill will also expand the purposes of the act as they relate to the acquisition, use and development of land by the minister and the provision of early childhood and associated services. The bill also expands the principles of the act to recognise the importance of access to education during early childhood and support access to early childhood education where there may be currently insufficient provision.

In my first speech to Parliament I spoke about how I am the proud product of our local public education system, having attended Coburg West Primary School. However, I was also one of the many children at that time from mainly non-English-speaking background families who simply were not in a position to afford, let alone understand the benefits of, sending their children to a local kinder. Today as a local member and also as a local dad I know just how much local families value the quality of our local

kinders, because it is local kinders that first shape and inspire the minds and future life chances of what we value and care for the most – children and young people. That is why I am so proud to be a member of the Allan Labor government, which as a first priority and task has assembled a refreshed whole-of-government approach to supporting children and families. With the creation of the new Minister for Children portfolio, to be led by Ms Blandthorn in the other place, the Victorian government will be bringing together Labor's Best Start, Best Life early childhood reforms and the state's ongoing improvements to our child protection system. When combined, the Victorian government will be laying the foundation for a refreshed whole-of-government focus on child development and wellbeing which will undoubtedly leave a lasting legacy for decades to come. In doing so I would like to also commend the outstanding work of the previous Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep Ms Stitt in the other place, particularly for the local record investments she has overseen across my municipality of Merri-bek into local kinders, which I will touch on through the substance of my contribution very shortly.

With 90 per cent of a child's brain developing before the age of five, early education has a profound effect on the way our kids develop and their future life chances. If we are talking about early intervention to support young people, well, it does not get any earlier than early childhood education. That is why, as the new local member for Pascoe Vale, Coburg and parts of Brunswick West, I will be doing everything I can to support the rollout of Labor's free three- and four-year-old kinder across the community so that all local families and children will have the chance to access a quality local kinder, which will provide a range of other benefits for families, including children's cognitive, health and wellbeing development, which I have just touched on. Free kinder helps support families with cost-of-living challenges and saves local families \$2500 a year, and free kinder also helps facilitate economic reform for women, particularly young mums, by encouraging women and young mums to re-enter the workforce through the increased provision of early childhood education for children.

Driving these landmark benefits is the Victorian Labor government's record \$14 billion commitment over the next decade to deliver Best Start, Best Life reforms, which includes continuing the rollout of funded three-year-old kindergarten. This investment means that from this year free kinder has commenced rolling out for all three- and four-year-old children at participating services. A 15-hour-per-week program is being made available for four-year-old children, and a 5- to 15-hour program is being made available for three-year-old children every week. This is a game-changing and nation-leading reform that signals the importance this government places on access to early childhood education programs for all children.

Over the next decade four-year-old kindergarten will also transition towards a new pre-prep model. Pre-prep will become a universal 30-hour-a-week program of play-based learning available to four-year-old children across the state. This will amount to a doubling of the educational opportunities available for children in their year before school. It will also mean children will have twice the amount of teacher-led, play-based learning time to develop critical social, emotional and cognitive skills. This will be delivered through kindergartens and long day care centres across the state as well as early childhood facilities across my community in Merri-bek, because of course we know that in implementing free kinder we will also need to help support the construction of new kinders, the upgrading of existing kinders and the expansion of more kinder spaces, which this bill goes to the very heart of supporting.

On 22 August last year I was so pleased to join with the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep to announce that the Victorian Labor government would be investing a record \$10.7 million towards 11 new and expanded kindergartens across the Merri-bek municipality. As part of the new Building Blocks partnership with Merri-bek City Council, our government's record local investment is proudly supporting the creation of an additional 329 new kinder places across the municipality by 2029.

Local kinders being expanded and upgraded as part of this partnership include the Doris Blackburn Preschool, which received a \$1.35 million investment from the Labor government. I was so pleased to have celebrated recently the kinder's 80th birthday by officially opening the brand new and upgraded facilities alongside the minister, on Sunday 17 September. The works provided for the

installation of the new modern kindergarten building alongside the pre-existing building, effectively doubling the size of Doris Blackburn's footprint. The works also make provision for a magnificent new outdoor play area at the preschool, creating more than an extra 40 kinder places for local children. Situated on the Shore Reserve recreational precinct alongside the West Coburg footy club, the kinder is really well placed halfway between the Pascoe Vale South Primary School and Coburg West Primary School catchments and will continue to support the lifelong learning journey of local children and families for many years to come. I commend the Doris Blackburn kinder community, who put on a truly wonderful 80th birthday celebration, which was very well attended by local families. I particularly pay tribute to the centre's president Hadleigh Morrissey, the manager Angela Favero, education leader Pam Roberts and all of the kinder's volunteers, teachers, families and children.

On 14 September, just recently, I had the absolute pleasure of visiting the Derby Street Children's Centre in Pascoe Vale to announce that the Victorian Labor government will be investing a record \$1.5 million to expand the kinder. The project will create 22 new kinder places, with the expanded service to provide 75 kinder places overall in the new modern and world-class learning facilities that local children deserve and that are close to home for families. It was a pleasure to visit and meet with centre assistant director Julie Payne, and I commend the work of all the families and parents over the years that have supported the centre to deliver such wonderful outcomes for children.

The upgraded Turner Street kinder in Pascoe Vale has also been allocated \$500,000. It is the kinder where my children went – my two daughters Raffaella and Cleopatra – and it is currently under reconstruction with upgrades almost now completed. The investment is delivering a new kitchen, lunch room, bathroom and refurbished spaces for children, which will provide for an additional eight kinder places from 2024, from next year. A further \$400,000 is supporting the expansion of the Pascoe Vale Community Centre kindergarten, with works to deliver 40 new kinder places from early 2025.

On 10 May I was also very pleased to have attended the official opening of the new and upgraded St Linus kindergarten in Merlynston, North Coburg. First opened over 60 years ago, the \$493,000 in upgrades that we have invested have helped turn St Linus kinder into one of the most modern kinders in the whole area, with a new foyer, an entry, a new children's kitchen, new children's spaces, a meeting room for staff, a storage room and new toilets. I pay tribute to the parish priest Robert Koren, president of the parents advisory committee Tim Erickson, president of the kinder committee Judy Fenner and kinder committee churchwarden Avril Slater. She has been a magnificent worker for the St Linus community for so many decades. She really has been the driver of this upgrade, and I pay tribute to her. I also of course commend all of the teachers, families and children for making that project possible.

On 1 May this year I was also very pleased to have written to the president of the Shirley Robertson Children's Centre Susan Bird and the director Tina Papa to advise them that they had been successful in being allocated \$154,000 through the Building Blocks inclusion grant program, which will support the replacement of verandahs on the three- and four-year-old kinder rooms. This will bring more natural light into the rooms and support more sensory and outdoor learning as well for the children.

Overall, this is an amazing partnership between the Victorian Labor government and the Merri-bek council – that is, the entire Building Blocks partnership for my municipality, which is creating more kinder places across the Merri-bek community and will provide for a pipeline of local kinder upgrades over coming years, giving families certainty. However, I am sad to report that while the Victorian Labor government committed to several of these landmark local kinder investments way back in August 2022, the then Liberal opposition and the then Liberal candidate remained absolutely silent on all of these commitments. They did not come out to match the commitments, they did not come out to support the commitments and the Liberals did not make any other local kinder commitments in any way, shape or form. In other words, if the Liberals had been elected in November 2022, these various kinder upgrades across Merri-bek which are now underway would simply not be happening: no free kinder, no upgraded kinders and no expanded kinders.

In contrast, I am proud to be here as part of a Labor government supporting the expanded rollout of free kinder and the new facilities in my community. But of course there is always more to do, and that is why this bill is so critical, because it will provide the government with a pathway forward to help identify and ascertain land in coming years to deliver more kinder places across the state and also across Merri-bek if need be. The bill expands the current education-focused powers in the act to acquire and develop land to include purposes related to provision of early childhood education. The purposes of the act are currently limited to the provision of education and training for adults and children of school age – that is, references to education and training in the act are limited to school-based education, vocational education and higher education.

In summing up and concluding, I commend this bill to the house. It is an absolutely tremendous bill that continues the work of Best Start, Best Life, and I am proud to be part of this government delivering it.

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (17:56): I also rise to speak on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023. I appreciate the contributions from all members, as it seems to be that nobody is opposing the bill – at least that is what I have heard so far. We also seem to have some bipartisan support on the importance of early childhood education, which probably is no surprise, but it is always good to hear.

We have come a long way. If I go back to my memories 50 years ago of early childhood – I vaguely remember being alive – I went to kinder in Ferntree Gully and then went to primary school the year after. There was absolutely no connection between the two. When my children went to kinder, which was 11 or 12 years ago when Sophie first went there – the change in the way we handled the education of our children from the start all the way through is chalk and cheese, the ability to have a transition. The teachers at the early childhood centres work with the teachers at the primary schools. They have a system of bringing them in. They have buddies in prep that bring them along, and they meet them early when they are still in kinder. We have come a long way in helping the development of our kids.

As many members from all sides have said, in their own ways, the importance of early childhood education on our little ones cannot be overstated. We have got some figures – you know, for every dollar we put into early childhood as a country, we receive \$2 back – but the reality is you cannot put a price on the advantage for a family having that education for their child. Some parents will have that initial social interaction of their kids to highlight issues that they may have or challenges that their kids may have, and we had a similar thing with one of ours. Having that ability to understand that there are some challenges that we are all going to get around, having that in third-year kinder or fourth-year kinder again means so much for the next number of years in that child's life and that family's life.

When we hear of the necessity of building more child care and early childhood education places, then it makes sense as we are building new schools that we need to put our kinders on these new schools because of the single drop-off and the ease of use for parents. And then it makes sense that the Minister for Children and the Minister for Education have the same ability to acquire land whether it be for a preschool or a primary school, and at the moment that is not the case. That is what this bill effectively strives to change, and given that we have no obvious objection in the house, it looks like – I do not want to pre-empt things – that will be the case from this house. Specifically, this bill will amend the act to expand the minister's power to acquire land either by agreement or compulsorily, or to take on or grant other interests in land, for the purposes of providing childhood education and care and certain other services associated with childhood education and care, such as maternal and child health services and community spaces.

Another member mentioned earlier the importance of having services with early childhood education. We have a fantastic centre in my patch that I have spoken about before, because I have a previous relationship with them. Pinewood Preschool is an excellent example of a community-run kinder who are providing free kinder and very happily doing so. But also in the Building Blocks grants of a couple of years ago they were awarded \$2 million to convert what used to be two separate buildings – one was a maternal and child health building and the other one was the kinder. They needed an extra room,

because obviously we are moving towards 30 hours and pre-prep. I was ecstatic to see that Monash applied for the Building Blocks grant and put in significant money themselves. Now the Pinewood hub – and we did have the minister out last year to open it – as I think a member on the other side said, is the best example of having all those services in one place. Now, the other member, I think it was the member for Melbourne, was not talking about Pinewood. If the member for Melbourne wants to come down and see how Pinewood is, she is more than welcome. The centre is great. The teachers there, who are still there from when my children went through, transform kids' lives. The feedback we have had from them is that they are still doing the same quality work they used to do and have always done. I think Debbie Brereton has been there for 20 years, maybe – it is a long time. They are still doing the same quality work that they have always done, but now they are in a brand new centre that allows them to be the best they can be. Now they have two separate spaces.

In my patch, at Ashwood, we are not a childcare desert. We have a lot of options. With the growth in demand over time, those options will fill and we will need to do upgrades, as the member for Narracan pointed out. That work will need to continue. But we also need to plan for new areas – for growth areas – where we need to build new schools, and we will need to acquire land for the early childhood centres or childcare centres that are near to those areas.

As a government we have delivered \$14 billion transforming Victoria's early childhood sector. I remember back in 2011, everyone else took two steps backwards. I remember being president when the 15 hours were going to come in, and we did a lot of work. As a community kinder, mums and dads turn up day in, day out –

The SPEAKER: We will just wait for the noise to be removed from the chamber.

Matt FREGON: Saved by the bell, Speaker. Mums and dads turn up for community kinders, turn up at committees and turn up at Bunnings barbecues; they do all that work. There are so many roles within a kinder committee that the community just takes on to help in the process of educating their kids. Not all kinders are community kinders, obviously. There are cluster-managed kinders and council-run kinders, but it strikes me that our community-run kinders really are a testament to the fact that parents get involved. I know in my patch I have got primary schools who are looking forward to having future kinders on their patch as demand increases when we go into 15 hours in the third year and 30 hours in the fourth year. I fully support that. I think it is a great idea that we can all turn up just for the drop-off. In short, this is a very sensible bill that extends the powers, which are already there for prep onwards, to what we all know now is the start of education. It will help our kids grow. I commend the bill to the house.

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (18:05): It is my pleasure to rise and speak today on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023. Before I start my contribution, I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the two previous ministers in this space, the former Minister for Early Education and Pre-Prep, Minister Stitt, and the former Minister for Education, Minister Hutchins. Both of these ministers should be incredibly proud of the huge amount of important work that they did in delivering these reforms and really transforming the early childhood and education space in Victoria. I am very much looking forward to working with Minister Carroll across the education portfolio and Minister Blandthorn across the new children portfolio and delivering great outcomes for the children and young people in the electorate of Lara. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the educators and support staff in Victoria for the incredible work that they do in nurturing our youngest Victorians. Reform like this cannot be delivered without a capable and committed workforce, and that is exactly what we have here in Victoria.

The intention of this bill is to enable the delivery of infrastructure needed to deliver our commitment to the Best Start, Best Life reforms. This includes our commitment to deliver free kinder, pre-prep and 50 early learning centres, providing affordable child care to communities that need it most. This bill will amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to enable the minister to acquire land to deliver these kinders and government owned and operated early learning centres. These powers to

acquire land are in line with the powers that already exist for the purposes of school education. Specifically, this bill will amend the act to expand the minister's powers to acquire land either by agreement or compulsorily, or to take on or grant other interests in land, for the purposes of providing early childhood education and care and certain other services associated with early childhood education and care such as maternal and child health services and community spaces; expand the purposes of the act as they relate to the acquisition, use and development of the land by the minister and the provision of early childhood education and care and associated services; and expand the principles of the Education and Training Reform Act to recognise the importance of access to education during early childhood and state-supported early childhood education where there is insufficient provision.

The Allan Labor government is a government that is committed to delivering the very best childhood and school education for all Victorian children. Over the past nine years we have seen unprecedented investment into Victoria's school and education system, and that now continues with our investment in the Best Start, Best Life reforms. Just this week we demonstrated our commitment to Victoria's youngest people, with Premier Allan creating the new portfolio of children, bringing together for the first time policy areas that impact children and families the most, such as child protection, family services and early childhood education. We know that when these services that are so important for families and our youngest Victorians are brought together we can deliver better outcomes, and I am really proud to be a member of this Allan Labor government that is determined to ensure every Victorian child gets the best start in life no matter where they live.

The electorate of Lara is home to some incredible local kinders and early learning centres, and I have a wonderful time getting around to visit all of these centres. Earlier this year I had the pleasure of visiting the Korayn Birralee Family Centre along with the then Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep. The name Korayn Birralee means 'Corio children' in Wadawurrung language, and this centre is a state-of-the-art integrated learning and childcare centre providing facilities, programs and services for local families and their children. It is one of the sites in Victoria where Our Place has been successfully implemented. Our Place is a holistic, place-based approach to supporting the education, health and development of children and families by utilising the universal platform of a school. During our visit we were able to meet with the kindergarten community and celebrate the rollout of the Best Start, Best Life early childhood reforms, and we saw how this centre is a real hub in the community. It houses kindergarten, long day care, maternal and child health, specialist family support services and consulting rooms, all interconnected in a central thoroughfare.

We also heard how the centre has strong engagement with the local community and school and family service organisations that work out of this site. Our government's reforms will aim to have associated services provided on the same premises as or nearby an early childhood education and care service. These will be the kinds of services that you would expect a family to access at a childcare centre: maternal and child health services, playgroups, allied health, family support services and toy libraries. That is just like what is happening at Korayn Birralee, where we have seen the centre blossom into a vibrant hub for families in the local area. This centre is such a great example of one of the best ways to set up a child for life – to provide them with a quality kindergarten program and wraparound services for their families.

The member for Broadmeadows spoke earlier about community hubs and the impact that they have in her community, particularly in supporting migrant women and families to settle children into kinder and school. I had the pleasure of visiting the community hub at Bell Park North Primary recently, where I saw too the positive impact that these hubs are having in our communities. As the member for Broadmeadows mentioned, these hubs help women learn English and build their skills and confidence while also easing their children into early childhood education. It is such an important place for the Bell Park North community to come together, make friends and help each other out, as so many of these families experience the same challenges as new migrants. Community programs and facilities like the Bell Park North community hub and Korayn Birralee go beyond just providing a service for

families and children. They contribute to building stronger communities and stronger families and providing so many more opportunities for Victoria's children.

At Korayn Birralelee and many other centres across the Lara electorate it is evident that all investment into early childhood education is an investment in our littlest learners and into the future of our state. We can see how this government's once-in-a-generation early childhood education reform will give our youngest Victorians the very best start in life and how this \$14 billion investment will transform our state's early childhood sector. Families are so excited for this investment. I hear this enthusiasm every time I have a chat with families – mums and dads, expecting parents and of course grandparents. As part of this reform, from this year free kinder has been rolled out for three- and four-year-old children at participating services. This means that cost will no longer be a barrier for families who want to access early childhood education. Part of this reform will be the transition from four-year-old kindergarten to pre-prep. Pre-prep will be a 30-hour-a-week program of play-based learning available for every four-year-old in Victoria. It will double the educational outcomes for children in the year before school, setting them up for the best start in life.

We know that this reform and increase in hours will drive demand, and that is exactly why we are investing in 50 new government owned and operated early learning centres. These early learning centres, along with already established kindergartens and long day care services, will deliver the pre-prep program. On this side of the house we understand that giving kids greater access to high-quality teacher-led play-based learning means better educational and life outcomes for our littlest learners. Parts of the communities that I represent experience real disadvantage, so this reform is especially important to my community, as it will support children to have more opportunities in their lives. As well as this, it will increase opportunities for parents to re-enter and participate in Victoria's workforce, which as we all know, has significant benefits for families and children. For parents who have been paying expensive childcare fees, the expansion of free kinder will help families keep their household costs down.

As I mentioned earlier, families are loving these reforms in the Lara electorate. Because of how well it has been received and because of the real need for this in the community, this reform will require a significant program of infrastructure to support its delivery so that we can create additional kindergarten places right across Victoria. That is exactly what the Allan Labor government is getting on with delivering. Right across the state as we speak we are building new kinders and expanding existing services, upgrading and modernising kinders to ensure they are accessible for all. In this year's state budget we invested \$1.2 billion in kinder infrastructure projects, projects that we need to deliver to expand three-year-old kinder and the transition to pre-prep. This \$1.2 billion will go towards the delivery of our commitment to 50 government owned and operated early learning centres. Importantly, this includes new kinders on government school sites and low fee paying non-government school sites, meaning more kids can go to kinder and school at the same location, making family drop-off logistics so much easier.

I do want to note that there are principles that sit behind this reform and the proposed legislation. These principles recognise the importance of early childhood education and the state's role in delivering early childhood education, really placing early childhood education at the forefront of education policy in this state. I do think it is worthwhile highlighting these principles. They are: that access to education during early childhood is important for the wellbeing of children and their families, and that all Victorians, irrespective of where they live or their social or economic status, should have access to education during early childhood. It is these principles that demonstrate the Allan Labor government's commitment to early childhood education. That is why this bill is so important, as it will allow the Allan Labor government to build the kindergartens and early learning centres that our communities need and to deliver on these principles. That is why I am so proud to support this bill, and I commend it to the house.

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (18:15): I also rise in support of the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023. As we all know, this is a relatively short bill of 11 pages, but it does draw together two very important issues: the provision of early childhood education and care and the acquisition of land for public purposes. These are both important issues in Preston and Reservoir, as they are across the state. But before I get to them, I would like to just take a moment to express my appreciation to our new Premier for giving me the opportunity to serve as the Parliamentary Secretary for Children, supporting Minister Blandthorn in the other place. Those who were present for my inaugural speech would know that I have had the opportunity to work with Minister Blandthorn on a lot of projects over 25 years now, and we are both very, very excited to work in support of this important reform of the Allan Labor government.

Of course the bill before us, though, is the work of the former minister, Minister Stitt. She has some new and exciting portfolios, but I did want to acknowledge her work and the work of her team in what was then the early childhood and pre-prep portfolio, supported by the member for Footscray as her parliamentary secretary – a great member and parliamentary secretary. The former minister, Minister Stitt, was out recently at Nara Community Early Learning Centre in Preston, which is a wonderful facility, and her understanding of and commitment to the government's long-term vision was really appreciated by the staff and the students at that centre. I should also, just by way of beginning, acknowledge the work of the department in putting this bill together and indeed in supporting our Best Start, Best Life reform agenda. I do understand that Kim Little, a very dedicated and passionate public servant who has been leading those reforms, unfortunately has been poached by South Australia –

A member: Outrageous!

Nathan LAMBERT: outrageously – as they seek to, I suppose, follow in our footsteps in introducing universal three-year-old kinder. I suppose imitation is the highest form of flattery. I do note that I believe the minister there, Minister Blair Boyer, is a former member of the Victorian Labor Party, so their reforms are in good hands.

I do want to pick up on some of the comments by the opposition and the Greens in their contributions. It was very exciting for those of us who are members of the class of 2022 – I see some of us are here – to hear the member for Bulleen contribute to this debate before question time, which I think was a first for us. He was sounding a bit hoarse, but it was good to hear him contribute; it is good that everyone contributes. It was clear from his remarks and other remarks from the opposition that fundamentally they support everything that we are doing in this area. They are supporting this bill, as the member for Narracan said earlier, and we appreciate that. I do feel that some of their speakers, to be honest, have been scratching around looking for things to complain about, as oppositions sometimes do. As those of us following the debate have heard, they have largely settled on complaining about implementation and consultation. I do want to say from my experience with Minister Stitt, and I am sure this is echoed by other government members, that she was very, very invested in consultation. I do not think those criticisms are fair at all. She knew, as previous government speakers have said, that the implementation of this huge reform to introduce a universal, free 15 hours of three-year-old kinder and a universal, free pre-prep year for four-year-olds is a very big project. Of course there will be challenges with making sure that we expand our workforce. There will be challenges with the acquisition of land and the building of facilities. There will be challenges with updating the industrial relations framework that supports those workers. We know. The idea that the government is ignorant of these things is completely wrong. We are aware of all of them, and that is why we are talking to and working with early childhood professionals to make sure we get this important reform right. I know the former minister did that and the new minister, Minister Blandthorn, will continue to do so.

Turning to the Greens, the member for Melbourne – unfortunately the Greens are no longer with us, as is sometimes the case in debates – did quote quite extensively from the Social Ventures Australia research. We also heard about that from the member for Euroa. The research encouraged us to locate integrated family centres in certain locations. I do not want to get too much into the weeds of this – I have read their work – but they are working with what the census calls statistical areas level 2, these

very large areas. Honestly, it is not granular enough for the sort of work that we need to do in this area. They are also using 2016 data instead of 2021, which in some of our electorates makes a very big difference. I would encourage the member for Melbourne and others – really we need to resource our own department to make good use of the wonderfully rich data and real-time data that they have, to achieve the same outcomes that she was referring to.

As we know, the bill before us amends the Education and Training Reform Act 2006. It is a very substantial act, almost 1000 pages, brought in by the late Lynne Kosky, and I echo the Deputy Premier's remarks earlier today reflecting on her great contribution to this portfolio. It regulates a whole range of matters, but pertinently for today's debate it sets out the general principles and definitions that guide our education system. Of course this bill as we know updates those principles and definitions to appropriately include early childhood education and care, and I am grateful to the member for Hastings, I think, who in some detail went through some of those definitional amendments so I do not have to. Most substantially, it updates section 5.2, which is the section that sets out the minister's powers and in particular allows the minister to acquire, lease and develop land in the way that most of us are familiar with, with the Minister for Education and for schools.

I think it is important just to note a couple of distinctions with the way we approach schools. Of course our reforms are inspired by the provision of universal free primary school, which we have had in this state for 150 years, but clearly there are some differences. The government is the main provider of primary school education. Most of us here went to a government school. Kinders are provided by a wide range of organisations, and it is important with this bill to be clear that the government is not seeking to take over the provision of kinder in the way that we do for primary school education. It is also important to set out that kinder remains optional. It is not compulsory in the way that primary school education is and there are no changes here to the parts of the act that set out the compulsory ages for school attendance. Finally, and most importantly, as other government speakers have alluded to, there is a really important case for the co-location of family services, particularly maternal and child health services, with kindergarten services. I certainly agree with the member for Melbourne and with other government speakers on that, and parts of the bill as we know are specifically drafted in order to allow that co-location. Other speakers have touched on its benefits, but that is an area again where we are different to a primary school, where families are a little further down their journey with the children and do not have the same needs with respect to maternal and child health and those services that apply to preschool children. So those are some important differences to set out.

Finally, I do just want to touch on the compulsory acquisition components. We heard some passionate stuff from the opposition's lead speaker about the sort of core role that property rights play in a liberal democracy and so forth. I am not sure we would quite talk about it in the same sort of language that she used, but of course this government recognises the importance of limiting our use of compulsory acquisition to those circumstances where the community broadly agree that it is justified. We have had some compulsory acquisitions in the Preston area in Herbert Street and Emery Street with respect to the Level Crossing Removal Project, and I recognise they are very, very tough. Some people are settled in their family home and it is such a shock to have someone knock on your door and say, 'We're going to acquire your home and knock it over.' We have actually got some more work to do there to make sure that those streets are restored to the level of amenity they had, with respect to trees and so forth, following the Level Crossing Removal Project. Our family also have some experience with compulsory acquisition situations, and I just want to say I think we are very aware of the important principles that are set out in the Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986 with respect to how we go about that. It is the Land Acquisition and Compensation Act that this bill refers to. The word 'compensation' is in the title for an important reason. People have a lot of rights in that situation, as they should.

I will just conclude by expressing my very strong support for this bill and the entire Best Start, Best Life reform agenda. My mum was a special education teacher who was involved in early childhood support and research at the Krongold centre and Methodist Ladies' College and other places, and I

know from her and we all know from people in the sector that these reforms will benefit everyone but particularly vulnerable children. Not every family has the capacity to give their preschoolers the care, attention and play-based learning that some do, and I think the equality aspect that the member for Lara touched on in her comments is really important in this set of reforms. I commend the bill and its part in the Best Start, Best Life reforms to the house.

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (18:26): It too gives me great pleasure to rise and to speak to the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023 and to do so following the outstanding contribution of the member for Preston. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETR act) to provide the minister with powers to acquire and to deal with land for the purposes of providing early childhood education and care and other associated services as part of the Victorian government's Best Start, Best Life reforms. We do know that active play-based learning is something that is very, very important to the development of all of our children, and to be able to have a government that continues to invest in that, providing not only the service but actually the physical structures that go on the land to allow all of that to occur is really to the benefit of Victorian society as a whole. It needs to be taken very seriously and it needs to be done in a staged way, and that is exactly what the Andrews Labor government did and what the Allan Labor government is continuing to do.

The bill proposes amendments granting the minister the authority to procure land for the establishment of kindergartens and the 50 government owned and operated early learning centres. The modification will empower the minister to facilitate the development of essential infrastructure to implement the Best Start, Best Life reforms, and this includes initiatives such as free kinder, pre-prep and the 50 early learning centres, which aim to offer affordable childcare services to underserved communities. Under those programs the Labor government has made kindergarten free. It is a \$270 million program. Up to 140,000 children and families can access kindergarten for free this year, and that saves families up to \$2500 in fees per child each year. More than 2750 services across Victoria offer the free kindergarten program this year. That is 97 per cent of services across the state.

In terms of the authority to acquire land, that authority for educational purposes already does exist, but the bill really does give clarity to ensure that the minister possesses all the necessary powers to oversee the creation of early childhood education infrastructure. The fundamental intent of the bill and the focal point for discussion is to enable the construction of early childhood education and care facilities, which are indispensable for ensuring that every single child has the best possible start in life. The specific amendments that are made are threefold. They broaden the minister's authority to procure land, whether through mutual agreement or compulsory means, or to undertake or authorise other property interests for the purpose of offering early childhood education and care as well as certain related services like maternal and child health programs and community facilities. Secondly, it expands the objectives outlined in the act concerning that acquisition and the utilisation and development of land by the minister, along with the provision of early childhood education and associated services. Thirdly, it extends the principles set forth in the ETR act to acknowledge the significance of ensuring access to education during early childhood and of government support for early childhood education in areas where it is insufficiently available.

Our government is committed to ensuring that every child regardless of their background or where they live has an equal opportunity to begin life with the best possible foundation. We understand that this means investment. We understand that one of the most effective ways to prepare a child for a successful future is by providing them with a high-quality kindergarten program. Given that 90 per cent of a child's brain development occurs before the age of five, early education profoundly influences the developmental trajectory of our children. That is why we are delivering a \$14 billion transformation of Victoria's early childhood sector through our nation-leading Best Start, Best Life reform. It is a once-in-a-generation reform committed to giving Victorian children the very best start in life.

As a part of this reform, from this year free kinder is being rolled out for all three- and four-year-old children at participating services, and this is a significant change that signals our commitment to early

childhood education and gives children the very best possible start. Cost is no longer a barrier to those families who wish to access early childhood education. Over the next decade under the reform, four-year-old kindergarten will transition to pre-prep. Pre-prep will be a universal 30-hour-a-week program of play-based learning available to every four-year-old child in Victoria, and that is a doubling of the educational opportunities available for children in the year before their primary schooling actually starts. It will be a high-quality program that gives four-year-old children greater opportunities to socialise and learn through play. Like kindergarten, pre-prep will provide greater opportunities for children to develop skills that set them up for the rest of their life.

Child care just has not really been working for working families. The fees are high, and many families have had to weigh up the financial impact of going back to work. That causes indeed lots and lots of stress within those families, and when you add into the mix the shortage of places, things can get very, very complicated for families. The Labor government establishing 50 government-owned and affordable early learning centres in areas with the greatest unmet demand is such an important reform, and where possible those centres will be co-located with schools, to avoid that double drop-off, and alongside hospitals, TAFEs and major employers to create convenient access for working parents. All 50 centres will be up and running by 2028.

In the last five years or so that I have been a part of this government I have really enjoyed going into different communities around the state and noticing how that co-location of primary schools with kindergartens and high schools has been occurring. Just last week I was in the community I grew up in in Springvale, which now falls in the electorate of Mulgrave, as it turns out. Seeing just how those kindergartens and primary schools have all been co-located onto the one property, I must admit I did think of what it was like being a parent doing the drop-off about a decade or so ago with my kids and certainly what my parents would have gone through all those years ago without the ability to do that.

It is a really critical bill. It plays an important role in facilitating that delivery of kindergartens and early learning centres and that co-location, delivering the building projects themselves that require the powers to acquire and to lease land. Let us face it, land in those circumstances should not just be vacant. It should not be used as an asset class. It has got to be used for good purposes, whether that is for accommodation purposes or whether it is for purposes of building our education institutions on or even our hospitals on as well. That is what the people of Victoria expect to be done with land. It is an excellent use of land, and it certainly should not be used to keep acquiring dollars. I have gone a little bit off track there, but I commend the bill to the house.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (18:36): It really is a delight to speak on this subject matter. Nothing is more important really. One of the most significant aspects of our wonderful state of Victoria is providing proper early childhood education in an equitable manner across our state, really giving everyone the best start in life. I did want to just address this. I think there was something raised about, 'Oh, well, you're only talking prospectively in terms of upgrades to early childhood education centres,' but I know – having formerly in my other life in the upper house visited on many occasions a considerable number of early childhood centres in Southern Metro that were being upgraded in anticipation of the progress to the three- and four-year-old kinder across the state in terms of accessibility, nature play and language, bilingual education, which is really a testament to the progressive nature of our government and one that truly also acknowledges the true diversity of our state as well – that when we talk about delivering, I can say that I have seen it physically with my own eyes, having attended many of these early childhood education centres ahead of being elected to the lower house. So just to allay any concerns about delivering, although our government has a strong record on delivering on many matters, I will speak more specifically to the bill, but I think that was a little bit unusual to in any way insinuate that we were not. I have seen it with my own eyes and I know my learned colleagues here have as well in their seats.

Coming back to the issue of what the bill does, I will acquit perhaps the letter of the law first and then proceed to what fundamentally underpins this fabulous legislation. Specifically the bill will amend the act to expand the minister's powers to acquire land either by agreement or compulsorily or to take on

or grant other interests in land for the purposes of providing childhood education and care and certain other services associated with early childhood education centres (ECEC), such as maternal and child health services and community spaces.

That makes good sense, doesn't it, to have that co-location – I know there has been a lot of discussion of this – on the one hand because it makes good sense that, whether you are picking up or dropping off the kids, you are able to have something that is actually convenient. We know how busy parents are in their daily lives, but also it can foster the inclination to say, 'Okay, we might need a check-up. Look, it is right there. It's convenient,' so also to increase the probability that people will access those very much-needed services that help keep our community healthy. We can see that it is not only logical from a convenience point of view, it is also fostering people to have access to those important health services that really are for the betterment of all children and their parents.

Secondly, the bill expands the purposes of the Education and Training Reform Act 2016 as they relate to the acquisition, use and development of the land by the minister and the provision of ECECs and associated services and expands the principles of the ETR act to recognise – and don't you love this – the importance of access to education during early childhood and state support of early childhood education where there is insufficient provision. I think this comes to what really is the heart, what really is the imperative that is driving these tremendous reforms in our state, which is that sense on the one hand of recognising the critical role that early childhood education plays in the development of a child's life and Victorians of the future, making sure that they do have the best possible opportunities to realise their full potential but also to have a whole-of-life experience. In terms of outcomes, we just know, but it has been well documented that the provision of something which is a net positive when you look at early childhood education really has a fundamentally positive outcome and will have into the future for our state.

Talking about the associated services, I was alluding before to care services provided to children under compulsory school age or to benefit the community, making sure that where possible those associated services are provided on the same premises. Again, convenience but also inclining people to take advantage of good health care or other services that make sense when we are looking after the best interests of young children. These would be the kind of services you would expect a family to access at a childcare centre. I have already spoken to maternal and child health services, playgroups, allied health, family support services and toy libraries.

Just to expand that out – a toy library is a fantastic thing. I do not wish to go on too big a tangent here, but I know they are much loved, and again we are coming back to the central principle of equity. You may not necessarily be able to afford the most expensive toy, but hey, here is a way that all kids get to access toys in a fair and reasonable way. And maybe when they are sick of a toy, they can take it back and try a different toy. That is also understanding the true nature of human beings: we do not always want to do the same thing, and this starts young, doesn't it? Toy libraries are much loved, and a shout-out to the many people across the state who support these libraries – often parents – and help them to really flourish. They are a great thing.

Family support services – we want families to thrive, so for carers or people who are looking after young Victorian children having those support services in proximity to their early childhood education again makes good sense, and perhaps it elevates the probability that people may take the opportunity to use them not only from a point of view of convenience but recognising the legitimacy of those services as well.

Something really touched my heart with this legislation. I know that might sound like an emotive thing. I was not an early childhood educator but I was a teacher, and there is just such joy, day in, day out, in being able to nurture young children. I taught different age groups – now, what did I teach? It was language, and we would play little ball games. Anyway, I am going back in time with reveries, and you do not need that. I know how rewarding it is but how demanding it is too, and I think a fundamental tenet of the reforms that we have been driving in our state is also recognising the skills

that are required in early childhood education. What once may have been viewed as childminding or otherwise is a pretty complex process of helping young children to develop not only the vital skills they need to be able to progress on to school but also life skills, ultimately fostering the way that they relate to each other and hopefully setting them up with some good boundaries and some good principles for life. These principles underpin this legislation.

Access to education during early childhood is important for the wellbeing of children and their families. Secondly, all Victorians, irrespective of where they live or their social and economic status, should have access to education during early childhood. This is really fundamental to our Labor values. This is who we are as a government. It is wonderful to be able to be part of a government that has taken the bold step to really commit to this and for the longer term. This is not just an overnight thing where we will do this for a year or two, this is a proper, rolled-out, long-term commitment for the betterment of all Victorians ultimately, because we know when we foster the young they are going to be the leaders of tomorrow. They are going to be the nurses, the doctors, the teachers and so many other professions, and they will end up looking after us as well, one way or another. If we can have a quid pro quo – we put into them and they will put into their community – I think that is the ultimate goal as well. On that note, I would like to say I am really proud that we are bringing through these critical reforms. There is a very pragmatic element to this in terms of having to acquire land where needed for the purposes of early childhood education, but it also shows our conviction when it comes to driving these reforms forward into the future. We are making sure that they are actually achievable, and we are putting our name on them as well. It is one thing to talk about something, it is another thing to deliver, and deliver is what we do.

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (18:46): I rise to speak on the bill that everyone has been speaking on this afternoon, the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023. The underlying purpose of this bill and the recommended focus for this debate is to amend the act to enable the minister to acquire land to deliver the infrastructure needed for our big, bold, nation-leading Best Start, Best Life reforms, which of course include free kinder, pre-prep and the 50 early learning centres providing affordable child care to communities that need it the most. This legislation paves the way. It is enabling and very straightforward. The powers to acquire land already exist for the purpose of school education.

We want our kids to grow up confident, with a good sense of self, and to be able to think creatively, problem solve, work collaboratively, show empathy, be inquisitive and have a love of learning – isn't that right, everyone in the chamber? This is why we invest in the early years and we are backing this with this big reform – as I said, Best Start, Best Life and the myriad of funding programs in tow. Right across the state we are building new kindergartens, expanding existing services and upgrading and modernising kindergartens to ensure they are accessible for all. We are investing in our early learners so that children have the high-quality facilities they need to grow, learn and thrive in their local communities. Having them onsite or next door to schools means they are accessible, obviously, and importantly it gives our children connections for an easier transition.

The free kinder aspect has really resonated across my entire electorate, from Pearcedale to Tooradin, Clyde to Bayles, Lang Lang across to Bass Valley and the island, and over to Inverloch. Free kinder obviously means more choice, more flexibility and more money saved, with our investment of \$270 million to provide this free kinder. This year it has reached approximately 140,000 eligible children – they are not all in my electorate. We have all read about the savings for families being up to \$2500 per child every year, and it goes without saying, obviously, the benefits of two years of early learning for the children. Also free kinder means that 28,000 parents, predominantly women, have the choice to go to work or go back to work.

I want to have a chat about Koo Wee Rup Primary School, where I was just last month at the end of the term. We celebrated an investment trifecta, really. We unveiled some new classrooms and the start of works. The new classrooms were our election commitment in 2018. That is done. We have started on the works for their new gym, and we also got to announce the news of an onsite kinder. This will

see a two-room modular kindergarten built onsite, which will create up to 90 kindergarten places for local families when it opens in term 1 next year. Koo Wee Rup is probably one of the fastest growing communities in the Cardinia shire, according to the census. They will also get more child and family services in one convenient location, with the council, Cardinia shire, running a maternal and child health service for the new kinder. It is really going from strength to strength, supporting the school community needs and providing a wonderful learning environment too. This is part of our \$1.2 billion 2023–24 budget investment for kindergarten infrastructure projects required for the continued expansion of three-year-old kinder and the transition to pre-prep.

Newhaven kinder opening – in September I was joined by the then Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep in officially opening Newhaven Kindergarten. It was funded out of our 2019–20 budget. This service is located at Newhaven Primary School and provides up to 66 places across two rooms and also has an outdoor learning and play space for children to explore and use their imaginations. I give a massive shout-out to Phoebe Daicos and her wonderful team, who truly have the children at the heart of everything they do. They have brought the centre to life in the true sense, with play-based learning; self-agency with stories; history, art and colour adorning the walls and floors; activity tables that inspire inquisitiveness; and spaces that create teamwork and inclusivity, and they truly give these children the best to be their best. The principal next door Sharyne Munday and her team are providing invaluable support and enabling that smooth transition to school.

Back in 2020 the Phillip Island Early Learning Centre received a Building Blocks grant in preparation for the three-year-old universal kinder rollout to expand their long day care. I go to the member for Narracan, who said, ‘You know, we need to look at our existing kinders’ – oh, he is in the room, the member for Narracan – and we are doing a lot of work to expand existing kindergartens across the state. They are located in the stunning surrounds of Phillip Island, and the school is right next door. They do more than kinder. They have long day care and child care. They have a community pantry with fresh produce, clothes and materials, family supports and a maternal child health service as well. Our government is helping the sector to attract and retain more professionals to deliver both three-year-old kinder and pre-prep through a range of scholarships, incentives, traineeships and career support programs that deliver training in a very rewarding career and is doing its bit to help the sector. This particular kinder are also doing their bit to attract and retain professionals in our area.

Last year I got to go to this gorgeous centre – again, another old, established kinder preschool – in Pearcedale with, again, the former minister and the amazing team there, the educators Rebecca, Yasuko, Julie, Jenna, Melanie and manager Virginia. The children were all dressed up in superhero outfits. We had first aid administered pretendly. The space was light filled, with heaps of running-around space, and a garden was growing away. Hands were signing, because they were learning Auslan, which is great because the school just down the road – Pearcedale – do Auslan. We went there last year because they were rolling out the 15 hours of free kinder this year – big savings for families and back-to-work options are really viable.

The San Remo Preschool committee were absolutely thrilled to receive a Victorian School Building Authority early years planning grant this year. This will enable them – and they have already started – to commence a feasibility project to plan for a future to double their size. The funding enables them to get the design and construction documentation ready for a future tender on construction. I got to visit this preschool as well, and the crew down there are amazing. This just goes to show how much we are expanding kinders onsite at existing kinders and building new ones as well, especially in the fast-growing area of the Bass electorate.

I am going to have to have another 10 minutes to get through this. Newhaven College at the same time received some funding to look at an 88-place kinder at their college, with a long day care service catering for three- to five-year-olds. Drysdale Street kinder in Wonthaggi opened in 2023 a bigger space, which was fantastic. Wonthaggi North, Devon Meadows and Clyde will all have new onsite kinders coming in early 2025, and they will support our big reform and deliver new places to help our local kids get the best start in life as our community continues to grow. Our budget this year invests an additional \$1.2 billion

by building and expanding around 145 kinders, supporting the delivery of 15 hours of free three-year-old kinder each week by 2029 and 30 hours of free pre-prep each week by 2032.

The key changes in the bill also include the ability to expand the minister's powers to acquire land for the purposes of providing childhood education and associated services; the ability to expand the purposes of the act as they relate to acquisition, use and development of land by the minister; and the ability to expand the principles of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to recognise the importance of access to education during early childhood. Victoria truly is an Education State, and I commend the bill to the house.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (18:55): It is a delight to rise this evening to make a short contribution on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023. As stated previously, this bill seeks to amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to make provision for the acquisition, use and development of land to support the expansion of the Best Start, Best Life early childhood reforms. Can I begin by thanking the former Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep the Honourable Ingrid Stitt in the other place for the tremendous work that she did to bring this incredible reform through the cabinet. I congratulate the new minister the Honourable Lizzie Blandthorn, who I am sure will do an equally fabulous job in her capacity as Minister for Children.

I want to start by reflecting on the importance of the bill and what it allows us to do, and that is about expanding the acquisition power to the minister beyond primary and secondary schools to early childhood centres. Even though it is specifically around the delivery of the 50 additional government-owned kinder sites, if I look around the kinder sites in my area, invariably they were built in the 1950s and 60s when the areas of Box Hill, Box Hill South and East Burwood were developed, and routinely they are a single room on a fairly small block. There is very limited room for those facilities to expand, and even if they have a small outside area, it is important that that outside area be retained for play space, because having an outdoor area and an outdoor play space is incredibly important for young minds not only in having access to daylight and the outdoors but also in the learning experience that comes when you are in that outdoor play space.

As we move to 30 hours of pre-prep and 15 hours of free three-year-old kinder, with the demand that that is driving and the population changes that are occurring, particularly in places like Box Hill, where there are a lot of multi-unit development and dwellings going up, it will invariably mean that those single-room kindergarten facilities will not be sufficient. I am sure that the elements in this bill will be incredibly important in the years going forward to making sure that those facilities can be expanded.

I just wanted to reiterate a number of the points that have been made by other speakers about the importance of early childhood education to the development of young minds. The first years of a child's life are so critically important. By the age of five a child has already experienced 90 per cent of their brain development. Research has also shown that in the window between three years and five years old a child's experiences lay the foundations for their future actions and development. This demonstrates the importance of well-directed investment in creating holistic services to support the development of young children. I see amongst all the young families in my electorate and of course with my own family as well how important those early childhood years are for their education and how that sets them up for a lifetime of learning. Having those additional hours and being part of that system will really carry them in good stead for –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am required under sessional orders to interrupt business now. The member may continue their speech when the matter is next before the house.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Tower Hill weed management

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (19:00): (341) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Environment, and the action I seek is for the minister to come and visit Tower Hill during the springtime and see for himself how a weed management program needs to be put in place to protect this magnificent asset. Tower Hill is a 30,000-year-old extinct volcano only minutes from the townships of Warrnambool, Port Fairy and Kororoit. It is a beautiful place with native wildlife such as kangaroos, koalas, emus, echidnas and prolific birdlife. There are beautiful walks throughout the revegetated landscape, and I never fail to see abundant native wildlife when taking friends from overseas or from the city for a tour of our Great South Coast region. However, many of these walking tracks are overrun by weeds – hemlock, forget-me-nots and other wildly spreading noxious weeds – destroying the native vegetation. I was shocked last week to visit the park and see how overrun it is at the moment by weeds. Friends of Tower Hill do their absolute best to manage this issue. They told me some time ago that they had been instructed by park staff that until the reserve has a change of name from a state game park to a national park, a management plan with the necessary funding cannot occur. This is a state government asset. It is beyond me why a name change is required for the government to manage their responsibility and do their job.

As a farmer with experience managing weeds and pest control programs I understand the importance of good weed management. It is common sense that letting weeds get out of hand is a disaster; it takes a long time to gain control back once you let them establish themselves in the ecosystem. Every year on a farm it is important to manage weed infestation from neighbouring properties or roadsides, and Crown land should be treated no differently. An appropriate management plan needs to be put in place, and the government needs to step up and assist the Friends of Tower Hill with a management plan that allows them to get the weeds back under control.

I have raised this in this place before – that the government's lack of responsibility towards the natural environment is appalling. It is environmental vandalism not to manage the state parks responsibly. The loss of understorey puts the natural environment at great risk. Farmers cannot get away with mismanagement of their land. Why is the state government making excuses instead of doing its job? The park was denuded of vegetation during European settlement, and in the 1960s and 70s many schoolchildren climbed the steep banks of the precinct and planted native trees. My brothers and sister and many of my friends from the district participated in this activity.

A member: Katherine?

Roma BRITNELL: She did, yes. The park is a beautiful legacy to their work, and to destroy the understorey of this revegetated area is a great shame. The state government is very fortunate to have volunteers such as the Friends of Tower Hill to do so much of the work to protect this beautiful asset and maintain it as best they can. It is a small ask to assist them with a management plan and give them some resources to do so.

Hastings electorate tourism

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (19:03): (342) My side of the peninsula, or the Ninch, is not always considered, or in fact is not considered, to be a hot tourism destination, and yet there is so much to see and there is so much to offer from the electorate of Hastings and Western Port. We have amazing wetlands with an abundance of native flora and fauna, art galleries, restaurants, walking tracks, bike tracks, wonderful wineries, distilleries and breweries, a plethora of amazing markets with products made solely from locally grown produce, quiet beaches, surf beaches, and of course some of the best boating and fishing anywhere in Australia. Recently I had the pleasure of hosting the Minister for

Tourism, Sport and Major Events at the fabulous McClelland Gallery in Langwarrin. The gallery attracts people from all over regional and metro Melbourne as well as tourists from around Australia and indeed the world. It was a pretty quick visit, just enough to whet the minister's appetite, and there is so much more that I would love to share with him.

So my adjournment matter is to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, and the action I seek is to ask the minister to make some time in his diary to come down again, but this time further down in my electorate to the small township of Somers, and specifically to come along to the amazing heritage-listed Coolart homestead. The Coolart homestead is a beautiful example of late Victorian architecture dating from 1895. The surrounding formal gardens and lawns feature native and exotic plants, perfect for a stroll or a picnic or a wedding, a music festival or a film festival. The late Tom Luxton purchased Coolart in 1937 and immediately had the property declared a sanctuary for native wildlife. In 1938 the then curator of Footscray gardens David Matthews redesigned the garden for Coolart, and this is the design enjoyed by visitors at Coolart today. The farmyard outbuildings are even older than the homestead, originating from the early days of settlement when Coolart was farming and grazing land. One of Coolart's oldest buildings is the barracks, built in the 1860s. Coolart was bought by the Victorian government in 1977 in recognition of its historic buildings and significant wetlands. I look forward to showing the minister this magnificent homestead and one of Somers's best tourism destinations.

Bushfire preparedness

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (19:05): (343) My adjournment tonight is to the Minister for Emergency Services, and the action that I seek is for the Victorian fire rating system to be made available to the public year-round. I will tell you what happened on Tuesday 19 September, just a fortnight ago, when the temperature exceeded 35 degrees in my electorate of East Gippsland: with hot northerly winds during the day, fires raged in the landscape right on the Victoria–New South Wales border. In New South Wales the fire danger rating was publicly listed as catastrophic, the highest rating that can be given, but over the line, the Black–Allan line, in Victoria there was no public fire rating at all. We would have a significant fire later in the day in East Gippsland, but many asked and I asked: how can it be catastrophic in one state and just over the border, with the exact same temperature and the exact same conditions, there is no rating at all? I made inquiry about this, and I was advised that the difference was that the contract arrangements between the New South Wales government and the Bureau of Meteorology kick in earlier there than they do in Victoria, meaning the bureau does not complete assessing the rating in Victoria until October, but New South Wales has an earlier arrangement. Can you believe the stupidity of that.

So I ask the minister that, when the stakes are so high, the public be made aware of these ratings earlier. I believe in Victoria all the criteria matched a rating of severe, but because those contractual arrangements were not in place it was not released publicly and it was not made official. I believe as a result the date is being brought forward from when it normally starts, 1 November, to 1 October, and we are now receiving this service this year. But it needs to be brought in year-round or at least be brought forward to the start of September if we are going to experience those conditions in September, because not having that system in place to make the public aware and warn the public is simply not good enough.

Banksia Gardens public housing estate

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (19:08): (344) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Housing, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me in visiting the Banksia Gardens housing estate in Broadmeadows. Firstly, I would like to thank Minister Brooks for his incredible work and advocacy on housing. I have been working very closely with him and his dedicated staff to advocate for improvements at Banksia Gardens housing estate, and they have always been very responsive and have listened to and acted on all concerns raised. Since earlier this year I have been chairing a multi-agency taskforce, and working together we have been able to improve

residents' experience at the estate. They are feeling heard and responded to. We have had a reduction in vandalism, crime and the dumping of rubbish, improved lighting and maintenance and increased feelings of safety and community wellbeing. I thank all partners who have come together regularly in a spirit of goodwill and cooperation to work collectively and achieve positive outcomes for the residents of the estate, including the office of housing, Homes Victoria, the office for suburban development, Banksia Gardens Community Services, Victoria Police, Hume City Council, Broadmeadows Central shopping centre, DPV Health, the Department of Justice and Community Safety and Broadmeadows Valley Primary School.

Banksia Gardens housing estate was built over 50 years ago and is home to a resilient and proud community who help each other out and work hard to make a better life. I am so proud of this government's investment in social and affordable housing with our landmark Big Housing Build and our recent release of the housing statement, and I thank Minister Kilkeny for her work on this. I am also very proud of our federal Labor colleagues, who understand the fundamental importance of making sure everyone has the security and comfort of a roof over their head and a safe place to call home. I am really looking forward to working with our new housing minister Harriet Shing and would love to have her join me on a visit to Banksia Gardens to discuss the opportunities and challenges at the estate and how we can work together to improve outcomes for all people living in Broadmeadows.

I also take this opportunity to thank Minister Spence and her team for their support of the Broadmeadows Revitalisation Board, which also helped deliver projects at Banksia Gardens, including the establishment of the Common Bean Cafe social enterprise at Kangan TAFE; support for DPV Health; and funding for murals, greening activation and the community connections program.

Country Fire Authority assets

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (19:10): (345) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Emergency Services, and the action I seek is that the minister direct the department to urgently undertake a review of all CFA assets and their readiness for the upcoming fire season. I bring this to the adjournment this evening because, as everyone in this chamber knows, we had fires in Gippsland early this year, and my electorate of Narracan and the town of Rawson were within these fire areas. After meeting with the region 9 representatives of the CFA, they informed me that out of the 30 trucks that turned up at Rawson, three of the trucks were damaged in the fire operations up there. So I am asking that the department undertake an urgent assessment of all CFA assets. Obviously the fire season is early this year, earlier than normal, but it is imperative that our CFA volunteers have the right equipment – the functioning equipment – to protect our rural communities.

I will take this opportunity just to shout out to all those CFA volunteers that got out of bed at a quarter to 5 on Sunday morning to race up to protect the tiny township of Walhalla – everyone knows I have spoken about Walhalla a lot in this house – and the township of Rawson. They need the support to make sure that these assets are going to be fire ready again. I have had numerous local CFA stations in my region constantly complaining about 'We can't get this fixed' or 'We can't get that fixed.' I think what we need to do is support the CFA so they can support our local communities and so they can protect our local communities, houses, lives and livestock.

Trek Learning Centre

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (19:12): (346) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Children, and the action I seek is for the minister to visit Trek Learning Centre in Monbulk to discuss their concerns. Trek is an important local group working with very at-risk youth in our local area who at times need links to local services. Trek Learning Centre in my electorate operates as a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to ensuring equity and access for vulnerable children and young individuals who confront substantial obstacles in the realms of education, training, employment, community integration, health and wellbeing. Trek Learning Centre was born out of an attempt to create specialised programs aimed at offering opportunities to vulnerable young people. The centre draws inspiration from insights into developmental trauma and the recognition that establishing foundations

and facilitating healing are essential prerequisites for genuine opportunities and success to be attainable for those who grapple with complex childhood impacts and barriers.

At Trek Learning Centre they extend opportunities for empowerment, growth and change to children and young people through specialised therapeutic programs meticulously designed to function within a comprehensive framework focused on addressing complex trauma, overcoming barriers and promoting healing. Their endeavours are centred on mitigating repercussions from trauma and mental health challenges in children and young individuals through hands-on interventions in a therapeutic farm environment. It is a truly, truly special place. Through these initiatives, Trek's objective is to establish a robust and capable neural foundation, facilitating integrated functionality and enabling children and young people to attain successful learning, adeptly manage intricate emotions and gain insight into their own responses and self-preservation patterns. I truly look forward to the minister visiting Trek Learning Centre, which is quite a special place we have here.

Public housing

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (19:14): (347) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Housing, and the action I seek is for the minister to build more public housing, not privatise public housing estates. The government plans to privatise swathes of public housing land, including in the Prahran electorate, gifting it to private property developers to rebuild the towers with no guarantee in its housing statement that public housing will be built following the demolition. In its statement it says it wants to increase the number of people living on these estates from 10,000 to 30,000, but incredibly, of the 20,000 extra people on the estates, 95 per cent will be in private housing – just 5 per cent in social housing at a time when our state's public housing waiting list stands at over 125,000 people and will continue to grow. Rather than committing to building the amount of public housing we desperately need in our state and utilising the land on public housing estates, which is close to transport and close to schools, services and jobs, the government is opting to sell off existing estates for the profits of private developers. The former Premier, when he announced this plan, said he expected a lot of interest from developers in the estates. Well, he is not wrong. I am sure they will be lined up. This proposed sell-off, reminiscent of the Kennett era – although even he has come out and opposed it – will have far-reaching and long-term effects on our state's ability to provide quality public housing for those who need it.

Our estates do need upgrading. Some parts need rebuilding. But it makes no sense to privatise prime public housing land so close to the CBD instead of building more housing on it. Under this plan, hundreds of existing public housing units will be destroyed and thousands of residents displaced without any guarantee that any of the newly built dwellings will be public housing homes. Public housing is essential to ensuring that people who need it most have a safe place to call home, and I call on the minister to ensure that our public housing estates remain in the public's hands and are used for the public good.

Parkdale Secondary College

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (19:16): (348) My adjournment this evening is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to give my community an update on the progress of Parkdale Secondary College's redevelopment of their junior learning centre and come out to the school community to visit and hear of the wonderful progress and work done at Parkdale Secondary. This is an outstanding school in our community. It has some 1700 students, and it has excelled, like so many schools in our community.

Parkdale Secondary College is another example of how we are building the Education State. Whether it is the commitment we took to the 2018 election for Parkdale and Mordialloc colleges or the commitments that we made again for Mordialloc and Keysborough Gardens primary schools, we see the transformation happening. We do not want the first-rate education that our kids get at Parkdale Secondary College being hamstrung by second-class facilities. The redevelopment of the junior learning centre caters for that growth and development and gives them modern learning facilities for

the future. I want to give a big shout-out to principal David Russell, his assistant Melissa Treverton, the educators, the education support staff and the wider Parkdale Secondary College community that make this school such an outstanding place of education and growth in our local community.

When we think of the journey that we have gone through in building works in our area, we are seeing upgrades at Chelsea Primary School. I just visited there this morning on the way through. They have got the steel beams going up. Chelsea Heights Primary School had their redevelopment stage – a \$4.5 million upgrade. When we think about Yarrabah School, the specialist development school, every single corner of that school has been rebuilt, with more than \$20 million invested. There is the hydrotherapy pool as well. The former Premier Andrews went out a number of times to Yarrabah School, and he literally put every single bit of effort into making that school modern and supportive for kids with additional needs. I look at Parktone – two stages of upgrades, their hall and their new library, which we opened just a few months ago. Mentone Park Primary School is just around the corner there; it had a staged upgrade as well. Then we see Keysborough Gardens. We literally rebuilt the new school there. In 2020 it was opened by the former member for Keysborough, Martin Pakula. As the student population grows – and it is estimated that school could have between 600 and 700 students in the next few years – we have got another stage of development for learning spaces and outdoor play space upgrades that will cater for another 150 students.

In every corner of the Mordialloc electorate and the Kingston community we are building the Education State – in early childhood, in TAFE and in our primary and secondary schools. I would love to have the Deputy Premier and education minister out to visit Parkdale Secondary College to hear about their vision and their values and to get an update on the wonderful redevelopment of the junior learning centre.

Kilmore secondary school

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (19:19): (349) My adjournment today is for the new Minister for Education, and the action I seek is that the government provide funding to build a public secondary school in Kilmore. The lack of urgency and care from his predecessor has seen a golden opportunity missed, and I hope he is able to rectify this. The previous minister took no action, refusing to engage with families and displaying a lack of foresight and an arrogance that has left hundreds of families without accessible local educational alternatives. Despite thousands of local residents signing petitions calling for the state government to purchase the former Colmont School campus, it has been sold to a private company. With over 3300 signatures on our petitions in a town of more than 10,000 people, the pressing need for a public school in Kilmore is unmistakable.

It is disheartening to find ourselves fighting for a school when most communities are focused on extensions or upgrades. I am here as a representative of numerous parents and grandparents united in urging this government to provide funding for a school. Among those are Jamie and Martin Leahy, Meghan Hayes, Linda Jeffery, Sarah Tofield, Taylor Woods, Narelle Robertson, Tracey Challis, Zoe Kranenburg, Sheree Cornell and countless others. Thank you all for your support in this fight for our fundamental rights. The former school campus was ready made, conveniently on the market and had the opportunity to provide a cost-effective solution to a very real issue for this town. While the golden opportunity has been missed, the lack of schooling options in the town cannot just be ignored. The community support highlights that we have enough students to fill a new school today.

Kilmore is the largest town in Victoria without a public secondary school and is one of the biggest growth corridors in the state. The Mitchell shire region population is set to rise by 255 per cent in the next 20 years, with Kilmore's population anticipated to more than double in the same period to nearly 23,000. Despite this forecast, this government is failing to provide a public education for our local children. The only secondary education choice in Kilmore is Assumption College, a reputable private school with annual fees beginning at nearly \$9000. Regrettably, this region's income levels fall below the state's median, making it challenging for many families to afford this. Not everyone can afford to attend a private school. Nearby schools in towns like Broadford, Wallan and Whittlesea are either at

capacity or nearing capacity, and students as young as 12 years old are having to make a 2-hour commute to and from school each day. Why is this government committed to perpetuating a postcode lottery which leaves children disadvantage based on where they live? This is not some rural, remote location; this is Kilmore, one of the fastest growing towns in our state. It is time to listen to our community and provide them with a public secondary school. As local parent Bianca Taylor put it:

Our children shouldn't have to travel to other towns for a fair education
and as dad James Mason said:

... this is a no brainer.

Yan Yean electorate schools

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (19:22): (350) My adjournment is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for him to visit Yan Yean to learn more about the priorities of our local schools. The return to school this week means parents are back to packing lunch boxes every day, children are back to gaining skills and losing hats every day and our fabulous teachers and staff are doing one of the most important jobs in the world. I am so glad that we are backing our schools with the investment to make sure that they have world-class facilities for their world-class education. Within Yan Yean I am so glad that the Wandong Primary School and Whittlesea Secondary College upgrade planning processes are now underway, and we have the Doreen Primary School upgrade kicking off very soon.

Responses

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (19:23): I am pleased to respond to several matters on the adjournment from members. The member South-West Coast raised a matter for the Minister for Environment, requesting that she visit her electorate to spend time with the community at Tower Hill, particularly around weed management. Serrated tussock might be one of those weeds that needs a bit of attention up there with the Friends of Tower Hill.

The member for Hastings raised a matter for the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events. He particularly noted the recent visit from the minister at the McClelland Gallery and is pretty keen to get the minister back as an action item to visit the great township of Somers.

I can also say that the Honourable member for Gippsland East raised a matter for the Minister for Emergency Services, requesting that the Victorian fire rating system be made available to the community year round, and he went into detail regarding those matters. Of course the house wishes his community well in what are some trying circumstances in regard to fire and flood at this time.

The member for Broadmeadows raised a matter for the Minister for Housing and sought the action that she join her at the Banksia Gardens housing estate in her electorate. It is certainly a place that has been a focus for the now Minister for Development Victoria and Minister for Precincts, and we are keen to continue that work with the new Minister for Housing.

The member for Narracan raised a matter for the Minister for Emergency Services, in particular to seek that the minister direct the department to review all CFA assets to ensure their readiness for the upcoming fire season, which as he noted in the town of Rawson has come a little early, unfortunately, in relation to parts of his electorate.

I also had a matter from the member for Monbulk, who sought from the Minister for Children an action to visit the Trek Learning Centre in her electorate, a not-for-profit organisation ensuring access for vulnerable young people to training and other supports. The member for Prahran raised a matter for the Minister for Housing seeking that the government build more public housing. The member for Mordialloc raised a matter for the Minister for Education, the Deputy Premier, seeking action on an update on the progress of the Parkdale Secondary College and the junior learning centre and for him to go out there and see the great progress that is being made at Parkdale Secondary College.

The member for Euroa raised a matter also for the Minister for Education, the Deputy Premier, seeking action to build a public secondary school in Kilmore, which she outlined. The member for Yan Yean also raised a matter for the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Education – he is going to be busy. It was also based on an action item seeking his attention and a visit to the mighty electorate of Yan Yean to understand those priorities of education in the member's ever-growing community, particularly some of the progress at Wandong Primary School and some other schools in her electorate that are doing great work, and her advocacy there. I commend all those matters to the respective ministers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The house now stands adjourned until tomorrow morning.

House adjourned 7:26 pm.