



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Tuesday 20 February 2024

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

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

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 ¹	Mulgrave	ALP	McCurdy, Tim	Ovens Valley	Nat
Battin, Brad	Berwick	Lib	McGhie, Steve	Melton	ALP
Benham, Jade	Mildura	Nat	McLeish, Cindy	Eildon	Lib
Britnell, Roma	South-West Coast	Lib	Marchant, Alison	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Colin	Bundoora	ALP	Matthews-Ward, Kathleen	Broadmeadows	ALP
Bull, Josh	Sunbury	ALP	Mercurio, Paul	Hastings	ALP
Bull, Tim	Gippsland East	Nat	Mullahy, John	Glen Waverley	ALP
Cameron, Martin	Morwell	Nat	Newbury, James	Brighton	Lib
Carbines, Anthony	Ivanhoe	ALP	O'Brien, Danny	Gippsland South	Nat
Carroll, Ben	Niddrie	ALP	O'Brien, Michael	Malvern	Lib
Cheeseman, Darren	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 ⁴	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Farnham, Wayne	Narracan	Lib	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Foster, Eden ²	Mulgrave	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
Fowles, Will ³	Ringwood	Ind	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Groth, Sam	Nepean	Lib	Theophanous, Kat	Northcote	ALP
Guy, Matthew	Bulleen	Lib	Thomas, Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Halfpenny, Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Tilley, Bill	Benambra	Lib
Hall, Katie	Footscray	ALP	Vallence, Bridget	Evelyn	Lib
Hamer, Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Vulin, Emma	Pakenham	ALP
Haylett, Martha	Ripon	ALP	Walsh, Peter	Murray Plains	Nat
Hibbins, Sam	Prahran	Greens	Walters, Iwan	Greenvale	ALP
Hilakari, Mathew	Point Cook	ALP	Ward, Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Hodgett, David	Croydon	Lib	Wells, Kim	Rowville	Lib
Horne, Melissa	Williamstown	ALP	Werner, Nicole ⁵	Warrandyte	Lib
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Wight, Dylan	Tameit	ALP
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

¹ ALP until 5 August 2023

² Sworn in 6 February 2024

³ Resigned 27 September 2023

⁴ Resigned 7 July 2023

⁵ Sworn in 3 October 2023

Party abbreviations

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

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Tuesday 20 February 2024

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

Bills

Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024

Introduction and first reading

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (12:04): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Private Security Act 2004 to provide for a new licensing system for the private security industry and to amend the County Court Act 1958 and the Sentencing Act 1991 to extend the operation of the Drug Court division of the County Court and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (12:05): I ask the minister to provide a brief explanation of the bill.

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (12:05): I thank the honourable member for Malvern. The aim of the bill is to give effect to the recommendations made in the report on the review of the private security industry which was endorsed by cabinet and published in December 2021 to extend the operation of the County Court Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court, DATC, pilot. The report arose out of a 2018 election commitment to review the industry with a view to improving worker access to their rights to fair pay and work conditions as well as to improve the professionalism and consequent public reputation of the industry.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Statute Law Revision Bill 2024

Introduction and first reading

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (12:06): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to revise the statute law of Victoria.

Motion agreed to.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (12:06): I request an explanation of the bill.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (12:06): The Statute Law Revision Bill 2024 will amend various acts to correct inadvertent typographical errors and update references and definitions as well as removing other definitions which are now redundant. This helps to ensure the Victorian statutes are up to date and clear and facilitates the administering of Victorian laws. The bill does not make any substantive changes to the law.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Estate Agents, Residential Tenancies and Other Acts Amendment (Funding) Bill 2024*Introduction and first reading*

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (12:07): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 in relation to funding dispute resolution and advocacy services, to amend the Estate Agents Act 1980 in relation to funding dispute resolution and advocacy services and to abolish the Estate Agents Council, to amend the Business Licensing Authority Act 1998 to facilitate closure of the Sex Work Regulation Fund, to amend the Public Records Act 1973 to abolish the Public Records Advisory Council and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (12:07): I request a full explanation of the bill.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (12:08): The bill will contemporise the approved uses of the Victorian Property Fund and the Residential Tenancies Fund to allow for funding of alternative dispute resolution services and other support for consumers under the acts. It will also discontinue the Estate Agents Council and the Public Records Advisory Council to allow for more flexible and contemporary forums to consult with stakeholders. Finally, it will make amendments to enact administrative changes, including closure of the Sex Work Regulation Fund and updating instances of gendered language to non-gendered language.

Read first time.**Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.****Bail Amendment (Indictable Offences Whilst on Bail) Bill 2024***Introduction*

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (12:08): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Bail Amendment Act 2023 so that the offence of committing an indictable offence whilst on bail is not repealed, or to amend the Bail Act 1977 to re-enact that offence if it is repealed, and to make consequential amendments to other acts and for other purposes.

This is a very important bill that I seek to introduce today. In 34 days time the Bail Amendment Act 2023 will be proclaimed and take effect. That means that in 34 days time the Allan Labor government will be weakening Victoria's bail laws. This could not happen at a worse possible time for Victoria's community safety. The idea that we should be making it easier for repeat offenders to get bail again is something which Victorians do not support, yet that is exactly what the Bail Amendment Act of last year is going to do. This bill is giving the government an opportunity to save Victorians from themselves. This bill is giving the government an opportunity to save the government from itself. This was a bad change, one that was not done with the interests of community safety in mind. This is why this bill needs to be introduced and debated and passed today.

We are seeing a very serious issue with crime in our community. It has recently been reported there were 24,881 recorded home burglaries last year – that is over 68 burglaries a day. There is not a single member of this chamber whose community is not affected by burglaries and, increasingly, aggravated burglaries. I have had so many people that I know, so many constituents of mine, who have told me about the absolute terror of waking up to somebody being in their home in the middle of the night, often armed people in their homes in the middle of the night. These people are a danger to good, honest people in our community, and that is why we need to have appropriate bail laws.

There were aspects of the government's bail changes last year that we did agree with, but this is one aspect that the government got wrong. The government absolutely got it wrong, and this bill is an opportunity to fix that mistake. The bill that I seek to introduce reflects a simple principle: if you abuse

the privilege of bail by committing further offences, you should face a tougher test to get bail again. That is the simple principle that this bill represents. It would be very hard to find many Victorians who would disagree with that basic premise.

We all agree that bail is appropriate in certain circumstances, but bail is giving somebody trust, and the covenant on the other side of that bail is that you will keep your nose clean, you will not offend while you are on bail. So in an instance where somebody is given bail and then is charged with a serious offence, which is what an indictable offence is – a serious offence – they have breached the trust the community and the legal system have placed in them, and for that reason we believe they should face a higher test to get bail again. That is not only common sense, that is about community safety. But what the Labor government's act, which is yet to be proclaimed, does is it says it does not matter how many times you are on bail, it does not matter how many times you are arrested on bail, you will continue to face the same level of test for each offence regardless of all the breaches you have committed in the past, and I do not believe that is right. I believe that if you breach the trust of the community by abusing the privilege of bail by committing another offence, you should face a tougher test to get bail again. When we have seen a 33 per cent increase in aggravated burglaries in this state over the past 12 months –

Brad Rowswell: How much?

Michael O'BRIEN: a 33 per cent increase in aggravated burglaries, member for Sandringham – this is exactly the wrong time to be weakening bail laws. It is exactly the wrong time to be weakening bail laws. When we see 43 police stations across this state reducing their opening hours to the public, we have got weakening bail laws, closed police stations and an increase in aggravated burglaries. It is a perfect storm designed to make Victorians less safe. Well, this government has a chance to admit that it got it wrong. This government has a chance to fix this mistake before Victorians pay the price for it. In 34 days time, on 25 March, the Bail Amendment Bill 2023 will be proclaimed by default. There is therefore one opportunity for this Parliament, one opportunity for this government to admit it got it wrong and put Victorians' safety first. That is why it is so important that this bill be introduced, that this bill be debated and that this bill be passed. We stand for the very simple proposition: if you abuse the privilege of bail by committing a further offence, you should face a tougher test to get bail again. We stand for Victorians and Victorians' safety. The question is: will the government do the same?

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (12:14): I rise in opposition to the opposition's motion. In Dunkley we were blessed to have the leader of the federal opposition down, apparently dining in Melbourne, dining in Dunkley – a person that said he could not go outside and dine. And we have seen the hysteria whipped up around African gangs, which was absolutely toxic in my community.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: If the member for Bulleen wants to stay in the chamber for the debate, I would suggest he cease interjecting.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is a procedural debate about introducing an important bill. There were five home invasions in my electorate last night. I would ask you –

The SPEAKER: Order! The Manager of Opposition Business knows how to introduce a point of order, and that is not the correct way. Member for Frankston, this is a narrow procedural debate, and I ask you to speak to the introduction of the bill.

Paul EDBROOKE: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, Captain Obvious. The Andrews Labor government is committed to keeping Victorians safe, and Victorians can see that. If you go to the police academy now, you will see that 3135 police officers have been trained there, as well as PSOs. They have had to put portable buildings on the athletics oval – this is the first time in history that has happened – to make sure there are lodgings and classrooms for that many police coming through. The

Andrews Labor government has also invested more than \$4.7 billion of new funding into the Victorian corrections system –

Members interjecting.

Paul EDBROOKE: which I think is lost on those opposite. They get confused pretty quickly. You can say ‘Andrews’ and it becomes a big deal. They know what I mean. That \$4.7 billion includes \$2 billion for better services and around \$2.8 billion to build and upgrade correctional facilities, which we have seen recently.

On both sides of the chamber we will have debate and argument about certain things. We agreed on certain legislation quite recently in regard to a serial killer in Victoria, and I think we are on the same ticket there. The argument around this, though, is not really taking into account some of the investment that has gone in from the Allan government; for example, the \$243 million which was spent expanding services and capacity across the prison system. We are investing too in those programs that keep people out of prison, especially young people, and reduce crime. It was great to have the Minister for Crime Prevention, Mr Carbines, in Frankston not long ago, at Headspace, to talk about some of those programs that are in many members’ electorates that help put people on the right path.

There is always going to be debate around the balance of bail and the tests therein, and I do respect that, but on this occasion I have to say that I am definitely standing up in opposition to what has been put up to the house today by the opposition. It is in some ways, I think, naive of the facts and naive of the data that we see from the investment by this government. I think the resources that have gone to our police force and the resources that are going to our legal system really have been seen only maybe once before, if that. We have invested more than any other government from what I can see. I think that that needs to be taken into account in this debate, and I do not think it has been.

With that, I will put on the record that I am not in support of this opposition motion. I think they need to go back and do some more homework. They need to maybe get some briefings and come back with a better conversation to be had in this chamber.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:18): I strongly support the member for Malvern’s attempt to introduce the Bail Amendment (Indictable Offences Whilst on Bail) Bill 2024, and I support the urgency that it needs to be introduced with. I advise the house that last night in my community there were five home invasions. When we speak about the need for this bill, there can be no greater proof of a need than the incidents that occurred last night. The member for Malvern spoke about the 34 days until the weakening of bail laws comes into effect. We absolutely need to introduce and consider this bill immediately, because I have five families in my community that expect it – families with children who go to one of my local primary schools, who this morning woke up to having had their homes invaded. When does it stop?

We need to ensure that there are punishments at law that act as a deterrent to stop these crimes. We need to ensure that the laws are strong, not watered down but strong, and that is what the member for Malvern’s bill is about. It is about ensuring that we have protections in place and ensuring that when you commit a crime more than once you are punished as you should be, not that it is easier for you to do it again. To know that 68 incidents are occurring a day is a problem, and that is what this bill seeks to address.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, the Manager of Opposition Business knows full well that this is a procedural motion. It is not an opportunity to debate the merits of the bill, and I ask you to bring him back to speaking only about the introduction of the bill, not what the bill may contain.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order.

James NEWBURY: I say again: there can be no more urgent reason to introduce this bill than to ensure that families like those in my community who were attacked last night are protected. Could

there be any greater reason? I am a father of young children, and to talk to other parents who have woken up in the morning and found they have been victim to a home invasion just absolutely rocks you. It hurts to hear the stories of what they have gone through.

And it is not just something that happened last night. As we heard from the member for Malvern, this is something that is now happening 68 times a day – 68 times every single day – on average. I have, in my community, heard of so many incidents where this has occurred. Only recently in Bay Street a family woke up, walked out to have their Weeties and were confronted by two armed home invaders with machetes. Can you imagine? That is why I so strongly support the member for Malvern's attempt to say that we cannot allow the laws to be watered down in 34 days. No-one in good conscience would allow the laws to be watered down in 34 days, and that is what this bill goes to. We must consider it immediately. We must consider it urgently.

We must ensure that our laws protect our community, and when we know that there are failings, when we know that there have been mistakes, that we stop them from happening. In my community our local police station is now closed for part of the day. It is just one of the 43. Forty-three stations are shut for many, many hours a day. I do not have a station in my community. The nearest one is now shut for a third of the day; the 24-hour station is now shut for a third of the day. Work that one out.

But the member for Malvern must be supported in his attempt to introduce this bill. We cannot allow repeat offenders to not have a deterrent to stop them from committing these horrific crimes. How can we as a Parliament look the five families in my community in the eyes and say what they went through last night was okay? It is not okay, and this government needs to stop sitting idly by while 68 of these invasions are happening every single day.

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (12:23): From the outset I just want to say – and I am not attributing this to any particular speaker to this point – that in this place, when we are talking about issues of community safety around victims of crime and around crime in general, it is very important to avoid politicisation and to be very careful about how we present statistics. In the past I have seen politicians take a piece of data and then put it out to their community in grandiose terms. I am just broadly saying that it is very important that we all take a deep breath and remember that when we talk about these issues these are not just numbers, these are people. I would urge people to be cautious in their debate around these matters.

I speak from experience. These are very, very important topics to our community, and that is exactly why the Allan Labor government, and previously the Andrews Labor government, have been strong supporters of our men and women and people in blue on the front line keeping Victorians, our community, safe each and every single day. I was very proud to have been a serving police officer before being elected to this place. I served at the rank of senior constable. I was on the front line. I know what it is like to be out there day in and day out keeping our community safe, and I know since transitioning into this place I am extremely proud to be a part of a team that backs in those very same people. This government has put on over 3000 more police – not just on the front line but family violence detectives in permanent jobs, because we know family violence is something that we need to get rid of. It is a scourge on our community, and that is why this government have put in dedicated family violence detective positions. It is why we have put in resources for family violence specialist courts.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, apart from being a procedural debate, this bill relates to bail and the urgency around introducing a bail law. It is not an opportunity to read out a media release, and I would ask you to bring the member back to the motion before us.

The SPEAKER: Manager of Opposition Business, I will not call you for points of order if you cannot make them correctly. I ask you to be succinct. Member for Bayswater, I have allowed some latitude here for members who have spoken on this, and I will not uphold the point of order.

Jackson TAYLOR: Thank you, Speaker. Talking about the importance of resourcing our police and resourcing our courts around family violence goes to the very heart of community safety, because it is what our police officers are responding to day in and day out. I have been a victim of family violence myself growing up, I have been in the police force and now I am here seeing that this government stands behind the victims of family violence and backs in our police to do their job every day, not just with the resources but also with the tech and the equipment, like body-worn cameras, making it easier for victims of family violence to give their statements. We are making it easier for police to do their job with iPads, telephone devices, everything that they need. All the powers and resources that the police force have needed, this government has responded to and provided to them.

Of course the member for Frankston before discussed the academy. I know since my time at the academy to what this government is doing now there has been an exponential increase. There is family violence specialist training. They have got portables on the course as well, getting through double squads of police officers. It is an incredible commitment that this government has made. We also have the guaranteed funding model for police. We are upgrading our police stations.

What I will say is that we have spoken about community safety and this government's absolute resolute commitment to community safety and to Victoria Police, but this government does not just provide the resources. We also talk the talk, because when talking the talk and walking the walk sometimes what you say is equally as important. I remember during the pandemic when our police were going through very, very difficult times and they were performing a job under very trying circumstances, this government had their back. I am not saying all in different political parties did not have their back, but some did not. They were very quick to criticise without any facts and jump to conclusions. Members on this side were not on that pile-on. We will always support our police. We supported them then, we support them now and we always will. This government will always resource Victoria Police to get the job done, to keep our community safe, because it is the right thing to do. We will continue to do it.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (12:28): I rise to support the member for Malvern's Bail Amendment (Indictable Offences Whilst on Bail) Bill 2024. You could never get a bigger reason for why we need to support this to ensure that we can protect the community than what the member for Bayswater just said – we want to focus on family violence. If you commit family violence at home, you will end up on bail. If you reoffend, which quite often happens in family violence, you will go back into the court system, and it will be easier after this law goes through from this government to get bail than it is today. We want to make sure that the offenders in those circumstances of family violence cannot get bail easier than they can currently. We need to protect those victims, so when it comes to bail and this Bail Act 1977 we want to make sure that the people who are applying for bail are treated as they should be if they have committed an indictable offence. We do not want them back on the street.

We have spoken about some of the crimes that have happened. We heard about that in here and about the police and the resourcing, and the one thing the government forgets to mention every time they talk about police resourcing is that there are 3 per cent less police available today than there were just 12 months ago. There are 5 per cent less police available today than there were two years ago. There are nearly 1000 vacancies. They are funded vacancies, so the government can say that they are increasing the numbers, but they are not actually putting people into those spots. We have got vacancies. It does not matter where you go in the state, that is a big problem. We have vacancies in nearly every station across Victoria; that is a massive concern. But we want to actually make sure that we are talking about the things that are important and can make a difference, so when the police do their job and arrest someone, they are not going to end up back out on the street, just like that, for the police to go and rearrest, because of the bail laws making it easier for people to get out.

The member for Malvern has spoken about stations that are closed and crimes that are happening. The member for Brighton spoke about five incidents in his electorate – just his electorate – last night. I could show every person in this room today a video from last night in Alira estate, in Berwick, of another time when offenders went into a house and they did not care who was home. They pulled up

to that house two nights in a row – it is all on video – and they have gone in through the back door. They did not care who was there. And I will bet my bottom dollar that these kids who are doing this, these thugs, are on bail. I will bet my bottom dollar they are on bail. We are seeing continuous reports; we do not have to go back. We have recently seen a tragedy where someone was killed by people who were on bail.

When is the government going to listen and understand that if you keep making it easier for people to get bail, the consequence is that our community is less safe? At the end of the day the focus of this place must be on community safety. That is why this bill is not just important to introduce, it is important to get through in a time line that ensures that that sunset clause does not happen. The member for Malvern understands it and has seen it in his own electorate. The member for Brighton understands it and has seen it in his own electorate. And I will tell you I understand it because I have those people come in to my office – I speak to those victims – and every time they say they were burgled or they had someone break into their house with a machete but that person was on bail it nearly makes people sick. When I go and speak to Victoria Police, those on the ground who are out there doing their jobs, the most frustrating time for them is when they go through a revolving system in the courts. They see offenders come in, and half the time the offenders will beat them back to the residence they came from because they get bail so quickly these days. We now need to make sure that the bail system in place has a priority, and that priority is community safety.

I am going to circle back to where I started and why this has to come in. We talk about being safe out in the street. We talk about being safe in our community. I say we need to be safe in our homes. During my time in Victoria Police we charged many people with violence in their homes, and there is not a person in this place that does not think that should happen. We want to make sure that we protect the victims who are at home, who are the most vulnerable and who do not have the opportunity to protect themselves. To do that, we need to support the member from Malvern's bill to ensure that those offenders who are inside the home, who we do not normally get to, do not get the opportunity to come back out and assault, intimidate or threaten any person in their own home. We need to make sure those protections are there, and the only way to do that and ensure people are safe in their houses is to support the member for Malvern's bill.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (12:33): I rise to speak on this motion and to speak against the member for Malvern's motion. As a new member of Parliament, one thing has become very clear to me very early in my term, and that is that one of the highest priorities of the Allan Labor government is indeed community safety. I know that because I see it every single day – day in, day out, week in, week out – in my community of Tarneit. The facts speak for themselves: \$4.7 billion invested into this sector in Victoria since we took government. That funding is obviously split up in different ways – it has been said previously to me – whether that be more police on the beat now than ever before, whether that be an academy out at Glen Waverley full of young prospective police officers that are about to go out and keep our community safe, or indeed whether that be through our record investment in corrections right here in Victoria.

We are investing like no government ever has before in correctional facilities right here in Victoria, indeed a lot very close to my community of Tarneit. We can go out there and we can use the real-life example of Cherry Creek. \$2.8 billion has been invested just into corrections infrastructure itself. As we know, new corrections infrastructure will help improve safety and security within our community. We have also invested \$243 million to expand services and capacity right across the prison system. I know – I am sure all of our MPs know – that when constituents come through our offices that is so incredibly important to them.

As I said, the proof is in the pudding in terms of the Allan Labor government's investment in corrections in Victoria and indeed its investment in community safety. We do not just talk the talk, we walk the walk. And unlike those opposite, this is not a political football to us. Politicisation of community safety is abhorrent; it is something that we are absolutely not interested in. Let us look at

the history of this. We can wind all the way back to the Liberals' federal colleague, now the Leader of the Opposition of this country, talking –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would ask members to cease interjecting while the member for Tarneit is on his feet. The Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order.

James Newbury: Relevance.

The SPEAKER: Well done, Manager of Opposition Business. I think the member for Tarneit was giving some context, and I do not uphold the point of order.

Dylan WIGHT: Indeed I was, Speaker, and thank you very much. Those of us on this side of the house will not turn this into a political football. We will not politicise community safety here in Victoria. As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted, we can go back several years to the now leader of the federal Liberal Party talking about community safety and talking about being scared to go out for dinner in Victoria because of African gangs. It was one of the more abhorrent displays by a potential leader.

The SPEAKER: Order! On a point of order, Manager of Opposition Business.

James Newbury: Clearly relevance.

The SPEAKER: Member for Tarneit, you have 26 seconds to come back to the introduction of the bill.

Dylan WIGHT: As I said at the beginning of my contribution, I will be opposing this motion because frankly what it does is politicise community safety in Victoria, which those on this side of the house are not interested in and never will be.

The SPEAKER: The member for Brunswick, by leave. Is leave granted?

Leave refused.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (26): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Nicole Werner, Jess Wilson

Noes (53): 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, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Motion defeated.

Business of the house

Notices of motion

Notice given.

The SPEAKER (12:44): General business, notices of motion 15 and 16, will be removed from the notice paper unless the member wishing their matter to remain advises the Clerk in writing before 5 pm today.

Committees

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Alert Digest No. 2

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (12:45): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 2 of 2024, on the following bills and subordinate legislation:

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing Pilot for Drug Harm Reduction) Bill 2023

Education and Training Reform Amendment (Early Childhood Employment Powers) Bill 2024

Firearms and Control of Weapons (Machetes) Amendment Bill 2024

SR No. 86 – Water (Recreational Area) Regulations 2023

SR No. 102 – Building and Plumbing Amendment (National Construction Code and Other Matters) Regulations 2023

together with appendices.

Ordered to be published.

Documents

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Gambling Regulation Act 2003 – Electronic gaming machine tax review – released on 12 February 2024

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

Boroondara – C406

Greater Geelong – C464

Hobsons Bay – GC214

Strathbogie – C80

Victoria Planning Provisions – VC244, VC254

Wyndham – GC214

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

Bills

Land (Revocation of Reservations) Bill 2023

Council's agreement

The SPEAKER (12:46): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Land (Revocation of Reservations) Bill 2023 without amendment.

Biosecurity Legislation Amendment (Incident Response) Bill 2023**Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2023****Land (Revocation of Reservations) Bill 2023***Royal assent*

The SPEAKER (12:46): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Biosecurity Legislation Amendment (Incident Response) Bill 2023, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2023 and the Land (Revocation of Reservations) Bill 2023.

Education and Training Reform Amendment (Early Childhood Employment Powers) Bill 2024*Appropriation*

The SPEAKER (12:46): I have received a message from the Governor recommending an appropriation for the purposes of the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Early Childhood Employment Powers) Bill 2024.

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

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (12:47): I 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 time to be moved immediately.

Leave refused.

*Motions***Middle East conflict**

Tim READ (Brunswick) (12:47): I move, by leave:

That this house:

- (1) notes that, since this house resolved on 17 October 2023 to stand with Israel, the following have occurred:
 - (a) over 100,000 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed or injured; and
 - (b) a growing humanitarian catastrophe is occurring in Gaza;
- (2) does not support the state of Israel's continued invasion of Gaza.

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) (12:48): 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 22 February 2024:

Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023

Education and Training Reform Amendment (Early Childhood Employment Powers) Bill 2024

Firearms and Control of Weapons (Machetes) Amendment Bill 2024

We have got a really important and significant legislative program this week, and I know that members on this side of the house are very much looking forward to the opportunity to speak on these very important bills.

I might start by just talking a little bit about why it is so important that the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023 is debated this week in this house. Let us be clear, when it comes to energy in this state, only our government has a plan to bring on the supply that is needed to ensure that Victorians have access to the energy they need. Only this government understands that the way to ensure a secure energy supply for the future is to ensure that you invest in renewables, that you have a vision and a plan to transition from those fuels that will no longer be available into the future and that you make sure that you have in place both the wind and solar power needed to ensure that you can deliver the electricity supply that Victorians need. I know members on this side of the house will embrace the opportunity to speak to our government's vision, our government's preparedness and our government's investment in the energy future of this state.

We will also have the opportunity to debate the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Early Childhood Employment Powers) Bill 2024, and members across the house will no doubt have welcomed our government's investment in early learning centres but most importantly in delivering government-funded early learning centres that will provide child care in childcare deserts. We know that once again this is an area that the previous federal Liberal–National coalition government comprehensively neglected, and indeed it amuses me, if I might use that word in this place, when those on the other side get up and talk about child care, not understanding that it is a federal government responsibility and that failures as they exist in child care sit firmly with the previous federal Liberal–National government. But our government has made some investments to address the shortage of childcare places in some communities across our state, and I am delighted that in 2025 we will see sites coming on board at Eaglehawk, Fawkner and indeed Murtoa, with other sites to be delivered through to 2028.

We also have the opportunity to debate the Firearms and Control of Weapons (Machetes) Amendment Bill 2024. This is a bill that is an excellent example of what this government does. We are not about grandstanding, we are not about stunts in the Parliament, we are about getting on and responding to the issues, and those include the personal safety issues that Victorians are experiencing at any given time. So when we see a problem, we work to resolve it, to fix it and to make Victoria a safer place for all Victorians. Of course as we have heard already from members on this side of the house it is the Andrews–Allan Labor governments that have invested in community safety. It is our government that has brought on more police across our state. It is under our government that the police academy is full, and we have very proudly given police the resources, the powers and the tools that they need in order to keep our community safe.

Finally, we have reflected on the apology that was made in the last sitting week and how significant that was for care leavers, whose tragedy was writ across their faces. I think we were all deeply moved by the apology, and there will be, as is appropriate, an opportunity for other members in this place to speak to that apology while it remains on the notice paper.

I would hope that the opposition would support the government business program, but knowing their ideological opposition to investing in energy supply in this state they will no doubt oppose it. But I commend it to the house, and I look forward to, as I said, perhaps some reason from those on the other side and perhaps some support for this government business program.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:53): For clarity, this is a procedural motion before the house on what the house is considering this week. The opposition will be opposing the government business program, primarily because again the coalition went to the government and asked if we could consider in detail one of the bills that is being proposed for the house to consider this week, and the government declined the opportunity to consider that bill in detail. Thinking through the last three terms, each term the government has agreed to one opportunity of consideration in detail in each four-year period, and

we saw last year the government agreed to consideration in detail on the WorkCover bill after I went to the minister directly. In this instance of asking for consideration in detail, the government declined. So I would say that it is unfortunate that the ministers do not feel that they have the capacity to debate a bill in a consideration-in-detail stage, and I understand why they feel they do not have that capacity.

Mary-Anne Thomas: Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, as was previously raised by the Manager of Opposition Business, again, this is a narrow procedural motion. It is not an opportunity to attack members of the government, and I ask you to bring the member back to speaking on the procedural matter.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Points of order need to be succinct, as was mentioned earlier. There is no point of order.

James NEWBURY: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. The coalition will be opposing the government business program. The Leader of the House spoke to the bills that are being considered this week. Picking up the points that were raised, the Leader of the House spoke to the climate change legislation and the importance of secure energy supply. I can assure you, having seen the biggest blackout in our state's history last week, that is absolutely an important matter for this house to consider. So we agree entirely with the Leader of the House that there should be a fulsome debate on secure energy supply. The fact that we have just seen the biggest blackout in our state's history means it is an important opportunity to talk about the capacity to deliver energy and the capacity for our system to work into the future, because these matters are serious, and this bill will be an opportunity to do that.

Secondly, the Leader of the House spoke about the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Early Childhood Employment Powers) Bill 2024 and the early learning centres that will be delivered as part of that package. The Leader of the House spoke about the locations of the centres, and I do note that 10 per cent of those centres are in Liberal electorates and 60 per cent are in Labor electorates. So when the Leader of the House talks to the way that they pork-barrel, it is an important opportunity to talk about the locations, because we need to do so much better. We need to ensure that these services are available to young families. I am sure the entire house agrees that we need to ensure that we have these services available to our families, to our kids, but of course I note, as the Leader of the House did, the locations where, just like school funding, pork-barrelling is absolutely rife within this government.

Finally, in relation to the Firearms and Control of Weapons (Machetes) Amendment Bill 2024, which the Leader of the House spoke to, the coalition does note that the government has taken up the opposition's call for action in this space, looking at the debate that occurred only some 20 minutes ago. Community safety is something that the coalition is deeply concerned about. The reduction in police numbers year on year – 3 per cent down in the last year, 5 per cent over the last two years – and 43 stations having their hours cut significantly are concerns. So in terms of the bill more specifically, the coalition did propose amendments, which the Labor Party has picked up, which we accept, but we will be opposing the business program.

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (12:58): I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak in what is going to be an incredibly productive week here in Victoria's Parliament. We have got some ripper and really important legislation to debate. As has already been foreshadowed, we are going to be debating the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. It is fascinating for me because this renewable energy and storage targets bill is something that the people in Cranbourne are passionate about. When the opportunity comes through, as it often does, for me to talk to the community, they are often just gobsmacked at the sheer quantity of important legislation that passes through this place as it relates to environment and energy legislation under that really important area of responsibility. So it is an opportunity for me this week to be able to go back to the community that I serve – and for all of us to go back to the communities that we serve – and speak about what that debate involved and the different ways and pathways that people were able to take forward through debates. It is an opportunity for me to say we often have so

many speakers on so much of this important legislation. We have so many people who are putting their hands up because it is so important to members on this side to be able to contribute to debate and bring in different opportunities to provide that insight that comes either from life experience or from their own communities. These debates are important. So consideration and debate are always deeply and purposefully undertaken by those on this side of the chamber.

The second piece of legislation that has already been discussed today is the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Early Childhood Employment Powers) Bill 2024. I am really pleased that Ms Blandthorn from the other place has worked so hard to continue the legacy of those who had her role previously and to be able to bring forward legislation for our early childhood sector – and we do see it very much as an early childhood sector; it is an early childhood education sector – to make sure that people have what they need in the communities that we serve.

It was terrific to hear about all the different places where these early childhood education centres are going to be offered, and it is often curious to hear those on the other side use phrases like ‘pork-barrelling’ and talk about stations. I thought they were talking about train stations, because I know that there have historically been some well-known train stations that were obviously unable to be delivered. I was reflecting a little bit on that while I was watching *Nemesis* the other night when I saw I think our previous Premier refer to them as ‘ministers A, B or C’, and then there was ‘Minister F’ under the previous Liberal federal government and his propensity to be able to forget, obviously, the state that he was representing. I know that he also had a propensity to speak about the importance of matters that were in his purview.

That brings me back to the other very important piece of legislation – before you pull me up there, Deputy Speaker – which is the Firearms and Control of Weapons (Machetes) Amendment Bill 2024. Of course this government is getting on with so much important work that acknowledges, as was perfectly unpacked by contributors on this side of the chamber just half an hour ago, the importance of reform in the area of making sure that our community is safe and secure. When it comes to understanding the importance of victims and understanding the importance of making the changes that are necessary, I thought that my friends here the member for Frankston, the member for Bayswater and the member for Tarneit were really able to unpack that well.

I am looking forward to debate. I am disappointed, obviously, to hear that those opposite are opposing the government business program, but I know as well that when it comes time for us to take note of the apology it will be the really important work of making sure people who experienced institutional care are really recognised. I thought that last week we had a very solemn and important opportunity to acknowledge those people who have experienced trauma in that setting, and I am very grateful to those who are putting forward important information on that matter.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (13:03): I rise today to speak on the business program, and I note, as the member for Brighton said earlier, that we will be opposing the business program. Look, there is stuff on here that I am sure we will all get up and talk about. There are a few bits and pieces, including the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. Others have spoken about how it is going to secure our supply of power moving forward. I do note that with the weather events that we had last week – and the member Gippsland South has now left the chamber – the people of Mirboo North are still in the throes of having no power supply up there. The work that the member for Gippsland South actually did on the ground with other people in and around Mirboo North just continues on. We talk about wanting to have security of energy supply. Why did it fall over – our energy supply to areas right across the state, from one end of the state to the other?

I still have issues in my electorate of Morwell with energy supplies coming back on. But it will be nice to be able to dive into the climate change and energy legislation. A lot of the data that goes through this – with percentages of where it is all at, trying to reach net zero and trying to reach all these targets and goals in 2035 and 2040 and 2050 – is getting lost on the general population down in my area,

because they are worried about their prices going up. So it will be great to be able to dive into this one and try to articulate to the house on both sides of the chamber what people are actually taking out of the climate change and energy legislation, because it is a huge issue and it is an issue that affects everybody in the whole state of Victoria. As I said, at the moment we are in the throes of trying to get power back on for people that have lost their food supplies that were in their freezers, so we have tunnel vision on trying to help them out and get the power supply back on.

The education and training reform – mums and dads that are down in the electorate of Morwell are also coming to me about not being able to get in. It is called ‘education and training reform’, but it is to have their children looked after so they can actually go to work to earn money to pay for their cost of living going forward. It is one thing to be building these new assets, but it is another thing to actually have the people that we can have to look after the kids and teach the kids in early learning, which is an important part. I think absolutely on both sides of the chamber we know how important early learning is for our children. As I said, it is one thing to be able to build the places for it to happen, but we need to make sure that we can staff them so mums and dads can have the confidence that they are going to roll up to a facility and they will be able to get their children in, whether they have got one child, two, three or four.

Firearms and the control of weapons of course are a huge issue right across Victoria. We talk about the security of people walking around on our streets. These days if you walk down the main street of any town, you can actually see the looks on people’s faces who are feeling concerned about certain people in our community, crossing the street to walk away from them because they do not want to engage with them at all, because they do not know if they are carrying weapons on their body. Community safety is a huge thing that is going on everywhere.

As I said, we will be opposing the business program this week. Even though we will dive into a lot of this stuff, we need to be broader and we need to do more. There are some parts of it which we are going to be happy to talk about right through, and I look forward to being able to talk in the chamber and hear from both sides about the business program this week.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (13:08): I rise to support the government business program, and I am just so sorry that those opposite are not getting on board as well. It was a bit of a shame that the member for Brighton did not say which bill they wanted to discuss in detail – and to be honest it really could have been any of them – because we know that rather than looking for progress, they are looking for an opportunity for scaremongering. And that could be for any one of these bills. For example, it does seem a little bit like unusual timing that this is the week that we are discussing our new storage and energy targets, with the recent storms we have had, but the fact is we are always introducing legislation on this because we are making careful and continual progress towards the transition to the future. It is a sensible transition, and we are carrying on step by step in getting that done. But it is not a surprise at all that they are looking to make hay with that, because we are talking about renewable energy targets and storage targets, and the only target they have got is 2026. That is all they are looking forward to. They cannot see beyond that, and people see through them, to be honest. It was funny – I picked up today from the library the book I had on hold, Alan Finkel’s new book *Powering Up* about the transition, and I do not think we are going to see any of the names of those opposite on the hold list for that book, because that book is about the facts, and I do not think they are interested in knowing what those facts are. It does not assist them in their 2026 target, and what a shame to be so short-sighted.

We are also discussing this week as part of our work the Firearms and Control of Weapons (Machetes) Amendment Bill 2024, and this is absolutely the government that backs police and backs community safety. Actually, speaking of scaremongering, I met with the Mernda and Epping police just a fortnight ago and we discussed a local crime issue, and that crime issue is that the perception of crime is much higher than actual crime. We talked about what could be contributing to that. What is contributing to this growing sense of unease when the police are telling me that the crimes that we were discussing are actually lower than pre-COVID? They spoke about the role of social media in unfortunately raising

people's perception of crime, and I would hope that nobody in this place would contribute to that. What a shame that would be, because we back our police, and in this firearms and control legislation we discuss today we will be taking the next step with our firearm prohibition order scheme. The reason why I say so strongly that we back the police is because when this order scheme was first discussed in this place those opposite raised a concern that police would use it if they had a gripe on a member of the community. Fancy speaking about our police officers in that way, as if they would be so improper. You would never hear that from someone on this side of the house, because we know that police are professional, they work hard and they do so much for our community.

I am looking forward to speaking on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Early Childhood Employment Powers) Bill 2024. This is another step in our Best Start, Best Life program. It shows a government that understands the needs of family. It is no surprise that we do. As I stand here my daughter is in four-year-old kinder with the wonderful Harpreet and the wonderful Kylie. They have been working on her letters for the last couple of weeks. I give her an A+; I am not sure what I would give those opposite. This is about the education of our kids, but we are also talking about jobs. As we heard from the member for Cranbourne, this is a sector which has jobs and has infrastructure. There is so much to the Best Start, Best Life policy, and I am glad that we are taking the next step towards that, because children are precious, and I am sure we will hear more about that in the take-note motion later on this week.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (13:13): I rise to oppose the government business program as already stated by the Manager of Opposition Business, the member for Brighton, and the reason we are opposed is, as the member for Brighton said, we would have liked the opportunity to be able to have consideration in detail on these bills that we will be debating on the business program this week.

As the member for Yan Yean has just said, there are many questions that could be asked on many of these bills, and for very good reason, so I am not sure why we would be opposed in being able to question the government and actually get clarification. One of the clarifications I was seeking was why, on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Early Childhood Employment Powers) Bill 2024 powers, we have to legislate to pay childcare educators, administrators and cooks. I did not realise that was part of legislation for nurses or ambulance officers, and I want to understand why that is in this particular bill when we have the appropriation act that I thought covered that. I would love some clarity on that, but there are no opportunities under this government. For the last three terms we have had one opportunity each term, so once in four years do we get the right to be able to get into consideration in detail on the very bills that will change the laws and affect our communities and possibly result in unintended consequences. The ability to seek consideration in detail – I find it extraordinary that the member for Yan Yean says it is unnecessary. That tells me that this is a government who think they already know everything and do not have to be scrutinised or have any of the bills that they put forward questioned in any detail, because clearly they believe they have got it all right.

We have seen many examples over those three terms where we only had one opportunity each term to put those questions forward in detail, clause by clause. We have seen many mistakes made by this government where we had to come back and fix those problems. We saw that in one of the things put through the Parliament this week by the member for Malvern, who has put forward his private members bill to make sure we strengthen the bail laws rather than let somebody who has committed an indictable offence out on bail without having a tougher rule to have to answer to. We are taking into consideration making sure our community is safer with this amendment to the bail law and that private members bill, but unfortunately the government will not even let it be debated. What could possibly be wrong with debating such an important subject and making sure we get that right? Unfortunately, under this government we do not see that ability. We see that the government under the Allan regime is as dictatorial perhaps as it was under the previous Premier, Daniel Andrews. You would expect that given the training that went on. We saw the inability for anyone to question their way forward. It is their way or the highway.

But we do have several important bills, the first one being the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. I think that there would not be a person here that does not agree we should leave the environment in a better way than we find it and we should be transitioning energy in a responsible way that makes it affordable, reliable and dependable. Under this government we are not seeing that; we are seeing a lot of pretending. Just see what happened last week with the lack of maintenance that has taken place, resulting in our transmission towers buckling and turning into a mush of metal. I heard from the opposition on the other side during the discussion by my colleague, the member for Morwell, that trees had fallen on them. Well, I do not think trees would fall on transmission lines and buckle them like we saw. It is purely because of lack of maintenance.

James Newbury: What about Hastings?

Roma BRITNELL: That's right. Thank you to the member for Brighton for reminding me of the irresponsible nature of the way this government is handling the Hastings situation, where there is Ramsar environmental protection in place. It is World Heritage listed, and here we have the government bowling through, destroying the environment. I do not think I can trust that they will do any better than that in Portland, where we have got a whale migration pathway. I am very concerned about the irresponsible process that they will undertake to pretend that everything is fine when it probably will not be. We will not be able to trust that process given the experience they have given us in Hastings.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Melbourne, by leave. Is leave granted?

Leave refused.

Assembly divided on motion:

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

Noes (30): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Gabrielle de Vietri, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, 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, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Jess Wilson

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

Lunar New Year

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (13:24): I want to wish all of those in Manningham who celebrate the Lunar New Year a very happy Year of the Dragon. A number of magnificent events were held across Manningham to celebrate the coming of the year of charisma, intelligence, confidence and power – the Year of the Dragon. Noting some Years of the Dragon are 1976 and 2012, the birth years of my wife and youngest son, I wish them and every Dragon a very special year.

Indian community

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (13:25): I pay my respects to and welcome our new Indian High Commissioner Mr Gopal Baglay. Many people came together at the Indian cultural centre in Knox last week to mark and celebrate his ascension to such an auspicious role. I would like to place on record my best wishes to him. Also, importantly, I would like to acknowledge Dr Sushil Kumar, the Consul General. He is a wonderful, wise person and in a short time has done much to further cement relations between the world's largest nation and our own. I wish him and his family the best. I again welcome Mr Gopal Baglay.

St Haralambos, Templestowe

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (13:25): Some brief words if I can about my wonderful Greek Orthodox church St Haralambos. The annual church festival was held last Sunday. It was a wonderful time and saw the Orthodox bishop and our wonderful St Haralambos's fathers preside over another beautiful service. St Harry's, as it is known locally, is a very, very popular church with a large and devoted community. I send my best wishes to them and thank them for their magnificent hospitality.

Russia–Ukraine war

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (13:26): Finally, Ukrainians are rallying this weekend to mark two years of Russian invasion. At Federation Square many people will be there to mark this awful milestone but to again put our faith in the Ukrainian armed forces and the spirit of those in Ukraine. As Victoria's only Ukrainian-background MP I will be there with my family, and we will not forget what is being done to Ukraine by the Putin dictatorship. Slava Ukraini.

Lunar New Year

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (13:26): Chúc mừng năm mới to the electorate of St Albans and all who have celebrated the Lunar New Year. St Albans is home to the largest Vietnamese community in Victoria, and the St Albans Lunar New Year is held right near here in the beating heart of my electorate. We rang in the Year of the Dragon at midnight at Quang Minh temple. This is one of the biggest festivals for the state, drawing in thousands of local community members. Thank you to Senior Venerable Thich Phuoc Tan and all the incredible volunteers who each year make it bigger and better. I have been excited to be part of many festivals that bring our communities together, from the Lunar New Year celebrations in St Albans to Sunshine, Footscray Park and many other areas of Melbourne. The Lunar New Year celebrations are truly an important time in the community's calendar. This is also an opportunity to showcase our local communities, from our businesses to arts, music and cultural performances. Melbourne is truly the cultural and events capital of this nation.

Euroa electorate student leaders

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (13:27): Over the past fortnight I have had the pleasure of meeting with emerging young leaders at primary schools across the Euroa electorate. I love listening to the young people of our community and hearing about the ways they are showing leadership every day, from helping their family at home to being kind in the schoolyard or being a role model each and every day. They advised me that this week to be a good leader I need to be kind, not interrupt and smile, because happiness is contagious. These kids also gave some fabulous advice for all of us which I said I would pass on to other MPs today. The school captains at St Patrick's Kilmore – Bridget, Jordan and Sarah – said that a good leader is kind, does not annoy people, upholds strong values and is responsible, humble, confident, a good role model, compassionate and considerate. Importantly, fellow school captain Max said a good leader is not arrogant.

At Broadford Primary School I was told all the four Rs by school captain Kim – responsibility, respect, readiness and resilience – while Sydney said leaders solve problems and need to be great listeners. Evan said leaders must be open to a variety of opinions and care for others. Cayden said it was

important to use common sense, but that was not always common. These are traits all of us can learn from.

I also want to thank the 32 student leaders at Avenel Primary School, including school leaders Immy and Charlotte and vice captains Ren and Bailey-Rose, who allowed me to participate in their badge ceremony. I am confident the region is in good hands with these kind, compassionate and responsible young people leading the way.

Pride events

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Employment) (13:29): Pride was celebrated loud and proud at Montmorency's annual QWere St festival. With a gigantic inflatable rainbow straddling both sides of the street, our community celebrated their diversity together with music, performance artists and craft stalls. Were Street was transformed, local traders packed with every colour of the rainbow and so many festivalgoers happily crowding into the street in front of the stage and the wonderful Frock Hudson. The night was vibrant, fun, safe and joyous. A huge thankyou to Banyule City Council and our Monty traders for such a brilliant, love-filled event.

Australia Day awards

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Employment) (13:29): Congratulations to our wonderful locals who received an Australia Day honour: Dr Jennifer Gowan AM, for her service to medicine as a pharmacist, to professional societies and to community health – Dr Gowan is a distinguished health academic who is highly regarded in Eltham for her skills as a community pharmacist; Michael Aitken OAM, for his services to optometry, including as an honorary archivist for the Kett optometry museum at the Australian College of Optometry, with the Aitken gallery featuring spectacles, optometry instruments and equipment, books, artworks and ephemera; Glenys Gayfer OAM, for services to the community through charitable initiatives including in the Philippines, where she is a founder and president of Kadasig Aid and Development; Helen Walker OAM, for her services to women through a range of roles, including as a volunteer supporter of women prisoners for 42 years; and the wonderful Allan Robinson OAM, for his services to secondary education. Allan has devoted over 50 years of his life to education. He has mentored and supported thousands of teenagers to find their path in life. Locally, he led as principal the transformation of Montmorency Secondary College into the amazing school it is today.

Land tax

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (13:30): We have all got them in our electorate, and I will be honest, Speaker, I think you have probably got more than most. I have got the Cent, the Cardi, the Piney, the Besa, the Berwick Springs Hotel and the Pink Hill Hotel. They are our local pubs. They are so important to our local community. The local pub is a place to gather. It is a place that people can come in, they can have a meal and they can support each other. There is always, in most of our pubs, some drunk in the corner who everyone just refers to as 'the drunk'. However, they are also someone who could be reaching out and in need of an extra bit of support, and that is why they go to their local. It does not matter if you are at the Commy up in Swan Hill. You could be at the Harp or Skinny Dog in Kew, or you could be at the Club Hotel down in Yarram. These places do so much for our community. They support our community; they back our community. They support the sports in our local community, and they make sure that those that they are working with get opportunities to get money back into our community and create jobs.

What is the reward they get from the current government? They get a land tax bill that is going to make it more expensive to buy a pot at any of these bars all the way across Victoria. The taxes that are put on to these pubs, that continue to support our communities, are absolutely outrageous. It is about time the government understood the importance of these local places. One of things that is so important to mine is getting in and having a gathering. I say to my community that I will be making sure that we can keep those pubs open and that you can keep supporting your community so – *(Time expired)*

Norm Gibbs Community Leadership Award

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (13:32): Norm Gibbs is a top bloke. In honour of a great local leader and resident of the Ashwood district, the Norm Gibbs Community Leadership Award is presented to a stand-out, community-minded year 6 or year 12 student from each school in my electorate who displays the same unique quality as Norm – someone who is always looking for ways to give back, big or small. I am delighted to extend my congratulations and recognition to the 2023 Norm Gibbs Leadership Award winners, and I will try not to muck up any names: Anna Fardon from Mount Waverley Primary School; Nithya Chelle and Alex Nason from Ashwood School; William Contessotto from St Scholastica's Primary School; Dylan Harris from Holy Family Primary School; Imran Mohamed from Park Hill Primary School; from Syndal South Primary School we have Vethum Alahendra; Kebo Zhou from Essex Heights Primary School; Avellino Jones at Salesian College; Jocelyn Seager from Mount Waverley Secondary College; Anja Hulston from Avila College; Archie Green from Solway Primary School; and, last but not least, Paige Rusmani from Camberwell South Primary School. These students have all demonstrated a commitment to giving back to our community, exhibited kindness and empathy towards others and served as positive role models, as exemplified by Norm, Topsy and the Gibbs family.

Ashwood electorate storms

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (13:33): When we talk about giving back to our community, we must at least pause today to thank our SES workers who were down at Monash SES for a couple of days last week. They got over a thousand calls – not just them but fire rescue, the police, the fireies, the ambos and Monash council as well.

Melbourne Youth Orchestras

Jess WILSON (Kew) (13:33): I rise to express my deep disappointment, and the disappointment of many of my younger constituents, with the Allan Labor government's decision not to fund the Melbourne Youth Orchestras. The Melbourne Youth Orchestras have 630 weekly participants, aged from eight to 25, and over 1000 students attended MYO's recent summer and winter program. Since its establishment in 1967, Melbourne Youth Orchestras has developed a reputation for excellence in music education and has grown to be Victoria's largest provider of music education outside the school system. MYO is committed to providing students from government schools with inadequate music programs, as well as young people from regional areas, those living with a disability and those experiencing financial challenges, with access to quality musical education. In 2024, 100 per cent of MYO state government funding – the equivalent of about \$200,000 – was earmarked to assist students who often face barriers to participation. The Allan Labor government's sudden cut to MYO has been left completely unexplained. MYO has been receiving state government funding since the 1960s. We know this government cannot manage money, but to cut \$200,000 from the MYO is just unfair.

The MYO deserves answers rather than buck-passing between the Department of Education and Creative Victoria. It deserves transparency as to where this money otherwise went. The students that rely on this funding deserve access to musical education, and they deserve much better from this government. I call on the government to restore this funding immediately. But I will finish on a positive note and congratulate the 27 young musicians from Kew who have been accepted into the MYO this year.

Country Fire Authority Ferntree Gully brigade

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (13:35): I just want to give a quick shout-out to members from the Ferntree Gully CFA. It was great to catch up with captain Seamus and the crew with the good member for Monbulk recently to listen to them and hear from them about their tireless work. Our volunteer firefighters and our emergency services workers go above and beyond day in and day out, so it was wonderful to see them and have the opportunity to thank them not just on behalf of ourselves and our communities but also on behalf of the government.

Wantirna South Primary School

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (13:35): It was also exciting to announce alongside principal Kerri Emonson a grant for nearly \$500,000 to deliver some new amenities and bathrooms at Wantirna South Primary School. It is a fantastic school, and this funding for them for some basic facilities is very well deserved.

Bayswater electorate storms

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (13:35): It has been very difficult week for many thousands of Victorians and indeed many locals in our part of the world with the extreme weather. I want to thank the countless workers out there fixing up lines and infrastructure to get people back connected. I know people greatly appreciate everything you are doing as well as of course all of our SES, CFA and emergency services and frontline responders.

From feedback I have received from locals, I have also discussed directly with AusNet the severe disappointment at some of the communication and the outage tracker, which for critical periods after the weather event was never fully functional. Respectfully, AusNet need to do better, and their website must be able to cater for volumes like we have seen recently and during the events in 2021. We know they are occurring more often. Information is critical in moments like we have seen, and this helps people decide what is best for them. I hope AusNet have heard this feedback and put the resources into their website for the future.

Australia Day awards

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (13:36): I rise to acknowledge Uncle Paul Briggs, who was recognised as an Officer of the Order of Australia in this year's Australia Day honours. A proud Yorta Yorta man, Uncle Paul founded the Rumbalara Football Netball Club in the 1980s, and today the club is known for its success and progression. Uncle Paul's volunteer work with the club along with his roles as co-chair of the AFL's Indigenous advisory council and deputy chair of the Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence and many other organisations highlight his commitment to cultural, social and educational progression of the region. Uncle Paul is well respected across our community, not only among First Nations people but by all who have the privilege of knowing his work and dedication.

Stan Jezewski is another from my electorate who was recognised in the Australia Day honours. He was awarded the Emergency Services Medal for his 50 years of commitment to the Shepparton Search and Rescue Squad, which is truly outstanding. Stan's contributions have been invaluable, from his early days of participating in water searches to his instrumental role in expanding the squad's capabilities, including road rescue operations, and acquiring lifesaving equipment. His leadership and mentorship within the squad have saved countless lives and inspired a new generation of volunteers. Stan's dedication to service reflects the essence of community spirit and the impact one individual's commitment can have on the safety and wellbeing of our society. Congratulations to both on these well-deserved recognitions.

Monbulk electorate storms

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (13:38): I rise today to extend my deepest gratitude to the SES, CFA and community volunteers across my electorate of Monbulk who have been working tirelessly in response to last Tuesday's terrible storm event. In the space of around 15 minutes, the high-force winds toppled over and snapped thousands of trees like twigs, blocking roads, tearing down powerlines and crushing houses and cars. This storm left thousands across the Dandenong Ranges and foothills without power or telecoms for days, and some are still awaiting reconnection. Although their own homes were at risk of storm damage and out of power, our emergency services volunteers did not hesitate to put others' needs above their own. Their dedication, selflessness and courage is truly something to behold.

The Premier, Deputy Premier and Minister for Energy and Resources visited Emerald SES last week, witnessing firsthand the wonderful efforts of these volunteers, supported by our great CFA brigades across the hills in addition to staff from Forest Fire Management Victoria, Ambulance Victoria and VicPol.

To the brigade of Gembrook CFA, your town is so very lucky to have you. Three dozen trees cleared off main roads in under 24 hours is an extraordinary effort, and then you opened your station to the community as a relief centre. You are stars.

The emergency food relief organisations have been in full swing supporting our community: Foothills Community Care, the Philanthropic Collective and Dandenong Ranges Emergency Relief Service to name but a few. Thank you to all, and apologies if I have left you out. Emerald and Cockatoo Emergency Support Team, a volunteer organisation, along with Cardinia shire have been assisting the communities of the two townships with accessing the supports and essentials they need. Thanks to Minister Blandthorn for visiting them yesterday to see firsthand the work they are doing. To all the volunteers, thank you, thank you, thank you.

Police resources

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (13:39): I recently attended a community crime summit with Liberal candidate for Aston Manny Cicchiello and the residents of Wantirna South to listen to their concerns about the increase in crime. Local residents are seriously concerned about the increase in crime in their area. Labor has continually failed to provide a safe state to Victorians, first failing to properly pay the police and now failing to keep residents safe.

Listening to the residents explain about the aftermath of a home invasion or a home burglary, it is obviously distressing for families, especially those with young children. Residents need more police resources for Knox, which would enable the police to patrol the streets of Wantirna South. Lighting in the Wantirna South area is also severely inadequate, especially around David Cooper Park. This matter has been taken up with local Knox councillor Lisa Cooper, who is following this matter through. It is time the Allan Labor government fixed community safety and delivered the funding to ensure our police force has the resources to ensure regular police patrols.

Melton biochar trial

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (13:40): The Allan Labor government is committed to Victoria's net zero emissions target by 2045. That is why we are developing Australia's first novel pyrolysis technology, developed here in Victoria, to reduce PFAS and microplastics in biosolids to create biochar. This generates beneficial re-use opportunities for both soil and non-soil applications, and following a successful first trial in 2021, 100 per cent of PFAS was eliminated. South East Water, RMIT University, Intelligent Water Networks and Greater Western Water have partnered again for the second trial. The second trial aims to achieve these outstanding results once again, where these results can be replicated, and it will present a great opportunity for Victoria's water and agricultural industries.

An Australian-built unit will be installed at the Melton water recycling plant for the second trial. This unit will process food and garden organics as well as blended feedstock with biosolids to create functionalised biochar. This creates dual benefits in diverting organics from landfill whilst also delivering higher nutrient and carbon values. Key issues that both the water and the waste industries face are PFAS and microplastics and contaminants in wastewater diverting waste from landfill. Pyrolysis technology is a practical solution to these environmental challenges. It is fantastic that this project is going on in the Melton electorate, and the Melton community should be so proud that this is happening in their own backyard to get rid of things like PFAS and microplastics.

Ringwood electorate schools

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (13:42): Education is in great hands in my electorate of Ringwood. In the last week I have had the pleasure of meeting students and staff from two of our terrific schools, seeing firsthand the great education being delivered to our youngest Victorians. During my visit to Ringwood Secondary College I was introduced to the school's newly appointed prefects, who I am confident will serve as fantastic role models to the school community. I extend my congratulations to college head prefects Hannah and Neena and deputy head prefects Nem, Imogene and Matthew. These leaders, together with school principal Rosina Fotia and school council president Teresa Lodge, took me on a tour of the newly completed STEAM building, an impressive building with state-of-the-art facilities. I look forward to attending its official opening in the coming months.

Later in the week I visited Blackburn Lake Primary School, where I had the honour of joining the school's Friday afternoon assembly to hand out the 2024 school captain badges to Ruotong, Josh, Riley and Madison. I am sure these students will excel in demonstrating the school values of thinking, respect, responsibility, attitude and caring.

It is fantastic to see that the school year is off to a great start in the electorate. I wish every school a successful year ahead.

Lunar New Year

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (13:43): It was my pleasure to recently celebrate the Chinese New Year with the Jiangmen chamber of commerce. A large crowd enjoyed a stunning banquet to welcome in the Year of the Dragon. I wish everyone celebrating this event across my community xīn nián kuài lè and a prosperous new year.

Western Victoria fires

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (13:43): Last Tuesday 13 February was a catastrophic day. They were the worst bushfire conditions since Black Summer, with multiple fires breaking out across western Victoria. In my electorate the grassfires first began in Stockyard Hill near Beaufort. They put the communities of Cross Roads, Lake Goldsmith, Stockyard Hill, Stoneleigh and Beaufort at threat. But thankfully, thanks to our amazing local CFA brigades, the fires were quickly controlled and downgraded. The communities of Pomonal and Dadswells Bridge north-west of Ararat were not so lucky, though. A total of 46 homes were lost, with absolute devastation on the ground. In amongst it all were a sea of CFA volunteers, including men and women from districts 15 and 16, putting the lives of strangers before their own to protect property, livestock and livelihoods.

I want to take this moment to thank these brave volunteers from the bottom of my heart. To the CFA crews from Lexton, Barkly, Beaufort, Glenorchy, Snake Valley, Burnbank, Redbank, Amphitheatre, Ararat, Avoca and beyond: thank you. Every single person in this chamber is in awe of you. To the Eureka group strike team from Ballarat, who faced a burnover while fighting fires but kept going: thank you. And to the crews who battled fires further south in my electorate, from Staffordshire Reef Road to the Ross Creek state forest: thank you. We see you and we commend your courage, strength and selflessness. Our firefighters work day after day, year after year, to protect our communities.

Park Orchards Primary School

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (13:45): I had the pleasure of attending Park Orchards Primary School's presentation assembly with their fantastic principal Bronwyn Garrity, also known as Mrs G. It is an amazing school in my electorate. Their new year 6 captains show great promise and excellent leadership. Well done to all the new student leaders. I pay tribute to this wonderful school and what it has added to our local community over the last 62 years.

Chirnside Park Primary School

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (13:45): I had the privilege of speaking at the Chirnside Park Primary School leadership ceremony with their excellent principal Graham Elliott. It was an absolute pleasure to attend with all the preppies at their very first school assembly – best of luck for your first year of school. Congratulations to the new leadership team and school captains – we wish you all great success this year.

Donvale Primary School

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (13:45): I look forward to attending Donvale Primary School's leadership assembly with their wonderful new principal Larissa Vesdrevanis. They are an excellent school in my electorate that works diligently to exemplify the values of respect, responsibility, resilience, compassion and gratitude. Last year upon being newly elected I had the pleasure of attending their school production and was so impressed with the dedication of all the staff and the talent of the students. All the best for the year ahead Donvale Primary School.

Ruby Fagan

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (13:46): Happy 100th birthday to Ruby Fagan. I met Ruby for the first time at Bupa Aged Care in Delacombe on her birthday on Valentine's Day and was immediately impressed by her. She was in excellent health and enjoying all the festivities to mark her centenary. Ruby has lived a remarkable and full life, and I believe that is the secret to her longevity. Ruby is a mother of three, she rode a bike until she was 83 and only moved into aged care at 99. She thoroughly enjoys reading outside and knitting. All her life she has been an independent woman and a great contributor to her local community of Warracknabeal. She attended meetings many nights a week, volunteering for organisations including the RSL and the blind auxiliary, as was being an active member of her church. Ruby was well known for making many pavlovas, sometimes 10 at a time, for her local groups. Thank you to the staff at Bupa for putting on a wonderful celebration for Ruby's family and other residents. It was a particularly wonderful moment when two residents wished Ruby a happy birthday. One was 102 and the other was 103 – between them, 305 years of wisdom and experience.

Ballarat Cycle Classic

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (13:47): Congratulations to the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute on another successful Ballarat Cycle Classic, raising an extraordinary \$309,000 in donations. Well done to all riders, whether they rode around Lake Wendouree or opted for the longer, more demanding rides over the weekend. Importantly, all money raised stays in Ballarat for cancer research.

Preston electorate student awards

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (13:47): This is my first members statement for 2024, and I would like to begin by congratulating Isabella Pingitore of William Ruthven Secondary College, Dylan Smarrelli of Reservoir High and Otis Williamson of Preston High for winning their school's respective community encouragement for student initiative awards last year.

Dyson Group

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (13:48): I also had a chance to catch up with the Dyson Group just before Christmas with the member for Pascoe Vale. Dysons drive most of the bus routes in Reservoir and northern Preston, and they have just signed an MOU with the Transport Workers' Union, which is a real credit to Andrew Jakab, Stuart Overell, Mike McNess, Mem Suleyman and the delegates of that union. I do want to make special mention of Reservoir locals Peter Dimovski and Gordon Robinson who have been driving Dyson buses for 35 and 42 years respectively. Well done, Peter and Gordon – many more years to come, I am sure. And a shout-out as well to Rochelle Dickason for her important comments at that event about improving gender diversity in the industry.

Evette Quoibia

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (13:48): Reservoir local Evette Quoibia is currently attempting to break the world record for the longest individual cooking marathon, which stands at 120 hours. She is doing it down on Victoria Street in Abbotsford, so if anyone is near there this week, drop in and check out her amazing food. There will be a lot of it. She is up to about 20 hours so far and hoping to cook for another 101. We wish the best of luck to Evette.

Nadia Baker

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (13:49): I congratulate one of my constituents Nadia Baker, who was awarded the Endeavour Scholarship educator award for 2023. Nadia came to chat and visit with me last week and talk through this incredible achievement. She, alongside our STEAM secondary students from around Australia, will embark on a hands-on astronaut training experience in July 2024 at the US Space and Rocket Center's Space Camp in Alabama. We wish her all the best. Indeed, as her local member I expressed how incredibly proud we were of her achievements and her achievements as a hardworking educator in the Sunbury electorate.

Jacksons Hill arts and cultural precinct

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (13:50): I was also delighted last week to have a visit from the dynamic Minister for Development Victoria, Minister for Precincts and Minister for Creative Industries to tour and visit the Jacksons Hill precinct. This site is of course fully master-planned. This government has invested a significant amount of money in the site both for education and arts. There is more work to be done, and I was absolutely delighted to have the minister there.

Sunbury electorate infrastructure

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (13:50): I was equally delighted to attend a visit of the Sunbury multideck car park with the Hume City Council mayor and local councillors. This is a really exciting project, a joint collaboration between local, state and federal governments. It showcases what can be done when all three levels of government come together. We are getting on and getting it done.

Cranbourne multicultural communities

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (13:50): There is a lot going on in Cranbourne. Next Sunday is Open Mosque Day. I will be visiting Omar Farooq Mosque in Doveton, and I know many of my colleagues, including the member for Narre Warren North, will also be participating in Open Mosque Day. I always look forward to the wisdom of Dr Iftikhar Ahmad, and I know many of my colleagues will be participating across Victoria.

Last Sunday I visited the Cranbourne mosque, and my heart was full of joy from time spent with the sisters. The mosque's mission is to be a place of guidance, and it benefits all members of the broader Australian community. They achieve this by nurturing the development of the rapidly growing community and by keeping our youth at the forefront of everything they do. Thank you as always to the Imam Khalil Hamid for the generosity and wisdom that he always shows me, but particularly thank you to the sisters, ably led by Nazra Ibrahim, who brings joy to any room. I cannot mention you all, but thanks to Sadia 1 and Sadia 2 and our young friend who is starting midwifery at Australian Catholic University. The future is bright, and the gorgeous kids were a joy. I was skipping through the rest of my Sunday.

I do reflect on the first time I visited a mosque as part of the Open Mosque program in the aftermath of the Christchurch tragedy. I was incredibly touched. I often speak about the effect of having the Sikh volunteers there in solidarity with our Muslim community at a time of pain and grief. We are an inclusive state, and social cohesion is our absolute priority, which is why it is also an opportunity to wish the priests of the Catholic parishes the best for Lent and the Lenten season.

Glen Waverley electorate storms

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (13:52): I rise to acknowledge the hard work of all those who responded to the 13 February storm event, the most catastrophic storm event that we have seen in more than a decade. Some of the hardest-hit areas include the southern half of my electorate, with winds of up to 130 kilometres an hour ripping up trees and taking down powerlines. In particular I want to thank the Whitehorse and Monash SES volunteers who have spent days and days working tirelessly to keep our communities safe. For perspective, the Monash SES unit alone received over 1000 calls for assistance. That makes this storm one of the largest ever storm events the unit has had to respond to. To all our SES volunteers, I say a deep thankyou.

I also want to give a shout-out to the hundreds of line workers who have helped restore power to the homes across my electorate. Many of them are members of the mighty Electrical Trades Union, and I want to thank them for their work around the clock to turn the lights back on. With more than 530,000 Victorian households without power at the peak of the storm event, electricians and linespeople worked hard to connect Victorians back to the grid as soon as possible.

Blackburn Orioles Baseball Club

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (13:53): On another matter, I would like to congratulate the terrific Blackburn Orioles Baseball Club on a wonderful achievement with their 60th anniversary. What started as a small club back in the 1960s has blossomed into a fully fledged eastern suburbs institution. Blackburn baseball club has terrific teams of all ages, from T-ball to junior, senior and masters teams, all based in Vermont South. Congratulations to all the players and club volunteers, especially the Burners president Brooke Tierney and secretary Patrick White. It was great to catch up with all the club legends – *(Time expired)*

Centre for Multicultural Youth

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (13:54): I had the incredible pleasure last week of attending the 35th birthday of the Centre for Multicultural Youth. This amazing organisation was started by one woman alone. Her name is Carmel. She was the daughter of migrant parents, and she is now the CEO of an amazing organisation that makes a difference every single day across our state to our incredible multicultural community.

John Rowe

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (13:54): I would also like to take this opportunity to send my love to the Rowe family after the passing of our amazing family friend John Rowe last week. John was an incredible member of his community and a really great, great person. My love goes to Dot, to Renee and to Sean. Vale, John Rowe.

Laurimar Community Activity Centre

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (13:54): I was so excited to be at the turning of the sod for our new toilet at the Laurimar Community Activity Centre, one of my election commitments and always something I am flushed with excitement about. *(Time expired)*

Bills**Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023**

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Lily D'Ambrosio:

That this bill be now read a second time.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (13:55): I rise to speak on the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. I start by saying that the coalition will not be opposing this bill that we are considering today. What we have seen over the last week is something I know every member of this place is concerned about. We saw last week 530,000 people go without power. Today, right now, 3170 still do not have power connections, and 2620 homes remain unconnected. We must have energy that is reliable, affordable and clean, and what we saw last week was the biggest blackout in our state's history. When you listen to the government, the first thing they will say is, 'It is not our fault. A weather event was unforeseen, and we could not have done anything about it.' We know that is not true. So when we consider this bill today, although the coalition will not be opposing it, we have serious concerns, because we know that the government is not providing secure and reliable energy for Victorians.

Over recent days we have heard of multiple examples where the government was warned about the issues that we have in our grid. It was warned by very informed peak bodies of concerns about the grid, the infrastructure and the potential impact of significant events. I refer to just one example, the energy market operator warning last year that:

The story for Australia is becoming more and more clear, but also more and more urgent ...

Quite simply, Australia's energy transition is happening at pace. Our coal fired power stations are closing down at the same time as demand for electricity is increasing and without urgent and ongoing investment in new sources of electricity, and the transmission that we need to connect it to consumers – there are significant risks to reliability.

That is what played out only a week ago with 530,000 people left without power and thousands still without. We know from media reports that one in seven of the 13,000 electricity transmission towers is damaged by patchy or extensive rust. The system needs investment and the system needs upgrading, because if we want to ensure that the community is provided with reliable, affordable and clean energy, we must make sure that the system works, and it is not working. And the human cost of the last week was, frankly, catastrophic – the worst blackout in our state's history. So when we consider this bill, we are not just considering targets. What we are also considering is how we ensure the plan for our energy transition works to guarantee that we have reliable, affordable and clean energy into the future, and each of those aspects I will be speaking to later today. But we know that there are no guarantees when it comes to reliability. We absolutely know that the cost of energy has increased 25 per cent over the last year, so the issues around affordability –

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

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Energy security

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, in response to the opposition's proposal for a parliamentary inquiry into the reliability of Victoria's energy network, Labor said it was not needed. The Premier has now caved to pressure and said that the government will conduct its own review – a sham review –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! This is not a good start to question time. I would like to hear the question. The Leader of the Opposition, without assistance.

John PESUTTO: Yesterday in response to the opposition's proposal for a parliamentary inquiry into the reliability of Victoria's energy network Labor said it was not needed. The Premier has now caved to pressure and said that the government will conduct its own review – a sham review that has no announced members, no reporting time line and no capacity to scrutinise the government's role.

Instead of a sham review, will the Premier agree to the opposition's proposal for an open and transparent parliamentary inquiry?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the Premier, I ask members to show some respect to those on their feet throughout question time. Members will be removed without warning. I will not tolerate this level of noise.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:03): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Last Friday when the energy minister and I were in Mirboo North meeting with the local community and seeing the devastation that struck that town as a result of the destructive winds – the tornado-like winds that were estimated to be as high as 130 kilometres an hour that ripped through that community – at the press conference I was asked ‘Will the government conduct a review into what occurred last week?’ and my answer was yes. So in response to the Leader of the Opposition’s first part of his question – and it is a bit of a shame that the Leader of the Opposition is choosing to look for every political angle instead of putting his shoulder to the wheel to support local communities – I bear as my witness the member for Gippsland South, who was also there that day as we were working with his local community. And I do acknowledge the support he has given and the leadership he has shown for his local community in working on the response. So first and foremost, in terms of the claim that the Leader of the Opposition was making, we made that very clear.

The minister and I had discussions over the weekend, and the minister, as appropriate, has provided further information today about a proper independent expert-led review. This is usual process. Those who have been in previous emergency services roles know that following an emergency there are always reviews into the events that happened. It is usual process for a review to be undertaken. There was one after the storm event in 2021, and a range of actions were implemented by the minister, including legislation that passed through this Parliament just last year.

Further, in terms of the claim, the nonsense, about calling this a sham review, quite frankly we will take the advice of experts. We will take the advice of experts, not of those who privatised the network, privatised the power stations, privatised the transmission lines, privatised the distribution businesses –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Premier is debating the question.

The SPEAKER: The Premier was being relevant; the Premier was providing context. I ask the Premier to come back to the answer.

Jacinta ALLAN: It is entirely relevant that we remind the Leader of the Opposition that the network under which we are operating is a privatised one that is regulated by a national regulator. I thank the energy minister for the leadership she has shown, particularly in the last week. We are going to take the advice of experts, not of those who are being asked to correct their own homework from the time they privatised the system when they were in government.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:07): In the past six years over 1.9 million Victorian homes and businesses have suffered a blackout, including 530,000 last week. This is despite the government receiving numerous reports and warnings about the vulnerability of our energy grid to failure. Why has Labor failed to ensure that Victorians have a stable and secure energy grid?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Prevention of Family Violence will come to order. Member for South Barwon!

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:07): The Leader of the Opposition has exposed himself as being more about the politics than working with communities. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that last week at its peak there were 530,000 customers without power and within 72 hours

the vast majority of those were reconnected. I want to thank those power workers, those road workers, who were out there doing their job, because you know what caused the power outages last week? It was catastrophic wind. The Leader of the Opposition may have missed the wind event last Tuesday. He might have missed the cyclone-type winds, the tornado-type winds that tore through the state – fires in the west, storms in the south-east –

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, the towers that collapsed last week were ones you were warned about in no less than four –

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

Jacinta ALLAN: The reason why I make the point that he may have missed that event is because the Leader of the Opposition, at precisely that time, was holding a press conference attacking a public servant.

Ministers statements: fire and storm events

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:09): I rise to update the house on the extreme and damaging weather event that tore through our state last Tuesday. At the outset can I on behalf of the government and indeed the Parliament send our collective condolences to the family of the individual, the farmer in the Mirboo North area, who lost his life during that storm event. Our thoughts remain with him, his family, his loved ones and indeed all the communities across the state who have moved into that rebuilding and recovery phase.

We did see last Tuesday a day that was predicted to be a catastrophic fire and wind event, and that is exactly what we saw tear through the state. We saw the fire danger rating be at that level for only the second time since the 2009 period. As I said earlier, we saw many customers lose power. The latest advice I have is there are now around 3600 people without power as a result of these storms, and we will continue to support those families and individuals as the work is done by hardworking individuals to get the connections redone.

I also want to point out that there are damage assessments still underway, but we know that there are 46 homes that are lost – one in Dadswells Bridge and 45 in Pomonal – and I want to acknowledge the work of the member for Lowan as well on behalf of her community. There are a number of homes with damage assessments in the Gippsland and south-eastern region, and at least 30 homes have been destroyed or are uninhabitable. We do expect that number to increase as the damage assessments are undertaken.

Just finally, I want to thank the emergency services across the board – in partnership with state government and local government – for the work that they have done. The recovery process will take some time, and we will support them along the way.

Energy security

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:11): My question is to the Premier. Heathmont burger restaurant Hey Sister, run by Sammi, stocked up in anticipation of Valentine's Day. Sammi's business lost power as a result of Tuesday's storms, and power was not restored until Thursday morning. The outage resulted in over \$4600 worth of spoiled food and thousands more in lost sales. How can Victorians like Sammi have any confidence that the government's own internal review will result in a more stable and secure energy grid?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:12): First and foremost, can I say – and again correct the Leader of the Opposition – that it is wrong to characterise the independent review that is being established as an internal government review. There will be external expert advice, people who are experts in this area, not you – people who are experts in this area –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, under standing order 118 personal imputations are unparliamentary.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold that point of order, but I do ask the Premier to address her comments through the Chair.

Jacinta ALLAN: Thank you, Speaker. In terms of how we support businesses, whether it is Sammi in Heathmont or businesses across the state or indeed households across the state, as we move into this recovery phase, it is not to deliberately mislead them as to what occurred last week. It would be very disappointing if the Leader of the Opposition was deliberately misleading on the circumstances of the event last week. On the Monday –

A member interjected.

Jacinta ALLAN: Stand up and say that.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for South Barwon, I do not know why you bother to come to question time. You can leave the chamber for an hour.

Member for South Barwon withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: I will not tolerate this kind of interjection across the table. I ask the Premier to come back to answering the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: Again I thank the hardworking people who have been working around the clock, many of whom also had damage done to their own homes and businesses. They have been out there reconnecting power, clearing roads, clearing trees and helping with that rebuilding effort. The focus in that immediate period has been absolutely getting businesses reconnected following the catastrophic wind event.

I was about to say it was predicted on the Monday. On the Monday the State Control Centre and the emergency leadership of this state stood up at a press conference and provided a statewide warning about the type of weather we were going to see on the Tuesday, and really the worst of that was realised with the catastrophic wind event that tore through our state. We will continue to work with businesses, councils, locals, our own agencies and the federal government as well. We know that recovery can be a long journey, and we will work with businesses and the communities, and it would be great if that could be done on a bipartisan, non-politicised basis in the interests of the community.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:16): Despite losing thousands in food spoilage and lost sales, Hey Sister is not eligible to receive the government's power outage support payment, because their outage was less than seven days. Given that spoilage happens in the first 24 hours, why has Labor set the threshold for support at seven days without power?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:16): It would be wrong of the Leader of the Opposition to characterise the prolonged power outage payments as the only support that the government has activated. Again, in partnership with the federal government – and I look to the member for Gippsland South to correct me – I think we were making these announcements in Gippsland on Friday morning about the range of different assistance we activated very, very quickly. Sorry, it was in Pomonal the day before that we were talking with the Minister for Emergency Services about the activation of the personal hardship payments and re-establishment assistance. There are energy compensation arrangements that are in place for immediate assistance, and I would be delighted if the Leader of the Opposition could work with us and provide information to affected households and businesses with the 1800 recovery line where people can go and get personalised advice and assistance, not deliberately misleading advice from the Leader of the Opposition.

Ministers statements: fire and storm events

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:17): I rise to provide an update to the house on how our government is responding to the massive power outages caused by last week's catastrophic storm event. Last week extreme weather caused severe damage to our power network, resulting in 530,000 Victorians losing power. Crews worked around the clock, reconnecting 95 per cent of people within the first 48 hours. I think they did a fantastic job, but we still have around 3600 people offline this morning, and that is why we have our prolonged power outage program for small businesses and for those residents that are still without power, to enable them to apply for that support for hardship.

Nearly all of the outages have been due to fallen powerlines on the low-voltage distribution network – that is, the poles and lines down people's streets. Any expert will tell you that that was caused by that massive catastrophic wind, tornado-like event that ripped through most parts of our state last Tuesday. More than 12,000 kilometres of powerlines and wires were impacted, brought down or damaged during that massive event – more than 12,000 kilometres.

I understand the community have a lot of questions that they want answered. I heard that clearly, as have other ministers and of course primarily the Premier, who has been out there almost incessantly since the event. We want the answers too, and that is why we have set up an independent expert-led review into this event that will focus on the operational arrangements and preparedness of energy distribution and transmission businesses. We have heard from communities about lack of communications, late communications, inadequate communications, websites crashing and text messages sent without links – all of these practical, immediate supports that communities went without. We are going to get answers, we are going to deliver, we are going to get recommendations and we are going to act on those.

Western Victoria fires

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:19): My question is to the Premier. Following the devastating bushfire that destroyed 45 homes in Pomonal last Tuesday, Grampians Community Health rapidly established a mental health case management team, which was ready to be deployed last Thursday, to provide ongoing support to the community. Today Grampians Community Health are still waiting for funding approval so they can deploy this desperately needed support. Why hasn't this Labor government approved additional funding for expanded mental health support for this traumatised community?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:20): I thank the member for Lowan for her question. I will immediately ask both the Minister for Emergency Services, who has responsibility for emergency recovery, and the mental health minister to understand what has happened here. As the member for Lowan may recall, when the Minister for Emergency Services and I – and I think the member for Lowan was there as well – travelled into Pomonal on Thursday afternoon, we met with a number of the emergency responders. As we were leaving the township and as the community were coming in, I know the Minister for Emergency Services wanted to ensure before we left that the mental health services were on the ground to support members of the community, many of whom were returning to the township for the first time since the fires went through on Tuesday. The minister was very anxious to ensure that the mental health services were there on the ground. There were some CFA peer support officers, but of course they provide support to the CFA volunteer network, not broader community support. As we were leaving the town, member for Lowan –

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, the question was specific to why this support has not been funded. I raised the matter with the Premier's office last Thursday and last Friday, the Minister for Mental Health on Saturday and again the Premier's office yesterday. I have not even received a response from the Minister for Mental Health. I ask: why hasn't this funding been delivered?

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. There are correct ways to raise points of order, member for Lowan; that is not one.

Jacinta ALLAN: At the outset I indicated to the member for Lowan that I was going to immediately follow this up, and I will do that immediately. I want to make it really clear that the conversations we had on Thursday in Pomonal were very much focused on ensuring that there were mental health supports on the ground. We were advised that there were. Indeed the Minister for Emergency Services, I think, may have even spoken to the Northern Grampians health team, who arrived when we were at the general store talking to members of the local community.

I will follow this up immediately to understand what has taken place, because I had understood that those supports were being provided to the local community. We will continue to work with the local community. I know the Minister for Regional Development was in Pomonal on Saturday. I know Emergency Recovery Victoria have been on the ground working with the Ararat city council. I know the Minister for Local Government has also been supporting the Ararat city council. We will have an immediate answer for the member for Lowan.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:23): I have written to both the Premier's office and the Minister for Mental Health's office advocating for this critical additional mental health support to be immediately delivered to the Pomonal community.

Steve Dimopoulos interjected.

Emma KEALY: It is not politics when you want mental health support in a community that has burnt to the ground.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Lowan! Minister!

Emma KEALY: It is well known that the longer you leave mental health support after trauma, the more likely it is to lead to post-traumatic stress disorder. The CEO of Grampians Community Health has relayed to me that every single member of that community is suffering some level of trauma. Premier, how long will the Pomonal community have to wait before the Labor government provides this urgent additional mental health support?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:24): As I said to the member for Lowan in my previous answer, my understanding – because we saw it as we were in Pomonal on Thursday afternoon – was that there were mental health supports available on the ground. In terms of her additional information, as I have indicated, we will follow that up immediately. I do know that the Minister for Mental Health addressed this yesterday at a meeting I was attending, where she made reference –

Emma Kealy interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lowan will cease interjecting across the table.

Jacinta ALLAN: I know the Minister for Mental Health made reference to – in response to the mental health royal commission – the additional mental health support services in the local area that had not previously been there. We know that this government has been resolute in its support for implementing each and every one of the recommendations of the mental health royal commission. I will refrain from politicising the matter any further, other than to add that I will immediately follow up the matter the member for Lowan has raised.

Ministers statements: fire and storm events

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (14:25): I rise to update the house on the efforts of the Allan Labor government to work with and encourage telecommunications carriers and the federal government to improve service levels and the resilience of Victoria's telecommunications network.

Last week we saw extreme weather cause widespread power outages, which in turn caused outages across the telecommunications network. Firstly, I want to thank all of our emergency services for their incredible work over the last week and of course the many impacted communities who have pulled together so firmly in such difficult times. Over 500,000 Victorians lost power and as a result were also unable to access those vital telco services. Concerningly, for all of us in this place, some communities were also unable to access even 000.

As members would know, our telco carriers are private businesses, so I have met with the executives from each of our major telcos and reinforced to them the criticality of their services and the need for them to do everything they can to restore connectivity as quickly as possible. I am now advised that mobile coverage has been largely restored across the state but that there may be reduced service levels in some areas while mains power is still being restored.

These recent events again remind us how essential telco services are, and that is why we have made it clear to the Commonwealth that better regulation of telcos as critical infrastructure must be a priority, as is Commonwealth investment in Victoria's telecommunication infrastructure. I have sought a meeting with the federal minister to reinforce this yet again.

The reality is, though, that even outside of emergencies many of these communities experience poor coverage. That is why we have invested \$540 million in the Connecting Victoria program to fast-track improved mobile and broadband connectivity across many communities, and while we are focused on connecting Victorians – *(Time expired)*

Gippsland storms

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (14:27): My question is to the Premier. Pramod and his parents run a FoodWorks in Upper Beaconsfield. They lost power on Tuesday, and it was not restored until Friday. Milk, meat, frozen meals and ice creams all had to be thrown away. This resulted in \$20,000 worth of spoiled food and thousands of dollars in lost sales. Why hasn't this Labor government helped businesses like the one run by Pramod and his parents?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:28): I thank the member for Berwick for his question. My answer to this question is similar to the previous question around supporting businesses. There are a range of existing supports that were activated very quickly following last Tuesday's catastrophic wind events, which as we have seen have done incredible damage to homes and businesses right across the state. In terms of looking forward to additional work, we are continuing to work through the assessments that continue to be underway. I am sure the member for Berwick can appreciate that. In terms of any future and further response, we do need to allow those impact assessments to be concluded, and it also speaks to the widespread damage that the catastrophic wind event resulted in that those assessments are still underway. It is a matter of fact that we have around 3200 customers without power, but we also have impact assessment teams going house by house, street by street, through the affected area, and I acknowledge his area is one of those ones that were most affected. Until that has concluded, we will continue to collect the information and advice and further respond accordingly.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (14:29): Rachel and James also run a small business, Blanc Bakery, in Berwick. They lost power on Tuesday and were unable to reopen until Friday. Despite losing thousands in food spoilage and lost sales, Blanc Bakery is not eligible to receive this government's power outage support payment, because the outage was less than seven days. Premier, how long will small businesses like the one run by Rachel and James have to wait before Labor changes the eligibility criteria for financial support?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:30): Again, in answer to the previous question on a similar example, there are other supports. It would be wrong to characterise the prolonged power outage payment as the only support that is available. There are other supports that are available, and if

the member for Berwick wants to provide further information, we can provide that advice to him and the businesses that he is concerned about in his local communities.

In terms of the extent of the damage, I do just want to reiterate that 90 per cent of customers were reconnected in the first 48 hours following the catastrophic wind event. I acknowledge that meant there were a number of others continuing to wait to be connected, but that speaks to the considerable and remarkable response of emergency services, power workers, people who were out there in very, very difficult conditions working around the clock to get the power connected as quickly as possible.

Ministers statements: fire and storm events

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) (14:31): Today I rise to commend the hard work and resilience that the people of Victoria employed in local government have demonstrated over last week's catastrophic weather events. From the devastating bushfires in Pomonal to the extensive damage from the intense storms, our state has taken a battering, but we are doing what we do best and working together to get the job done.

We know that in these events it is councils, firstly, on the front line, standing up relief centres, coordinating local clean-ups and caring for the community. Last week I visited both Ararat and Northern Grampians councils and met with mayors and CEOs, and what I saw were communities jumping into action, immediately implementing recovery plans and making sure their communities were safe and looked after. In fact just today I met with the mayor and CEO of South Gippsland Shire Council, who are in the gallery today. They have the monstrous task of cleaning up Mirboo North and surrounds, and they told me that 60 per cent of their staff have been deployed to the storm response, whether it is staffing relief centres, providing emotional and financial support or clearing blocked roads.

Just six weeks ago I was talking to councils about the devastating floods of January. I was in Campaspe and Greater Bendigo councils, where I saw unprecedented damage to our road network. The Banfield Bridge at Mosquito Creek was literally picked up and washed away. The effects of floods over the past two years have been devastating, and that is why we announced a \$105 million package just last week to support the immediate and long-term recovery of our community. This funding will allow for emergency roadworks across the state, fixing potholes, repairing road surfaces and getting Victorians back on the road. This is on top of the \$770 million we have invested in road maintenance. That equates to \$2 million a day on our road network after the October 2022 floods. I commend councils' resilience, determination and sheer will to get the job done. The Allan Labor government stands shoulder to shoulder with these councils.

Gippsland storms

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:33): My question is to the Premier. On Friday I joined the member for Gippsland South in Mirboo North to speak directly to locals and see the scale of the clean-up and recovery challenge. Damage to local community infrastructure was widespread, and residents are facing huge bills to simply clear their properties, with one estimating it will cost them \$60,000. When will the government actually start delivering the support and clean-up package the Mirboo North community desperately needs?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:34): I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I was also in Mirboo North on Friday morning, and I want to thank the mayor of the South Gippsland shire Clare Williams and the CEO Kerryn Ellis, the CFA captain Trent Venten and many others in the local community for the time they took with me, the Minister for Energy and Resources and a member for Eastern Victoria in the other place Tom McIntosh. Also I would like to thank the member for Gippsland South for spending time talking to us and looking around the local community.

I draw the Leader of the Opposition's attention to an announcement we made whilst we were in Mirboo North on Friday morning, and that was the announcement of the waiving of the landfill levy fees so that communities could immediately get on with the work of clean-up. I also want to acknowledge a conversation I had with the mayor and the CEO of South Gippsland shire, who raised with me the immediate need to activate the head contractor arrangements that have been in place for some time now. After emergencies, be they fire or flood or storm, we activate these arrangements so that a head contractor can get into town and commence the clean-up. That was something we confirmed we were going to do on Sunday morning, when I was at a press conference at the Monash SES, the busiest SES in the state for call-outs following the storm events.

So in response to the Leader of the Opposition's question on when we will start delivering, we started that pretty much as we went from the immediate emergency response into the recovery phase. When we were in Pomonal on Thursday, when we were in South Gippsland on Friday –

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, just on the question of relevance to the question, the question was about when the action will start delivering on the ground in Mirboo North. I appreciate the minister's answer that announcements have been made. The question was very specifically about when people in Mirboo North will start getting help from that head contractor.

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

Jacinta ALLAN: Can I also add that whilst we are putting those arrangements in place – and the member for Gippsland South knows this quite well because he saw it. Well, I saw it in action, so I can only assume the local member did as well. We saw the clean-up being undertaken. There were SES volunteers and there were Forest Fire Management Victoria members on the ground in Mirboo North on Friday. They had been there pretty much since the storm event occurred on Tuesday. I am assuming many of them are probably still there now, undertaking that immediate clean-up, and I want to thank them. Indeed the minister and I met SES volunteers who had travelled from Chiltern and Tallangatta to go into South Gippsland to provide support to local households with the clean-up. That action is happening now as we activate that head contractor clean-up arrangement in partnership with the Commonwealth government.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:37): The Mirboo North pool has been used and loved by local residents since 1904. When the closure of the pool was raised in 2011, Mirboo North residents rallied together and collected \$1 million to help refurbish the pool. Unfortunately the recent severe weather resulted in extensive damage to the pool. Will the refurbishment of the pool be included in the support package for the Mirboo North community?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:38): When I was in Mirboo North on Friday with the minister for energy, the mayor, the CEO, representatives from the local community and emergency responders, as we were moving around the township we did go to the pool. We saw firsthand the damage that impacted that important community facility, and I heard how much of a valued community facility that is not just for Mirboo North but indeed for the broader district. In terms of the next steps, I spoke to the council – again, this was one of the matters that the mayor and the CEO raised with me when I was there on Friday – and as we go through that initial assessment phase that I referenced earlier, we will take stock of the assessment of all the damage that has been done and work with councils and local communities on the response.

Ministers statements: fire and storm events

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for Medical Research) (14:39): I rise to update the house on how the Allan Labor government is supporting students, teachers and families that have been devastated by last week's devastating events, particularly the weather events. I think we need to put on the record that it has been a very tough time for teachers and students right across our state. They have not only been working and studying through the toughest conditions, but they have been personally impacted as well – their homes and their communities. The member for Lowan

does know this, because I have been talking with her in relation to Pomonal Primary. I also want to give a shout-out, if I can, while I am on my feet to the hardworking member for Monbulk. The member for Monbulk and I last week visited Emerald Primary. We met with the principal and the assistant principal, and there is no doubt that the member for Monbulk and the work she has been doing with that community have given them a lot of confidence. I have seen the resilience and the resolve of that community to get through this, just as they got through 2021. We should also recognise, I think, as a chamber some of the collective trauma that has occurred from 2021 that is still with people today. That is why we are doing everything we can, whether it is through our employee assistance program supporting teachers and principals, or whether it is working hand in hand with Foodbank to make sure our important breakfast clubs continue to get delivered right across those impacted areas in our state.

I do want to also thank the Department of Education. They had an incredible almost 200 call-outs last week, and they are responding as I speak right now to every school in need. As I speak right now, we have only two schools closed, and I am very hopeful – I say ‘hopeful’ in inverted commas – that those two schools will be open by the end of this week. It is so important that we continue to support our teachers and our staff. We know and the Allan Labor government knows that our support for schools does not stop at the school gate. Whether it is the employee assistance program or whether it is the breakfast clubs, all those social services that are at the heart of our education system are vitally important. We will continue to support our schools, our staff and our students, and we will make sure those 190 requests all get dealt with as soon as possible.

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Speaker, I have three constituency questions which remain unanswered and are well overdue. All of them were due before the end of last year: 370 to the Minister for Environment, 404 to the Premier and 444 to the Minister for Emergency Services. I would appreciate those being followed up.

Bridget Vallance: On a point of order, Speaker, constituency question 428 to the Minister for Environment still remains unanswered, despite me raising a point of order on this previously. Could you please get a response for my constituents about the Silvan Reservoir.

Constituency questions

Eildon electorate

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (14:42): (500) My question is to the Premier. Brendon Clark of Healesville is a small business operator who had seed collection and firewood contracts with VicForests. He is a victim of the Victorian government’s decision to shut down the Victorian timber industry. Will the Premier expedite the matter and see that compensation is quickly paid so that Brendon and others like him are not in limbo and forced to join the Centrelink queue? Brendon and other small business operators in similar situations have now been informed they are eligible for timber support packages for business compensation but have no information, confirmation or compensation offer. His financial situation is dire. He is nearing bankruptcy and fears losing his home. Unlike harvest and haulage companies, Brendon has not received monthly compensation since the shutdown in July and has had to rely on savings to pay tax, superannuation, vehicle costs, insurance bills and redundancies. He needs your support hastily.

Northcote electorate

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (14:43): (501) My question is to the Minister for Public and Active Transport in relation to the Alphington link project. I ask the minister to update my community on what steps are being taken by the government to deliver on our commitment to build a safe connection for Alphington residents to the Darebin Yarra trail. Alphington locals are extremely eager to gain access to this magnificent trail, which the Labor government funded and opened in 2018, a trail that is a vital connector for pedestrians and cyclists. They have been immensely patient and understanding since the commitment to build a pedestrian and cycling link was first made in 2017, and since being elected I have worked with successive ministers to overcome some of the complex

and sometimes unforeseen steps in this process. That includes community consultation, extensive technical planning and scoping options to arrive at the right alignment through Farm Road as well as drafting and passing legislation to enable the acquisition of land from the Latrobe Golf Club. At this juncture we are still awaiting final confirmation from the club, VicRoads and the minister regarding the outcome of negotiations, and we await an update.

Gippsland East electorate

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (14:44): (502) My constituency question is to the Minister for Environment, and the information I seek for farmers in my electorate is whether there are any plans to terminate or reduce the wild dog control program. A dogger recently retired in my electorate, and his position was not advertised. There has been no commentary at all from this government around support for that program. There is also talk that all wild dogs with any dingo DNA will be recognised as dingoes and therefore afforded greater protections, which causes concern. There are issues around the 3-kilometre buffer zone, with talk of it being abolished. Now, it does need to be abolished, but it needs to be abolished for a different reason than those people are proposing, and that is to get doggers into the wider bush to undertake their control programs. We would welcome some commentary from the minister around support for the wild dog program, but I would start by asking him to clarify whether there are any plans to terminate or reduce the program.

Glen Waverley electorate

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (14:45): (503) It was a pleasure to join Nunawading Cricket Club for their pink stumps day lunch at Mahoneys Reserve. On the day we heard from breast cancer survivor Megan about her firsthand experience, both the trauma she experienced and the immense resilience she showed during her journey. In light of this, my constituency question is directed to the Minister for Health. Minister, how will women in the Glen Waverley district be able to engage with our landmark women's pain inquiry? For too long women's health issues have been seen as a niche issue, but the reality is women make up over half of the Victorian community and women's health has been overlooked for too long, not just issues like women-specific cancers but also fertility-related conditions, women's pain and general health issues that are underdiagnosed. Spreading awareness matters. I congratulate the Nunawading Cricket Club for running their pink stumps day to share these important stories. I commend all involved, including Megan for sharing her story and club president Rob Ferdinands for their leadership. I am proud to be part of a government that treats these issues with the focus they deserve. I look forward to the minister's response.

Sandringham electorate

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:46): (504) My constituency question is to the Minister for Police. In recent months I have been inundated with countless distressing reports from locals who have personally experienced a home invasion or witnessed crimes in my electorate of Sandringham. Local residents have experienced alleged aggravated burglaries, car thefts, home break-ins and devastating homicides, many of which have occurred in broad daylight. The first job of any government is the safety and security of its citizens, safety in their home, in their community and in their workplace. I ask the Minister for Police: what are the government's plans to increase police resourcing to prevent future crime from occurring in my local community?

Narre Warren South electorate

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (14:47): (505) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and is regarding the Smarter Roads project. Minister, how will the Smarter Roads project's pedestrian crossing technology assist pedestrians, students and traffic flow in my electorate of Narre Warren South? The Allan Labor government committed \$340 million to the Smarter Roads project to improve travel times and the safety of drivers and pedestrians, and I was delighted recently to see the latest pedestrian sensors installed on the corner of Pound Road and

Seebeck Drive near Waverley Christian College in my electorate. The installation of that technology has been really welcome. I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

Ringwood electorate

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (14:48): (506) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Minister, what is being done to remedy the dangerous crossover at the Rangeview shops pedestrian crossing on Mitcham Road in Mitcham? I have received numerous reports of people on mobility scooters becoming stuck when they exit the road to the footpath due to the sharp change in gradient of that crossover. Indeed when I went to investigate I chatted with 94-year-old Betty, who said she had become stuck on three separate occasions, requiring assistance from bystanders and motorists to safely get off the road. I have raised this with both the minister's office and Maroondah council since June last year without action, each saying it is the responsibility of the other. Given the potential for serious accidents, this site needs urgent remedial works to ensure everyone can safely cross at this pedestrian crossing to access this essential shopping precinct. I look forward to the minister's response and an end to the bureaucratic buck-passing on this important safety matter.

Pascoe Vale electorate

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (14:49): (507) My constituency question is for the Minister for Creative Industries. What funding programs are available to help support arts and creative businesses, community organisations, workers and events across Pascoe Vale, Coburg and parts of Brunswick West? The arts are central to Victoria's way of life, cultural fabric and identity, sparking the imagination, nourishing our souls and driving inspiration for younger and older Victorians. The arts are an essential pillar of our state's vibrancy and wellbeing. Along with the cultural dividends that the arts provide us with, there are also the economic dividends that we are well aware of. As outlined in the creative state strategy by the Victorian government, the sector is worth \$38.7 billion to the state's economy, representing a 7.4 per cent share of the total economy. It employs over 324,000 Victorians, almost 9 per cent of our total workforce. In my community it contributes over \$935 million to the economy, employing 9300 local residents, including writers, songwriters, musicians, illustrators, film and digital content creators, producers, photographers, performers, fashion designers and much more. We are home to many vibrant art community facilities, and we would welcome funding opportunities from the minister.

Nepean electorate

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (14:50): (508) My question is to the Minister for Environment and Minister for Outdoor Recreation. Recently there has been a spate of drownings not just across the Mornington Peninsula but right across Victoria – more than 22 since December and 14 in January alone. A large amount of those have happened on the Mornington Peninsula. We have got more than 190 kilometres of coastline when you think about Port Phillip and Western Port. I have had the opportunity to meet with local law enforcement. I had the local police in my office the other day. I have met with the Peninsula Surfriders Club, who regularly down at Gunnamatta ocean beach are pulling people from the water – people that are lucky enough to have surfers there to pull them out so they do not just become another number on that tally. We need to do something about these drownings. It needs to be approached in a bipartisan way. My question is: will the minister join me in meeting with local stakeholders to develop and implement real solutions for the tragic drownings that are occurring right across the state, including on the Mornington Peninsula?

Sunbury electorate

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (14:51): (509) My question is for the outstanding Minister for Education. Minister, what is the latest information on design and construction of our over \$13 million upgrade of Diggers Rest Primary School in my electorate? As the minister well knows, Diggers Rest Primary School is an outstanding school within my electorate full of wonderful students and staff committed

to high-class quality teaching and learning. This government has already proudly delivered stage 1, more than \$3 million, to upgrade the administration wing of this school, something that I know the school community was very excited about. The next stage of course looks at what we can do with the \$13 million, and of course this will build upon a considerable investment in education right across the Sunbury electorate. I again ask the minister for the latest information on design and construction for this very exciting project.

The SPEAKER: I remind members that there is an information session on how to prepare constituency questions this week, which the clerks are running. I would encourage members to take advantage of that session.

Bills

Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:52): Just to reiterate, the coalition will not be opposing this bill. What this bill does at its core is set climate targets and put those in legislation. On principle at the last election the coalition put a policy forward to legislate targets, because if you are doing 30 years of transformational change in your economy, it is only right that you understand what you are doing, that you track what you are doing and that you also transparently make it clear to the community what you are doing. So at the last election the coalition put forward a commitment to legislate targets. I recall in this very place having an argument across the chamber in question time with the Premier, who said something like it will be a cold day in hell before he listens to the advice of legislating targets. We stand here today with the government committing to legislating targets, and I note their acceptance of that policy position that the coalition took to the last election.

We will not be opposing the bill, but I will be moving a reasoned amendment. I move:

That all the words after ‘That’ be omitted and replaced with the words ‘this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the government:

- (1) guarantees secure and reliable energy for every Victorian, noting the recent system collapse which led to 530,000 people without power;
- (2) commits to energy being affordable, noting the 25 per cent price increase over the last year;
- (3) details how Victoria will have adequate baseload power, noting the state government’s ban on gas;
- (4) sets out a plan to upgrade 57-year-old transmission infrastructure, noting that almost one in seven of Victoria’s 13,000 electricity transmission towers is damaged and experts warned the government in 2020 of the risks in extreme weather events;
- (5) reveals to Victorians exactly how the new planning powers, and ministerial directions, will operate, and why the government is stripping communities from planning decisions;
- (6) explains what the impact will be on agricultural land, when analysis from the government’s offshore wind policy directions paper of March 2020 shows that to meet net zero targets up to 70 per cent of Victoria’s land will need to host wind and solar farms;
- (7) provides an update on how Victoria will reach the 2032 wind target, noting the collapse of the flagship project in Hastings; and
- (8) provides public transparency on climate measures through a website with live measures covering emissions, renewable energy, battery storage, and wind energy.’

The coalition will not be opposing the bill, but there are serious concerns around the capacity of this government to deliver reliable, affordable, clean energy. We know that because of what we saw last week, and I touched on those tragic events earlier – 530,000 people without power, the worst power outage event in the state’s history. But we also saw frankly one of the most embarrassing state displays at the start of this year with the federal government’s knockback of the Hastings project, which is

referred to in the amendment. It was so tragic to see a policy space where a Premier would stand up in front of the nation's media – because it did become a national issue – and not understand what her own government was doing.

We must ensure that energy is provided in a reliable way, and part of what this bill does is legislate targets on wind energy. To deliver wind energy you will have to have projects that are in place, where the turbines are turning, by 2032. There are serious commitments at law for energy to be provided by 2032. Sadly, what we know is that there is currently no plan for wind energy. There is no plan to ensure that we have any projects committed to. The Premier, when she spoke to the media and referred to the Hastings project and spoke to the work that she was doing in lobbying the federal government to change their position and approve a project on a Ramsar site, which will never happen, did not understand that her own minister had referred the matter off for further investigation. The Premier stated at that press conference that her own government had approved the project, which clearly it had not.

When it comes to how we ensure there is a transition of energy, we need to make sure that there are plans in place to do it. Obviously part of that work does involve setting targets and monitoring those targets – it absolutely needs to ensure that there is a transparent overarching plan to do that – but what it means is that all the pieces underneath need to be in place, and they are clearly not in place. We know because we have heard the warnings repeatedly. I referred to some at the start of my earlier contribution, but if I can go back to the energy operator's warnings of late last year:

To ensure Australian customers continue to have access to reliable electricity, it's critical that planned investments in transmission, generation and storage projects are urgently delivered.

Further:

The projected electrification of traditional gas loads, particularly heating loads in Victoria, increases forecast consumption and maximum demands in winter. For Victoria in particular, winter peak demands may exceed summer peak demands by the end of the ...

Electricity Statement of Opportunities horizon. What the operator has said and warned repeatedly is that we have an imminent and urgent problem in ensuring that we have the electricity that we need, that we have a system that provides reliable and affordable energy, and that is what this reasoned amendment speaks to.

I spoke at first about the need for secure and reliable energy given recent events but also a commitment to affordable energy. In the last year we have seen a 25 per cent increase in cost. The government will ignore that fact, but no matter who you talk to in the community, the cost of energy is almost always their first cost-of-living concern. The cost is crippling people. It is absolutely crippling people, and a 25 per cent increase in cost is not something that any government should sit idly by and allow. If we want to see a transition in terms of our economy, we have to ensure that we take people with us, and one of the ways that people are taken with us is for things like affordability to be a priority for the government, not a point to be ignored by the government. As the transition is occurring, we are seeing a cost impact that is absolutely devastating people. The government needs to provide a commitment, and the coalition is calling for that commitment.

Further, we absolutely need detail from the government on how Victoria will be provided with adequate baseload power. The ideological obsession of the government's gas ban is frankly dangerous. I think the community are finally understanding both that the government is intent on this ideological gas ban and the impact that it is having. You only need to look at the impact last week to see what an ideological gas ban will do to communities when they need baseload power. They need to ensure that power is available, and this ideological obsession is frankly dangerous, so the government needs to be called to account over that gas ban.

I referred earlier to the 57-year-old transmission infrastructure and reports that have appeared in the media around that. If I can refer to a recent media report, one in seven of Victoria's 13,000 electricity

transmission towers is damaged. About 8000, or more than half, are now about a decade or less from the end of their service life. If I can quote the Australian Energy Regulator:

All failed structures were built to historical design standards with inadequate strength to withstand convective downdraft winds occurring during extreme storm events.

What that is is another warning that we are not adequately prepared for reliable energy. The core of providing reliable energy is an adequate system and an adequate grid to deliver it to people's homes. I mean, nothing could be more obvious. To know that the infrastructure has not received the maintenance required should concern every Victorian. I know last week, when the weather event hit and pictures of the damage to the towers were circulated, that shock went through the community, to see what was happening across those lines. We need to be prepared. We need to ensure that our infrastructure is ready for the future and, sadly, it is not.

We call on the government to set out a plan – a plan I do note that at the last election formed part of the coalition's policy push. Sadly, since then we have not seen the government take any serious action in that regard. The coalition did put at the very centre of their policy platform the two items that I have just mentioned. We talked about the need for gas as a transition fuel and the importance thereof. We also talked about the need for our grid infrastructure to be adequate and up to date, and part of that policy included working closely with industry to see that happen. You can only look at the last week to see how adversarial the relationship between government and industry is in these issues. When it comes to upgrading infrastructure we need to, as government, partner with industry to ensure that we have a reliable system for the future, so we call strongly on the government to set out a plan to ensure that our infrastructure is set for the future.

In terms of the planning powers contained in the bill, there are very wideranging planning powers which effectively allow the minister to set out a determination in relation to a planning scheme amendment and take into account climate events in making that determination. In the government briefing, which they did kindly provide, they did make it clear that quite a lot of the detailed work around the operation of that direction is still underway. So though the power is being provided in a bill, the work to see what it will do in an operational sense has not been fully done. The government confirmed that work had not been completed, was still underway, and you are talking about a sweeping planning power which will have significant impacts across the community. I mean, the bill effectively gives unfettered power to the minister to make a direction in these matters. That direction must be considered, and I think that it would be fair to say in practice municipalities will often – even though it is not a requirement – heed to the direction. To not understand and not know the full details of what that power may entail is concerning, and the community has a right to know what that power will entail.

Unfortunately as the bill currently stands the community does not know and the government was not able to provide that information around how that power will operate, so the coalition is calling for the government to reveal how those planning powers – in terms of the ministerial directions – will operate and also to ensure that communities are fully consulted throughout these processes. Because at the end of the day community should always be at the heart of decisions about the future of those communities. We are seeing with the planning reforms more generally a view from the government that community should be stripped away from the centre of planning decisions, that communities should not have a say in their own future and that planning decisions should be made in Spring Street from an ivory tower, which runs contrary, frankly, to the concept of a democracy.

But the community will see and is seeing through those proposals, and you can see it in terms of the backlash from municipal bodies and peak bodies. They are meeting with the government through their government briefings, and then they are putting out media releases or ringing the opposition and saying what the government is proposing is just wrong in principle. The wholesale takeover of planning at a centralised level is outrageous, and that will play out over coming months, and so it should. We can

see that there is a groundswell, a campaign in the community, to stop the government centralisation of planning power – and so it should be.

When it comes to this particular power, the coalition has called on the government to fully explain what that power will entail. I mentioned previously the Hastings issue; that was just an absolute disgrace to see at a state level the state government propose something. I am not aware of a single instance where permission has been given on a Ramsar site for a project to go ahead. I am not aware of a single instance, so I do not know how, when that project was first proposed, someone did not just ring the federal minister's office and say, 'What do you think?' They would have just poured cold water on it a second later, yet we were months if not years down the track of a project which quite obviously could not proceed. To not only have it fail – have a Labor government knock it on its head; a Labor government knocked over the state Labor government – effectively what they did, the federal government, in knocking over that proposal was say, 'Your wind strategy now has no meat in it.'

Peter Walsh interjected.

James NEWBURY: No wind in it, as the Leader of the National Party says. So we are considering a commitment to a wind target in this bill, a target where there is no detail as to how we can achieve it. These projects take 10 years at the best of times from idea to turbines turning. We are talking about putting in place a level of infrastructure in the sea and back to land in an almost unprecedented way, especially when it comes to Australia, so this is a significant project that will require enormous community cooperation and consultation, and to see the flagship project fall over in January says that the government does not understand what it is going to do.

I reiterate the point with the Hastings project that it is all very well and good to have targets, and it is important to set out measures of where you are going – it is essential to understand where you intend to go, and as government you should always set out where you intend to go – but what matters is how you deliver it. We have seen over the last two months two central core components of the energy transition fall over, and the community is rightfully saying that government need to do more than set a target, they need to explain to us how we are going to achieve it. When it comes to wind – and we have just spoken to wind energy – what is the wind project that will be delivered by 2032? Fortunately for the minister – and perhaps that is why the minister wrote the bill in this way – there is not a single punishment in relation to this bill. When the government does not meet a target, there is literally no punishment. There is no consequence. There is nothing in this bill that says there is anything that happens to the minister. There is no consequence for not meeting it. In fact on meeting the targets the minister and the Premier just determine them. So not only is there no consequence for not meeting a target, the minister and the Premier around the corner in the Premier's office can just determine when it happens. When it comes to things like wind energy, the government has not done enough to explain to the community how that generation will be provided.

I will also note the transparency component of the amendment. The community deserves to know, frankly in a real-time, easy-to-access way, where the government is up to when it comes to the targets that the government has set. You could suggest that the targets are hidden or not reported because the government do not want people looking at the deliverables on the targets they set, and there is not an easy-to-use, friendly point. I made the point in the government briefing that primary school kids should have the capacity through school to pull up a government website which has all of the targets on it and where it is up to at that time. It is not an unreasonable thing. What this bill does is say the minister once a year has to come into this place and deliver an annual account for where each of the targets is up to.

Is that really good enough? Is it really good enough that we say to kids in our communities that we are waiting on the minister to walk into the chamber and provide an annual account? I think it is only reasonable that this information is kept available. We know why some of it is not. When it comes to electric vehicles, the government has a commitment of 50 per cent of new vehicles to be electric by 2030. They are currently at 6 per cent. Is it any wonder that is not being reported? The national average

is 8 per cent, and this government is at 6 per cent. No wonder that is not being reported. When it comes to wind, right now it is zero. When it comes to emissions and renewables, those numbers are available on separate websites. From memory, the last renewables figure was dated early 2023. These are not new figures, but they should be available.

I say again that the coalition will not be opposing this bill. We will not be opposing this bill, but Victorians must have reliable, affordable and clean energy. If we are transitioning our economy, we need to do more than just set targets. I repeat again: the coalition took to the last election a commitment to legislate targets. The former Premier in this very place – I think the words he used were that it would have to be a cold day in hell for him to take my advice on legislating targets. But we stand here saying we will not oppose this bill, because targets are an important measure. They are an important mechanism. However, it is the detail underneath, and what this amendment does is call out so many failures in relation to the detail of how we get there.

If we want the community follow and to understand where we are going as a state, we need to make sure that each element that is set out in that amendment is a question that is properly answered. They are not. 530,000 people last week were without power, the biggest power outage in our state's history. We do not have reliable energy. At the same time, we have a government that is pushing forward with an ideological gas ban to undermine baseload power security. The government has serious questions to answer. I call on the government in good spirit to consider the points in the amendment and to provide public detail about all of those genuine issues in that amendment.

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for the Suburbs) (15:18): I am delighted to rise to speak on this really important bill, the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. At the outset, I do wish to acknowledge the extremely hard work being done by our Minister for Energy and Resources and her department in helping to guide Victoria's really important transition to renewables.

I note the coalition's reasoned amendment, and frankly it is mischief. It is really the coalition simply trying to hide their disdain for climate action behind this reasoned amendment. I must remind those here of the coalition's really shameful record on climate action: they voted against the Climate Change Act 2017, they voted against our Victorian renewable energy target legislation, they voted to rip up our ban on fracking, and when last in government they scrapped Victoria's emissions targets. They may well claim to now care about climate action, but I think their record speaks very clearly for itself.

Our transition to renewables is a crucial transition. This is all about delivering cheaper, more reliable energy for all Victorians. Indeed Victoria's transition to renewable energy should not be ideological. It should not be a political game, because when you do that, it comes with a human cost. The mischief being peddled by those opposite is having a real human cost that could actually impact Victorians for generations to come. So I say to those opposite now: reveal yourself on climate action. If you truly put the interest of Victorians first, you will be supporting Victoria's transition to renewables, enabling Victorians – every household – to get cheaper, more reliable energy.

This is about taking decisive action on climate. This is about supporting a growing industry to create thousands and thousands of jobs for Victorians. Transitioning to renewables is about supporting our economy to become even stronger and more prosperous and making sure that Victoria is a really good place to invest in and to do business. At the end of the day investing in renewables, transitioning to renewables, is about making sure that Victoria maintains our livability and Victorians maintain their health and wellbeing. But, as I have said, those opposite are not focused on the interests of Victorians, they are focused on themselves. I suggest to those opposite: put the interests of Victorians first, support our transition to renewables, support cheaper and more reliable energy for all Victorians.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, on relevance, if it assists the minister I think she has picked up the wrong speaking points. The coalition will not be opposing the bill. I am not sure

if the minister did not understand the 30-minute speech that I gave, but the coalition will not be opposing the bill.

Vicki Ward: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, it is not necessary to be patronising in this place. Furthermore, the minister is speaking to the bill. She has already shown a comprehensive understanding of the bill and is talking to it. Possibly if the member opposite, instead of being patronising, took the time to listen, he might understand more of what she is saying.

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

Sonya KILKENNY: Thank you, Acting Speaker. I will speak to the planning issues in this bill – and they were raised by the member opposite – because we know that the land use planning system is going to play a really critical role in the transition to renewables and Victoria’s ambition to achieve net zero emissions and climate change resilience. Indeed the planning system has quite an important role in coordinating government efforts to protect communities from climate change and to reduce emissions.

We know climate change threatens the very safety and function of our built environment. Of course that includes our physical structures like our cities and towns, our homes and workplaces; our natural environments like our foreshores, our beaches, our rivers and parks; and our transport and energy systems, the systems that help us move around our state and power our state. My own electorate of Carrum has many bayside areas from Bonbeach to Carrum to Seaford and of course inland at Patterson Lakes. The Edithvale–Seaford Wetlands are in my electorate, and recent modelling shows that these beautiful wetlands would be at risk of irreversible damage and change by 2100 when sea levels rise by 1.4 metres.

Land use planning can play a really important role by directing where new development should go, away from places exposed to the highest risk and towards those places that are more resilient to climate hazards and encouraging less carbon-intensive development. Planning standards aimed at locating new development in areas that are less exposed to hazards like sea level rise, bushfires and erosion, together with development standards that strengthen resilience, ultimately are going to save lives. They are going to significantly reduce damage-related costs and contribute to the whole of economy and community effort needed to reduce emissions.

We have seen in the last week the devastation caused by the natural disasters of catastrophic wind and storm events and of course the fires. I want to commend all of the emergency services, the responders who responded so incredibly to these catastrophes, including in my own electorate. The Frankston SES trains for these events, and we have seen how that training has certainly paid off.

The bill before us is proposing changes to the Planning and Environment Act 1987. Those changes, as we know, are going to introduce a new, explicit climate change objective in the planning framework and require planning authorities, which are typically the local councils, to consider climate change, natural hazard risk and emissions when preparing or amending planning schemes. This will ensure that climate change considerations are embedded at the very top of the hierarchy of the planning system. It does not impact, as perhaps the member opposite was trying to suggest, local planning decisions, local planning applications. This is not new. This will complement and strengthen existing policy in the Victorian planning provisions that is going to support Victorians to respond to climate change.

We know also that there is a real, growing push from local councils and local authorities, key industry groups, peak bodies and environmental groups for government to take a real lead role to ensure that climate-related natural hazards and emissions inform planning decisions. It is the right thing to do. We know there is going to be an increase in the number of heatwaves and an increase in the number of storm events. It is important that we plan and we take a whole-of-government approach to that. We also know that nearly half of all of Victoria’s local councils have declared a climate change emergency. This is the highest across the country. I want to acknowledge those councils and acknowledge their

commitments to their understanding of climate change impacts and the need for action in their local communities.

The amendments to the Planning and Environment Act and the Climate Change Act that come about from the bill before us will mandate an assessment of climate change in all planning scheme amendments, planning decisions and minimum standards. This will help to protect the future health and wellbeing of Victorians. It will help preserve and maintain the livability of Victoria. It will help guide us in the overall strategy that this government is embarking on in terms of a transition to renewables. Ultimately we want our built environment to protect and enhance the health and wellbeing of Victorians now, obviously, and in the future. We want to see – working with local councils, with industry and with community – that we are achieving this objective together.

This is an important bill. We should not be distracted from the importance of this bill by the comments made opposite by the member for Brighton, who frankly is raising mischief here, when what we are seeking to do on this side is address climate change, address climate resilience and ensure that energy for our future is cheap, reliable and secure. Rather than adding and peddling mischief, rather than hiding their disdain for climate change and climate action behind these reasoned amendments, those opposite should be supporting our orderly transition to renewables and ensuring that Victorians have cheap, reliable and secure energy for years to come.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (15:28): In starting my contribution, I reiterate the reasoned amendment that was moved by the member for Brighton:

That all the words after ‘That’ be omitted and replaced with the words ‘this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the government:

- (1) guarantees secure and reliable energy for every Victorian, noting the recent system collapse which led to 530,000 people without power;
- (2) commits to energy being affordable, noting the 25 per cent price increase over the last year;
- (3) details how Victoria will have adequate baseload power, noting the state government’s ban on gas;
- (4) sets out a plan to upgrade 57-year-old transmission infrastructure, noting that almost one in seven of Victoria’s 13,000 electricity transmission towers is damaged and experts warned the government in 2020 of the risks in extreme weather events;
- (5) reveals to Victorians exactly how the new planning powers, and ministerial directions, will operate, and why the government is stripping communities from planning decisions;
- (6) explains what the impact will be on agricultural land, when analysis from the government’s offshore wind policy directions paper of March 2020 shows that to meet net zero targets up to 70 per cent of Victoria’s land will need to host wind and solar farms;
- (7) provides an update on how Victoria will reach the 2032 wind target, noting the collapse of the flagship project in Hastings; and
- (8) provides public transparency on climate measures through a website with live measures covering emissions, renewable energy, battery storage, and wind energy.’

Until those things are done, we do not believe this bill should be read a second time.

I will start by expanding on those points. If you think about the last week, 530,000 homes and businesses in Victoria were without power. Cumulative over the last six years it is 1.9 million homes and businesses without power. The system is unstable, and the government has been warned by four previous reports before we start this sham inquiry that the Premier announced and talked about in question time today, a sham inquiry by experts that will be hand-picked by the Allan government. It will be like the Coate inquiry into hotel quarantine: there will be some pet people who will say the right thing to cover up for the government’s mistakes. That is why we will move in the upper house that there should be a parliamentary inquiry, a public inquiry, a transparent inquiry, one that can call expert witnesses who will be on the public record so people will be able to hear what is being said rather than having a secret sham inquiry around those issues. The 530,000 people who were without power last week and the 1.9 million people who have been without power at times in the last six years

deserve answers, and a parliamentary inquiry is the way to do that rather than a secret sham inquiry by the government's hand-picked experts.

We all know what the cost of living is doing to Victorian families. One of the things that is driving the cost of living is a 25 per cent increase in power prices in Victoria over the last 12 months. It is bad enough for people's power bills, but it is also how those power bills are put through the food chain and through the industry chain. The cost of doing business in Victoria is constantly going up. We are seeing a lot of businesses asking the question – with energy costs, with land tax costs, with some of the other rules that this government has brought in – 'Why do I want to stay in Victoria and do business?' That is why with our point (2) we want to make sure the government commits to affordable energy in the future so we keep businesses and keep people living here in Victoria, because we know how the cost of living is impacting every Victorian and how the cost of energy is a key component of that.

The third point concerns details on how Victoria will have adequate baseload power, noting the state government's ban on gas. We know that gas is part of a sensible transition to renewables. You do not ban gas while you are going through this transition. That is why that policy by the Allan government to ban the use of natural gas here in Victoria is such a flawed process.

A member: You don't understand what you're talking about.

Peter WALSH: I actually do. Point (4) asks the government to set out a plan as to how the 57-year-old transmission infrastructure lines and the 13,000 electricity transmission towers in this state are going to be upgraded. We see an absolute divergence in policy on this issue. We have got the government in our area pushing VNI West, which is one big powerline from New South Wales to Victoria, and we have Bruce Mountain and the Victoria Energy Policy Centre talking about a much more sensible upgrade to this. He is talking about upgrading the existing transmission lines on the existing routes so you do not create new easements, you duplicate the system that is there with a higher voltage powerline and you have that loop system that does not put you at risk of blackouts like one great big powerline would.

Jade Benham interjected.

Peter WALSH: As the member for Mildura says, it is a commonsense solution. Common sense is not very common on the other side of the house. For those that say you cannot upgrade it, you build beside it. It is quite simple; it is not hard. It is certainly a lot easier than building a tunnel that has never been built.

Point (5) asks that the government reveal how the Victorian planning changes will have an impact on the community and answer the simple question of why the government is stripping the community out of planning decisions in the future. One of the tenets of Victoria was that, through local government and through people having the opportunity to have input into it, community could actually be involved in planning decisions. This actually takes the community out of those planning decisions, and I think it is a retrograde step for democracy here in Victoria.

Point (6) calls on the government to explain:

... what the impact will be on agricultural land, when analysis from the government's offshore wind policy directions paper of March 2020 shows that to meet net zero targets up to 70 per cent of Victoria's –

agricultural –

land will need to host wind and solar farms ...

One of the key export industries in Victoria is actually food and fibre. Those on the other side of the house may not know where that food and fibre comes from. It actually comes from agricultural land. It does not just magically appear in the supermarkets. It comes from agricultural land with our very good farmers, which the other side never like to admit. They never give credit to the farmers here in

Victoria. If that land is going to be 70 per cent taken up by renewable energy projects, how are we going to actually produce the food in this state?

Point (7) is to provide:

... an update on how Victoria will reach the 2032 wind target, noting the collapse of the flagship project in Hastings ...

You have got a Labor state government and a Labor federal government, but there is no connection. The Victorian government wanted to upgrade the Port of Hastings to bring in the wind towers that were going to go out to the Star of the South and the other projects on the edge of Bass Strait. The federal government said, 'No, you can't do that.' Where is the connection here? Where are the synergies of how these targets are going to be met when the federal government knocks over the Victorian decisions around that?

Finally, it seeks:

... public transparency on climate measures through a website with live measures covering emissions, renewable energy, battery storage, and wind energy ...

This legislation actually does not put any real compulsion on the government to do anything. If you precis it down to a simple message, it is up to the Premier of the day and the minister of the day to say 'We've met the targets' or 'We haven't met the targets'. There is no compulsion in this legislation to force the government to actually do anything other than talk, other than have spin, other than try and fool the people of Victoria that this is somehow going to deliver something in the future. Whatever it delivers, it will drive up the cost of living, it will drive up the cost of energy and Victorian consumers will pay for the mistakes of this government.

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (15:37): I rise to speak on the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. I had quite a lot prepared, but I do feel I need to address some issues. It has been quite a long week. In fact it is almost exactly a week since the moment the storms hit, and it has been a tiring week for my community. People have been working hard. People have been without power. People have been without telecommunications. We have AusNet linespeople working their guts out to restore connections. We have seen emergency services volunteers contribute countless hours of their time to recovery efforts. It has been a really tough week, and I have to say I am probably a little sleep deprived. I am just trying to make sure that I did not fall asleep, because I have just heard stuff which is fantasy land. It is not grounded in reality. I am hoping I am not in a dreamlike state here, because I have heard things which are absolutely false, I have to say, and I would like to address them before I go further on to what I had prepared to discuss.

I think it needs to be raised, and raised pretty clearly, that it is our investment in renewables that has actually been driving down our wholesale prices. Our state has seen our wholesale prices reduce better than any other state around the country as a result of our investment in renewables. Renewable technology is a cheaper technology, and one of the reasons why power went so high is a funny little thing called war. The war in Ukraine actually drove energy prices up around the world. It is a global phenomenon. We are not the only place to see energy prices increase – not by a long shot – but here in Victoria we have been leading the nation after a decade of the 'noalition' federal government full of climate change deniers. I have the greatest hits of those – a list, a litany, a laundry list of fantasists who claimed daily that there was no such thing as climate change. Or if they even did indeed acknowledge that climate change was happening, it could not possibly have been human induced – absolutely not. Why? Because it is an inconvenient truth. Al Gore stated that. Seventeen years ago I watched that documentary, and 17 years ago I got fired up. Now my people in Monbulk are suffering the effects of ineffectual governments of the past who did nothing to address this.

The storms ripping through are a result of increased global temperatures around the world. Our ocean currents are not behaving the way they have. Our winds are getting hotter. They are becoming almost tornado-like. We have never seen anything like it here. In 2021 the June storms hit the Dandenong

Ranges, and we said that was unprecedented. Then they hit the Dandenong Ranges again in October of that year and knocked out powerlines. That set a record for power outages because of the lines down, the trees. We have got here an amendment. Point (1) says:

guarantees secure and reliable energy for every Victorian, noting the recent system collapse ...

The trees came down. They fell because of the wind. I am sorry – you know what, now I feel I need to go back to my geography teaching time to indicate how important it is to have trees as the lungs of this earth to soak up the carbon emissions and spit out the oxygen we require to live. I am absolutely gobsmacked that we are talking about clearing trees. What – all of them? Shall we have wind deserts where the wind whips you because there is no tree coverage? Farmers need trees. Farmers do better when they have trees as windbreaks to protect their crops. I actually know a little bit about farming. I have dealt with farmers often, and I have great agriculturalists out my way. I have got to say, I cannot believe we are now talking in these terms, with falsehoods. There is a moral culpability here on all of us to talk about the truth of the situation. There is no time for politicking. It is the greatest existential crisis we are all facing, and we are responsible for what happens from this point forward, for our children and our grandchildren.

The Minister for Energy and Resources deserves the greatest thanks from all of us for the power of work – I choose that word very carefully – that she and her team have been putting into this. We are leading the country when it comes to renewable energy targets coming down, and I have to say my hat is off to the minister because it takes a lot of effort. Boy, am I fired up about this, and I am sure you can tell I am. This bill is enshrining our targets that we are working on reducing. I really hope that we can all be above politicking in this place and we can deal with facts and the actual substance of the matter here, because at the end of the day if we do not address this existential crisis in real terms with real ways to actually make change to drive down carbon emissions, we are headed for a planet that will no longer be inhabitable for us. No other animal has ever managed to destroy its own habitat quite as effectively as we seem to be doing as humans. My word. To then discuss and throw around these numbers about planning and land – I do not know where this has come from. I am sitting on the Environment and Planning Committee. We have commenced an inquiry to look at how we protect our arable land in our peri-urban areas, because we understand food and fibre. We are the greatest exporters of food and fibre in this country. We understand –

Members interjecting.

Daniela DE MARTINO: And they are not all in the electorates held by the National Party. The National Party does not have a monopoly on arable land in this state. Some of us also represent arable land, so I say that there needs to be an understanding that this government, the Allan Labor government, is charging ahead to make sure that we are balancing the interests of all involved, because we need to make sure that we are clever with how we manage our land usage going forward.

The rules of old have been thrown out. We are living in very different times. As I said before, we had the 2021 June storms. Everyone talked about them being unprecedented. People were shocked; 25,000 trees came down in three days. We had extensive power outages. When we go back to the storms in October 2021, 525,000-odd homes were disconnected and we said they were the worst we had ever seen. We just topped it last week – 530,000. That is not because of some kind of failing of this government. Please let us stop using that narrative, because it is dangerous. It is dangerous because we then feed it to the population and our public. Misinformation and, worse still, disinformation are problematic, and we have seen what that does in other democracies around the world. Let us not play into that trope. We have topped the event with last week's event. Most people do not even realise the extent of the damage in Cockatoo and Emerald and Belgrave.

I have got to say this legislation is key. It is important. What we do with our land going forward is important. The energy targets that we are setting and enshrining in legislation are absolutely crucial; they truly are. We have been leading this nation. I am so proud that I am a part of this government that has had the vision. As I say, on the former coalition federal government – for the love of God – I read

the sad list of those who were climate change I read some of the comments today earlier, which I brought in to just refer to because it beggars belief. It really was beyond disturbing. I am just going through the names in my head – Kelly, even Barnaby Joyce – and some of the commentary from these federal members of Parliament who should have known better. The facts were to hand. To call a climate scientist the little ‘Pommy weather girl’ – I believe that was Craig Kelly – was truly unbelievable. She is a climate change scientist; is that how we refer to someone?

Juliana Addison interjected.

Daniela DE MARTINO: Here we go. Thank you very much, member for Wendouree, because the whole point about a ‘sham’ inquiry is beyond insulting to those experts who will be empanelled to be on it. That is a terrible thing, because already then you undermine confidence in our systems and structures. When we bandy about words like that, words have an effect. Words have an effect. The potency of the language we use in this place and with the public – we have to take very careful responsibility with how we inform the public with truth and facts. Truth and facts –

Peter Walsh interjected.

Daniela DE MARTINO: Well, you can come and see – sorry, through the Chair. I will just correct myself, point-of-order myself. I will say it through the Chair. The Leader of the Nationals is very welcome to come and visit the electorate of Monbulk as well and see the devastation and ruin there through climate change. There are no two ways about it. I commend the bill to the house.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (15:47): It is a pleasure to rise and to provide some comments around the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. I know that those opposite are pretty excited after a great concert we have just had over the weekend – Taylor Swift. I will not be putting the hat on today or doing any of the dance moves. I will reserve my excitement for maybe later. If there was more excitement about this bill, maybe I might shake it off, but I will not be doing that today.

Can I say the issue of climate change is a really important debate. We need to ensure that we transition to zero emissions. We need to ensure that we have a plan to get there. We need to ensure that along the way we provide affordable and reliable energy. The three elements that underpin our energy system – being affordable, reliable and clean – are really the three pillars that we should all be fighting for in this house. Unfortunately the government has lost the plot when it comes to ensuring that we have affordable energy. We saw what happens when it comes to reliable energy from the events of the week just gone, when 530,000 people were without power for literally hours. I know in my electorate, although the power itself remained on, the absolute mess that it left. Many that worked in other areas lost power for literally days. There were those that were coming in on public transport. When the events actually happened, we were waiting for an important meeting to discuss some issues, and a particular individual that could not make it to that meeting was stuck on a train for 3 hours. Three hours on a train midway to a station, no advice as to what would happen, literally packed into a train like sardines. It was Third World.

People appreciate that we have these kind of events, but what we also understand is we have a fragile infrastructure system when it comes to our energy. It literally is just holding itself together. You would almost use gaffer tape in the way that it is all literally keeping it all together. In building an energy system that is reliable, we have got to ensure that the power that we currently have works, that we are not beholden to blackouts and uncertainty and also we have got to make sure that it is reliable. I know when the Minister for Energy and Resources was asked last year about the integrity of the system and whether we would be able to withstand blackouts it was all ‘No problems’, ‘We’ll be right’, ‘We’re all fine’. We have seen that that is not the case.

With this minister, everything is ‘Prices are down, down, down’. She is ‘Lily Down, Down, Down’ when it comes to prices. We know that is not the case. There has been a 25 per cent increase in power prices. This minister has literally got her head in the clouds. There is absolutely no validity in our

prices in this state. We are paying more for energy than any other state in the nation, and for the minister to claim that it seems to be like Coles in terms of some ‘down, down, down’ prices is a joke. People are struggling in a cost-of-living crisis in this state from a government that is literally missing in action. When we had the blackouts, there was no advice, no certainty, no details and no information for hours. People had no idea what was going on.

What the member for Brighton has put forward in his reasoned amendment on this bill is very important, because he talks about guaranteeing a secure and reliable energy system for the state. Reliability is really, really important. He also talks about committing to energy being affordable, noting the 25 per cent price increase that we had last year. In the reasoned amendment we also talk about how we will ensure adequate baseload power, noting the state government’s ban on gas. We have got to be able to transition to a clean energy system going forward, but we need gas as that form of transition. You cannot turn gas off and turn coal off and expect the lights to stay on. We have heard so many people already having real issues about the uncertainty around gas. Many of those opposite may have been to the Australian Hotels Association’s drinks. The president, when the Premier was standing there, as he was introducing the Premier, was talking about the issues around gas. Many of our pubs and clubs cook with gas. Many of those pubs and clubs use gas as an affordable fuel source, and when you turn it off, what you do is you affect prices. When you turn it off, you effectively ensure that Victorians end up paying more. For those that are left on gas –

Members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Meng Heang Tak): Order!

David SOUTHWICK: It is all right. The minister has gone off her tree. It is okay. It is fine. It is not a problem. The minister is going down, down, down and making all kinds of imputations across the Chair and across the floor. No idea.

What we absolutely understand is that this minister for years has been missing in action, and that is why our power prices are where they are. This minister has built renewables without the grid to connect them in. We need renewables. We need to ensure that there is also the road to connect many of those renewables in, and that is where this government has got it completely wrong. There is no plan to be able to transition to affordable, reliable and clean energy, and that is why this minister and this government are missing in action. When we went to the last election, we had targets that were to be legislated. We are now talking about it. We came with legislated targets. You may laugh, but they were legislated targets which we went to the election with. And where was the government? The minister was up there.

The government at that stage said they would never, ever legislate. Minister D’Ambrosio said they would not legislate. Guess where we are now? We are talking about legislation. We are at groundhog day, absolute groundhog day, because this government says one thing and then they do another. They say one thing and they do another. That is why they cannot be trusted. They cannot be trusted to deliver anything. The only thing this government has now delivered when it comes to any kind of energy is an SEC logo and higher prices – and jelly beans and yo-yos and show bags and all the paraphernalia to promote the SEC, but no detail about how they are going to bring energy prices down. And you cannot bring energy prices down with an SEC logo. A logo will not do it for you. You have actually got to do the hard work, and that is the problem with this government. They are so big on cutting ribbons and putting out press releases, but they are so missing in action when it comes to the detail, and that is where it is flawed. Like we were going into the election in the last period, supporting targets, supporting getting to emissions reduction and looking at a climate change agenda that was real, that had people putting their shoulders to the wheel, including industry and incentivising the industry to work with the biggest emitters to get them to actually look at clean ways to transition, we will not be able to do it alone. We will not be able to do it with the government being able to just sit there and dictate to everybody and tell them how to do it. When the government dictates to Victorians, we all

pay the price. That is why life is harder under Labor – because they keep telling Victorians how to do it, what to do, when to do it, and ultimately we all pay the price for it.

I was with the Japanese consulate only last week for Emperor's day, and the Japanese consulate had some fantastic hydrogen buses and a whole lot of these cars looking at hydrogen fuels. And I know the Treasurer, who has been very supportive of this, would have loved it. I am not sure whether the Minister for Energy and Resources would have loved it, because I know she has quite attacked the hydrogen projects and been very, very critical of the hydrogen projects. The minister is smiling at the table – I note that – because there is huge dissent between what the government says. You have the energy minister on one side, who is very critical of hydrogen as an alternative fuel source, and the Treasurer is saying it is good. That is the problem with this government – they cannot get it right. They say one thing, they do another. Japan is a great trading partner for us.

We have got to look at alternate fuel sources to be able to ensure we transition to clean energy and we also have affordable and reliable energy. You will not do it alone. You need solutions from the industry to do that. That is what we understand as Liberals and Nationals. That is why we want to incentivise industry to work with us, incentivise universities. We should be the clean state. We should be a state that looks at research and commercialises, but you need a plan and you need to know how to get there. You cannot do it by government alone. You cannot do it by dictating to people how to live their lives, and this is the way Labor works. This is Labor's playbook: dictate to people how they live, dictate how people work and ultimately tax people to the hilt so they cannot afford it anymore. That is why nothing works under Labor. We are not opposing this bill. If the government had any sense, they would support the amendments by my good friend the member for Brighton to ensure we get some kind of sensible bill moving forward.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (15:57): I am very pleased to rise to speak on this very important legislation, and it is a pity the opposition do not give credence to the value of these tough targets that we are setting for the benefit of the Victorian community. On the one hand they say they support renewables, but we have got this impossibly convoluted and confusing series of rebuttal points, and I think 'rebuttal' is an overstatement because that would suggest that there was some sense in what they have put up here in their reasoned amendment: 'We support it, but we have a reasoned amendment.'

Clearly yet again we see evidence from those opposite that they hate renewables. Every now and then when they are in front of a certain audience they say, 'Oh, well, we've got to appeal to that teal vote, so we'll pretend we care about the environment.' When push comes to shove and the legislation is in front of them – look here – they find a way to try and crawl out of it. But we are not going to let that happen, because our Victorian community deserves better. In talking about what Victorians want, we were very up-front about the SEC in the election, and, guess what, we got elected. Who knew? Tough targets? Yes. We got elected, so that must speak to something. And I am not talking about the fact of being in government per se, but the fact is that we are reading the room and we are reading the climate.

I think many of us in the chamber may have had the value of seeing the impassioned speech of the member for Monbulk, because we know that her area has certainly felt the thrust, the absolutely horrific impacts, of catastrophic tornado winds, but these are the exact concerns that we are surmounting as part of these targets – these hard, tough targets – that we need to meet as part of a strategic approach to actually creating climate resilience in our community.

There are so many aspects that I have to rebuff here, because I think the opposition have strayed away from facts on many occasions. I am just going to bring the chamber back to the reality, because I think it is very important. Further, I make a second point, which the member for Monbulk made earlier, and that is: we have to be very factual. We have just had some pretty traumatic experiences with very catastrophic weather, and it is easy to default to the tired old tropes that actually have no factual basis anymore with what we know from science.

The first point that I want to address is with regard to the issue of gas. We know that we do have a gas transition plan – the opposition are saying it is a gas ban – of 95 per cent from renewables by 2035 and 5 per cent from gas-fired power generation. I think the opposition are really just frightening community, and I do not think that is helpful. Nevertheless what really underpins this is the tired old trope of saying, ‘Look over here. We’ve got absolutely zero policy on renewables, zero policy in terms of creating a clean energy future for the children.’ Thinking of the children, I can honestly say they are the lowest priority for those opposite when it comes to looking at a secure energy future. They dare to say as part of their reasoned amendment:

guarantees secure and reliable energy for every Victorian ...

Well, we can see that the imperative for the legislative changes in this bill is right in front of us, and that is because of the extreme weather conditions that we are all facing as a result of rising global temperatures. That is exactly why we have been working strategically over many, many years, precisely, universally – and I should say we are leading the way in Victoria. Certainly when you compare us internationally, we are leading the way here. We are certainly comparable in terms of driving down emissions, because it is the right thing to do.

I am going to jump around here, because I do have a lot to acquit in 5 minutes. It is a big task, let me tell you, because the opposition served up a treat and we need to correct the record a bit. Victorian bills are not the highest in the country as the member for Caulfield said. Our Victorian default offer is still lower than the national default market offer. The average VDO is \$207 cheaper than the average DMO. Additionally, our wholesale power prices are the lowest in the national market. We are insulated from the massive price rises in gas and coal because of our – get this – record investment in renewables. Unfortunately, those opposite hate renewables. I am sorry this is such inconvenient information, but let us have the facts stand on the record.

We know that the Libs want fracking, and that is their way. When they are talking about gas, they really mean fracking, and of course we banned fracking – we banned it in the constitution. We know it is terrible for agriculture. On the one hand, they have said they back in our farmers, yet they want fracking. Well, the best thing you can do for farmers is not endorse fracking. The other thing they throw in there is the nukes. There are always nukes: ‘Oh, we love nukes.’ Whenever they can, they just love throwing them in there. Let me look at the cost of nuclear energy.

Danny O’Brien: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member on her feet is required to be factual in debate. It is only the Labor Party that issued 23 fracking licences and 73 fracking explorations, and the member should be made aware of that before she misleads the house.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Member for Gippsland South, that is not a point of order.

Nina TAYLOR: There are just a couple of things that I do want to reflect on from the past when talking about where the Liberal Party opposition – let us say ‘opposition’ just for the purposes of the argument today – is coming from. As planning minister, Matthew Guy introduced strict planning laws, the strictest in Australia, which effectively prevented any new wind turbines being built in Victoria, costing hundreds of regional jobs, wasting regional investment and slowing Victoria’s uptake of renewable energy. Wind farms were banned completely around the Mornington Peninsula, the Yarra Valley, the Dandenongs, the Bellarine Peninsula and the Great Ocean Road. I remember it well.

Members interjecting.

Nina TAYLOR: I remember it well, because I was alive then, for starters, and I remember how disappointing it was. I was thinking, ‘We need to get Labor back in there so we can actually advance renewable investment in our state.’

Now, talking about where we have got to – as I was saying, in terms of renewable investment I know those opposite were saying ‘Well, what have you actually delivered?’ – let me speak to this. Since

2014 the government's renewable energy policies and programs have been successful in driving the growth of renewable energy generation in Victoria. The growth has seen the share of renewable energy in Victoria's electricity generation increase from around 10.8 per cent in 2014 to 26.6 per cent in 2020, which surpassed our Victorian renewable energy 2020 target of 25 per cent renewable generation and almost 38 per cent in 2022–23. Victoria is well on its way to meeting its 2025 Victorian renewable energy target. In October 2023 the Minister for Energy and Resources tabled the VRET 2022–23 progress report in Parliament – accountability, there we are, because those opposite were saying, 'How are we going to hold them to account?' Well, they tabled it in Parliament. Who knew? It reported that renewable energy sources produced almost 38 per cent of Victoria's electricity generation in that financial year.

At the end of June 2023 Victoria had 5150 megawatts of commissioned large-scale onshore wind and solar capacity, 4195 megawatts of small-scale rooftop PV capacity and 537 megawatts of operational energy storage capacity. We have form. I am just putting it on the record. It might seem a little laborious, but those opposite have said, 'Well, what have you delivered?' I am going to tell you what we have delivered. In the pipeline, 13 renewable energy projects totalling 1407 megawatts were under construction at 30 June and, further, 6187 megawatts of new projects have been approved under our government but are yet to commence construction. The Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Act 2017 defines 'renewable energy source' to mean solar, wind and any energy sources declared by the minister. But of course there are energy storage targets as well, because you need to have the mix. It is not only generating the energy in the first place, but there is also the fact of being able to store the energy as well.

I did have a number of other points – with 45 seconds I do not think I am going to get there. I am going to do one more point. Victoria's energy storage targets are for at least 2.6 gigawatts of energy storage capacity by 2030, 6.3 gigawatts by 2035. We know that energy storage is vital to the decarbonisation of Victoria's electricity sector and to support the development of renewable energy. It provides dispatchable energy capacity, because we are talking about this baseload issue, that helps smooth renewable energy generation, delivers network capacity and helps limit price volatility in the wholesale electric market. We have actually thought this through. Who knew?

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (16:08): I am pleased to rise to say a few words. I want to begin by correcting some of the absolute mistruths delivered by the previous speaker, who talked a lot about wind farms. Apparently we banned wind farms. The member needs to understand planning –

Nina Taylor interjected.

Danny O'BRIEN: You said 'banned'. You said 'banned' and your government says 'banned' repeatedly. I am happy to be corrected, but the member for Albert Park also said that we banned them in certain locations. The member for Albert Park, let the record show, has departed the scene now and does not want to hear the truth. She said that we had banned them in a whole lot of locations. I would like to read into *Hansard* from the *Planning Guidelines for Development of Wind Energy Facilities*, which were first published in June 2015. Can anyone tell me who was in government in June 2015? That would be the Labor government. The guidelines specifically preclude the development of wind energy facilities in:

- Yarra Valley and Dandenong ranges, Bellarine and Mornington Peninsulas, the Great Ocean Road area within five kilometres of the high water mark, and Macedon and McHarg Ranges
- the land within five kilometres of the high water mark of the Bass Coast, west of Wilsons Promontory

Is anyone seeing a pattern here? Does anyone know what this is? These are all either Melbourne or Labor-held areas. For areas east of Wilsons Promontory, 'Go your hardest. Build a thousand wind turbines there. We don't care. It's not relevant to us.' It goes on:

- all land west of the Hume Freeway and the Goulburn Valley Highway ...

which is the racing area of the state, the thoroughbred area, and it goes on. This is the hypocrisy of this government. They will have wind farms, and they will sell it in Brunswick and Northcote and Fitzroy but not anywhere we want it – not anywhere in regional Victoria, where farmers and people who live in the rural parts of this state have to put up with them. No, they just want them out of the places they live and the places they holiday, like the Yarra Valley and the Great Ocean Road. But Gippsland – ‘Oh, go your hardest’ – unless it is in Bass, because on the Bass Coast that is a bit sensitive. That is one of their marginal seats; they do not want it anywhere there. The member for Albert Park has wilfully misled the Parliament in saying that it was the previous government that banned wind farms in these areas. It was the Labor Party. I think they stand condemned for their attitude on this.

This is one of my frustrations with this legislation and this debate. As a regional member of Parliament and as a member who is representing rural and regional areas – the areas that have historically powered our state, both through coal-fired power generation and more specifically in my electorate through the production of gas, where 90 per cent of Victoria’s gas comes from, through my electorate at Longford – we hear so much debate about energy, but all the benefits are for the city, and the country wears all the issues. We are going to lose the jobs in the Latrobe Valley. The member for Narracan knows this. The member for Morwell is sitting there because he and his constituents know that the Labor Party abandoned them and the blue-collar workers in the power industry a long time ago. Do not get me started on the timber industry – that is a whole other kettle of fish. Now we have got the government saying, ‘We’ll just build all this stuff here.’

That leads me to – and I wanted to come to this a bit later, but I will go to it now – the issue of offshore wind. Members will be aware that the offshore wind sector is planning to be developed in Gippsland, or off Gippsland. Indeed it is almost entirely off my electorate of Gippsland South and that of my colleague the member for Gippsland East. Of course even the federal government has banned offshore wind west of Wilsons Promontory: ‘Because some people from Bass Coast might see that, and we don’t really want that.’ But if you are on the other side, if you are on the Ninety Mile Beach, ‘Oh, we don’t really care. That’s not our area. We don’t mind about that at all.’ Anyway, I digress because there are great opportunities for us in Gippsland from offshore wind, and I hasten to add that this government is very late to the party on it. The offshore wind sector planning started in 2017, or earlier, when Star of the South first started their planning and certainly came to me and other parts of my community and said, ‘This is what we want to do.’ Now the government is saying that the offshore-wind sector is the Labor Party’s policy: ‘It’s all our idea.’

But what are we actually going to see in Gippsland? Offshore wind is a port-based industry. You do not put a tinnie in at Seaspray and go out to work at the offshore wind tower out in Bass Strait. You have to go from the port, or potentially from a heliport, and that might be an opportunity for us too. What does the government do? Does it look at a port in Gippsland, like Barry Beach? No, it says, ‘We’ll go to Hastings in the marginal Labor seat of Hastings.’ How did that go for them? That has gone really well, because the federal government has put the complete kibosh on that and said, ‘You can’t actually do that.’ There are issues with Barry Beach as well. It is also part of a Ramsar-listed wetland, and there would need to be dredging. But I urge the government to not be so stubborn as to continue to say that Barry Beach is not an option for construction for offshore wind, because it is in fact much closer to the proposed location and there is land there. There is not a town within the immediate vicinity of Barry Beach, so there is little local impact – noise and all those sorts of things in a port. We run the risk, and we need the government to guarantee that this offshore wind sector is in fact going to be delivered from Victoria, because there are developers who are looking for acreage who have said to me, ‘Well, actually, Bell Bay in Tasmania is closer to our proposed acreage than Hastings, let alone going to Geelong or Port of Melbourne or somewhere else.’ The government needs to have all the options on the table and actually ensure that if offshore wind is going to happen, there are some benefits for Gippsland, because ports in Hastings are no good to us. You might as well move Loy Yang and Yallourn and everything over to Portland, because there are just no jobs for Gippsland if you have this operating out of Hastings.

I want to just talk a little bit about the issue of electricity more broadly. Members will be aware that my community was savagely hit last Tuesday by the storm that came through, and in particular the town of Mirboo North. I do not get the opportunity to talk about it another time this week, so I am just going to reflect on it briefly here, with indulgence. For the Mirboo North community the impact that is had from the supercell storm that went through actually has to be seen to be believed. The pictures do not do it justice, and I have spoken to numerous people who have said the same thing. Even on TV and social media photos just do not do justice to how catastrophic the damage has been, particularly to the forests around Mirboo North and, sadly, to about 20 homes that we believe are currently uninhabitable, homes which have had their roofs ripped off and damage done. Even more sadly and tragically, we had the loss of a local dairy farmer in that storm. He was out trying to get his cows in to protect them when apparently the roof of the shed blew off. My condolences to his family. I did not know him personally, but I knew of him and know that he was a very well-respected dairy farmer not only in the district but in the industry.

We have got a lot left to do. The questions we asked in question time today about the government's response were not about politics, they were about trying to make sure that we get the help that we need. The Premier says she has announced that there will be a head contractor to help with the clean-up in Mirboo North. That will be great, but we are now a week down the track from the storm event happening and there are still tin sheets on the side of the road. There are still tin sheets in people's front yards and there are still massive trees everywhere. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of what we call potential widow makers – trees and branches hanging down from the trees that are going to be seriously dangerous. I know the community is very concerned that if the wind gets up again, which I think it is predicted to do on Thursday, there will be danger. I urge the government to quickly get on with appointing that head contractor. Volunteers, Forest Fire Management Victoria and the SES are doing quite a lot of the work, but there is still a lot of rubble, building debris and massive amounts of trees and branches down – it is just hard to comprehend how much – and the government needs to act quickly to get in and do that.

I just want to very briefly pay tribute to Mirboo North. Like your children, you love all your communities equally, but Mirboo North has shown time and time again, well before this event, what a beautiful community it is and what a great proactive community it is in supporting each other, and we have seen that again. Indeed not just in Mirboo North – we have seen it from throughout the Gippsland region, with people coming in in droves to volunteer, people bringing in food, businesses coming in and providing food, people coming in with generators, people checking on their neighbours and people helping out everywhere they can, cutting their way into neighbours and people who are elderly and unable to look after themselves. I just want to say I am so proud of the people of Mirboo North and what they have done in the last week. I love looking after them, and I hope we can get through this as quickly as possible.

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (16:18): I too will talk on the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. I follow on from the member for Gippsland South, and I take very much with seriousness his support for his community, who have suffered these significant wind- and climate-related damages over the last week. It is not something that has left the community that I represent unaffected, with Werribee South in particular hit with some of these high-velocity winds, wrecking roofs, wrecking sheds and tipping over tractor sheds in the fields. We watched a crane lift one of those up just on the weekend. We also had a small fire occurring just before the storms came through. I think we were quite thankful for the storms, but the FRV and the CFA were straight onto it, and that grassfire did not get out of control despite the enormous winds that were occurring on that afternoon.

Where I do have some concern with the member for Gippsland South's statements is when he says words like 'all options' – all options must be on the table. I know what that is code for. I know that is code for more coal and more nuclear. It is not something that has been mentioned by many of those opposite over time. I just want to quote a member from the other house, Bev McArthur: 'Nuclear ...

must be considered.’ Of course they are looking at all options as if they are equal options. I think about the federal Liberal leader at the moment and his reflections on this in September last year when he talked about the old Anglesea coalmine and how it might be an appropriate location for a nuclear reactor. That was Peter Dutton, who is hoping to win a by-election in Victoria in the next few weeks by talking about how they support nuclear energy. I do not think the Liberals and the Nationals have ever really got off the nuclear train, and I do not understand why they keep supporting it, because it is simply dangerous.

We have seen coal and the danger that is ensuing in our communities. Those storms that we see are more ferocious because of climate change. Those floods that are no longer one-in-every-thousand-year or one-in-every-hundred-year floods are occurring with regularity. Those fires that whipped through our communities are again occurring so much more often and with so much more ferocity because we have spent too long sitting with the coal industry, and the LNP cannot get off it, so they are shifting to the nuclear industry. Four coalition MPs – maybe some of them are not MPs anymore after the last election, but at least two frontbenchers – spoke to the *Age* before the last election, all anonymously, of course. Why would they put their name to it? They said that nuclear should not be ruled out: ‘We should always reassess these things.’ Of course we should not reassess these things, because where does the nuclear waste go? Those people in advanced economies like Japan at the moment are still working out where that nuclear waste goes, like in Fukushima. They are an advanced economy, technologically advanced beyond many, with a long history of involvement in the nuclear industry, yet they are working out whether they just dump toxic nuclear water back into the ocean and hope for the best and hope that does not affect their communities on an ongoing basis. It is extraordinary that we are not seeing those opposite denounce nuclear to make a very clear statement to the community that they do not support it, they will not support it and they are ready to get out of coal.

I am glad on this occasion that the opposition is actually going to support this bill. I was somewhat surprised, because there is a history with those opposite of voting against or trying to gut energy bills that have come to this Parliament and the previous Parliament supported by a Labor government, which is all about the economic future of this state and the economic development of this state, because you can change the state but also grow the economy.

I recall that Matthew Guy’s Liberals voted against or tried to gut the following bills in Parliament: the Climate Change Bill 2016, the Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Bill 2017 and the Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Amendment Bill 2019, and in 2020 and 2021 we saw bills there too. So I am very surprised and I am quite glad that this is an occasion when they are actually going to support a bill that talks about the future of this state and the future economy of this state, because Victoria has been since 2014 the leader – the leader where other governments around the country, LNP governments, have not stepped up.

We had a lost decade in Canberra where simply nothing changed from 2013 onwards. Nothing changed. They tried to roll back the clock. I reflect on some of those prime ministers, and I think we saw some of their best performances recently on the ABC. Howard, to his credit, by the time we got to the 2007 election had decided that climate change was appropriate for him to support because the politics were there for it. But we have not seen it since then. Turnbull, I guess, supported it to some degree, as much as he could. I am not sure if Abbott really understood what climate change was. ScoMo, I think, probably made himself the minister for climate change at some point as well. He is probably the secret minister right now trying to do it. But more importantly, what does the opposition leader of this place think? Where are they up to on this?

Michael O’Brien interjected.

Mathew HILAKARI: I am glad you are supporting the bill, but where are you up to on climate change? What are you actually going to do about it? When are you going to start to support the solar panels program? When are you going to support the rollout of batteries? When are you going to get

on board? When are you going to stop opposing these bills? When are you going to stop talking them down and saying that they will not improve people's housing prices and their energy costs, and get on board with them? Most recently many of those opposite were talking about how we need to keep the gas on when they know that it is the most expensive form of energy that we have got going, except for nuclear. There is one more expensive form of energy, and it is nuclear, the only thing that they actually come out and support beyond gas. We have got to get off the gas already. If we want to get to net zero, we have got to get off the gas. If you want to look after your communities, get off the gas. That is why we are doing it. Of course that is why we are doing it.

You will be happy to hear that with a 32 per cent reduction in statewide emissions we grew the economy by 42 per cent – almost 43 per cent – which is an extraordinary thing. At some point some of those opposite might reflect on the four years that they had in government, where again, just like federally, there was an absence, a leaving of the field, an open field of 'Look, let's just see how things go. We'll spend the first four years doing nothing, and we'll hope we'll get another four.' Well, Victorians are somewhat too smart for that, and Victorians have doubled down at every election since, because they actually like to see the economy change and improve.

Victorians support it. In my own community you see the solar panels on the rooftops and you see the Teslas in the street, because people are moving with their feet and moving with their dollars. They are not going to wait for you to catch up, and they are not going to support nuclear either. I am happy for those at the table to tell me now whether they support nuclear. Well? There is silence once again, because there is no commitment to getting off the most expensive form of power that is going around today. If you could find a more expensive one, I am sure you would support that as well.

This bill, which of course I will get back to, is supporting emission reduction targets from 28 per cent to 33 per cent –

A member interjected.

Mathew HILAKARI: The power stays on? Is this where you are up to this week? In this week, as communities have suffered, this is where you are up to. We saw that in question time – what a disappointing mob with the questions this week. In this week, when people lost power and communities suffered, you politicised it on the other side. I commend this bill to the house.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (16:28): I am pleased that is over.

Members interjecting.

Brad ROWSWELL: I am. Acting Speaker De Martino, you know as well as I do. You have been sitting in the chair. Congratulations, by the way, on your elevation to be on the speakers panel; it is a great tribute to you. You heard that contribution, Acting Speaker, and I am sure, like me, you know in your heart of hearts that that was just absolutely terrible. It really was.

Members interjecting.

Brad ROWSWELL: No, no, it was shocking. It was a shocking contribution. It was full of froth and bubbles. Let us speak about the reality of this. The reality is just last week more than half a million Victorians' homes and businesses were without power. Let us speak about that. Those opposite will start talking about the fact that it was a weather event. Well, sure. Yes, it was a weather event. Blow me over with a feather, there was a weather event. It was not like the government were not warned about the inadequate nature of those transmission lines – not in one report, not in two reports, but in four reports. They knew that, and they did sweet nothing about it.

They have been in government for 10 years this year. This question about reliable, affordable, renewable energy has not just come up in the last couple of weeks or the last couple of months or the last couple of years. No, no, no, this has been around for some time. And those opposite, who have had the great privilege of being sent here to sit on the government benches by the people of Victoria,

what do they do? Sweet nothing to prepare for such events. In fact they make life harder. This government makes life harder for Victorians – Victorian households and Victorian businesses – because we know that the cost of energy has gone up by 25 per cent for households in the last 12 months and 26 per cent for businesses. These are real cost-of-living pressures that the Allan Labor government can have a positive impact on to make life easier for Victorians, but no. Not interested. They are just sitting back. They claim to be the party that takes care of people, that looks after people, that is concerned for the welfare of people. Well, prove it in your actions. They do not time and time again.

You will not be surprised to hear me say this, but I fully support the reasoned amendment moved by the member for Brighton, a very well constructed reasoned amendment that poses a number of clauses which are worthy of consideration. Let us be frank about this. This bill will go through the Assembly. It will go through the Council. It will be law in a matter of weeks in this state. But my overarching question is this: does this bill, the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023, guarantee Victorians that the power supply will be reliable and affordable?

In the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, in the middle of great uncertainty around energy supply, the Labor Party in this state want to ban gas. I note the member for Box Hill is not here, and I wish he was, to hear this, because I do not think his constituents would like this very much. The constituents of Box Hill, the constituents of Warrandyte, the constituents of Bulleen and those of other places where many Victorians of Asian origin have settled and made their homes and built communities will not like this, but this government want to ban the wok. This government want to ban them from using gas. In every other part of the state this government want to ban the barbecue. They have this hatred – absolute hatred – of gas. But as the member for Malvern pointed out just before, on any day of the week ending in ‘y’ gas will be a lower emissions option than brown coal.

Members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Order! There is too much audible noise. I cannot hear the contribution.

Brad ROWSWELL: Acting Speaker, I am grateful for your protection. The member for Malvern was absolutely right. Yes, it was a disorderly interjection earlier, but he was absolutely right. On any day ending in ‘y’ gas will be a lower emissions option than brown coal. What is this government’s inclination? They just want to ban gas. It is ideological lunacy, and it should be called out for what it is. I am proud to be part of a party that has actually gone –

Steve Dimopoulos interjected.

Brad ROWSWELL: I will take up the interjection of the minister at the table. I usually would not, and I know it is disorderly, but bear with me. The minister just interjected, disorderly as that might be, and said that it is more expensive. Of course it is more expensive, because this government has wanted to ban gas. Supply and demand. If you reduce the ability to supply something, it is going to get more expensive. It is economics 101, and I would like to think that a member of the executive – respectfully to you, minister at the table – would understand that.

Michael O’Brien: It’s like Taylor Swift tickets: supply and demand.

Brad ROWSWELL: I never got Taylor Swift tickets either, don’t worry.

I do want to address two matters in the 4 minutes I have remaining. Firstly, there is a question of renewable energy zones and transmission lines. It is one thing for the government to say that there are renewable energy zones around the state – there are six of them, and we know that – but it is another thing for the renewable energy that is created in those renewable energy zones to then be transmitted to the grid in Melbourne. Without those transmission lines you can get as much renewable energy as you like in the regions, in those six renewable energy zones – no worries at all – but unless it can be

transmitted, it is practically useless. This is the elephant in the chamber. This is the elephant that the Allan Labor government, and the Andrews Labor government before this government, did not want to touch with a 10-foot pole. It is as simple as that. The transmission of renewable energy is something which needs to be dealt with as a matter of urgency to provide not only homes but also businesses with the energy security that they need and that they demand from their government. We are meant to be a First World country. I mean, for goodness sake, if the Labor government is going to take us on this journey to 100 per cent renewables by some point in the future with targets legislated in this bill today, what is the plan to get there, and is the plan actually believable? I will contend at this point that it is not.

I do want to address a local matter which is deeply connected to the bill before the chamber at the moment, and that is the issue of the local Sandringham community bank, the local Bendigo Bank. This is a wonderful community institution. The community bank in Sandringham, with Matt Gallop, who is the branch manager there, and Graham Ludecke, who is the chair of the board, do a fabulous job in the community, giving back a significant amount of their profits to local community initiatives. I commend them for their work. They recently applied through the state government's solar scheme to have solar panels installed on the roof of the bank. Here is the thing: in order for the tradesmen to install the solar panels on top of the bank's roof, they needed to access rail land. Enter VicTrack. What do you reckon VicTrack want to do? VicTrack want to charge the community bank, which does a great service in the Sandringham community and beyond, \$2500 so the tradesmen can access the VicTrack land to install the solar panels on top of the bank. I have written to the Minister for Environment about this. I have written to the minister for transport about this. I am yet to hear from the transport minister about this. This is an absolute disgrace. If the government's stated policy is to get more solar panels on roofs and you have got a local community organisation that wants to do just that, why would another government organisation want to penalise them for trying to implement in their own community – in my community – that policy intent? It is absolute lunacy. I use this opportunity to implore the government to not be so idiotic about this and the transport minister to get back to me as soon as possible and not charge the community bank that \$2500 to frankly do the right thing in line with the government's stated policy intent.

I support the reasoned amendment moved by the member for Brighton. I have massive question marks over the legislated targets in this bill, and I put the government on notice. We will be watching how they actually transition through the next few years.

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (16:38): I am absolutely shocked and appalled after hearing what we just heard from the member for Sandringham. I actually did not realise that you really do not take climate change seriously and you want to condemn all of us, our kids and future generations, to some disastrous future, just building on rising temperatures and using it all for political gain. You are talking about –

Brad Rowswell: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I take personal offence at what is being said by the member on her feet.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): That is a matter for debate; it is not a point of order.

Bronwyn HALFPENNY: Just to start talking about, for example, the renewable targets, I was in the Parliament when the Andrews Labor government first introduced renewable targets, and the joke is that the arguments, the talk and the drivel that we have just heard now were exactly the same then. And, guess what, we not only achieved those targets, but we excelled and surpassed those targets, so there is no reason why they are not going to happen again. When I look at the reasoned amendment and hear what is being said here, again, there is just no care or consideration about what the economy needs, what Victorians need or what the world needs in terms of climate change.

I look at, for example, some points in this reasoned amendment. First of all, we need to ‘guarantee secure and reliable energy for every Victorian, noting the recent system collapse’. Well, the fact is that the collapse was due to fallen powerlines and things like that because of a catastrophic storm and other events caused by climate change. The fact is that the Labor government, under both the Andrews and Allan premierships, have been working towards reducing emissions and putting in place some really successful programs to ensure that we do have reliable energy. If you look at solar panels on homes, that is a program that has been very successful. It has been very popular, and it continues to grow. When we are talking about risks to power, that is because of climate change, not because of what the Victorian Labor government is doing.

The reasoned amendment talks about committing to energy being affordable, noting there has been a 25 per cent price increase. Haven’t you heard about some of the programs on retrofitting public housing to make electricity cheaper? Haven’t you heard about rebates for solar panels on roofs for everyday Victorians? Haven’t you heard about the programs for community batteries so we are not as reliant on coal-fired power? These are things that reduce electricity bills for Victorians. I look at my mother, for example, who is on an age pension. She is paying \$10 a month on an interest-free loan to have solar panels on her roof, saving hundreds and hundreds of dollars every year in electricity bills. These are the things that are the truth and reality, not the drivel that was talked about by the member for Sandringham.

When we look at some of the other arguments in this reasoned amendment, one of them is to explain what the impact will be on agricultural land when analysis from the government’s offshore wind policy directions paper of March 2020 shows that 70 per cent of Victoria’s land will need to host wind and solar panels. That report is completely out of date; it is irrelevant, it is old fashioned. It is exactly like the Liberal and National parties: not relevant and not keeping up with the times. Haven’t you heard about new technology in the provision of electricity generation in renewables? Haven’t you heard of offshore wind farms? These things were not discussed when this directions paper was talked about. Let us get with the facts, tell the truth and talk about the reports that are relevant to what is going on today, not what was happening in the past.

The residents of Thomastown have not borne the brunt as other places have in the sense of the bushfires and the floods. While we have had some power outages, they have not been to the extent of those in the regional and rural areas. But the residents of Thomastown have empathy with and express concern for those other Victorians living further out in those regional and rural areas. The thing is the National Party and the Liberal Party, who much of the time represent people in regional and rural areas, have less empathy than the residents of Thomastown, because they continue to badmouth and ‘bah humbug’ any actions to reduce emissions and therefore provide a better future for all of us.

Getting back to the bill – sorry, I did digress – I do support the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. It is an important piece of legislation that goes to continuing to put on track the things that this Victorian government has done, as a nation-leading state, in the area of renewable energy. We are increasing our targets. As I said, we have surpassed the original targets, so we are putting in even stronger ones. We also are looking to ensure that we make changes within planning to ensure that the aspects of renewable energy and storage are all put into the planning program so that when anything is built, when anything is planned, these things are serious considerations.

In this legislation that we are debating today the targets that we are looking at really are growing and growing. I think we ought to be proud of what the government is doing, because these things do not happen by themselves. You do need leadership and you do need well-targeted programs to make sure that the policy and the aims are achieved. We are looking at, under the Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Act 2017, increasing the renewable targets from 50 per cent by 2030 to 65 per cent, a new Victorian renewable energy target of 95 per cent by 2035 and of course also establishing new Victorian energy storage targets, enabling us to store that renewable energy so it continues to give us a more reliable source of power into the future. The bill makes sure that we are looking at Victorian offshore

wind generation and capacity targets there, so again we are not just talking about taking up land for those solar panels and wind generation.

The bill also amends the Climate Change Act 2017 because we want to, for a start, talk about climate action, so we want an act that talks about action. This is very much what we are doing here in terms of this bill and the amendments that we are looking to make to a number of pieces of legislation. The bill amends the Planning and Environment Act 1987. We want to make sure that climate change action and renewables are embedded in the planning system, so we are looking at putting a new objective relating to the consideration of climate change in the Planning and Environment Act. We will also require planning authorities to consider Victoria's emissions reduction targets and significant climate hazards when preparing planning schemes or planning scheme amendments. That would be in accordance with ministerial directions.

In terms of the legislation that we are debating today, this is building on the program that has been implemented since we were first elected in 2014. We want to continue to build on that. Both the Andrews and the Allan Labor governments have really ensured that Victoria paves the way. We know that other states and the federal government are looking at the work that we are doing and the programs that have been so successful in ensuring that we are reducing emissions and we are reducing our reliance on the dirty power of coal, and in doing so we are also providing support for Victorians. We are making sure that Victorians can convert to not only cleaner energy but also cheaper energy by way of solar panels and other programs. This is very important. It is an achievement that the government is proud of, and it really is making sure that we are looking out for our kids – for the future generations who deserve a future that is not going to end up with the bushfires, the storms and the flooding that now seem to be continual events every single year and multiple times a year. We really owe it to them to make sure that we do whatever we can. We have got to move on. We do not listen to the opposition. They have got no idea about the science and they have got no idea about the future.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (16:48): Acting Speaker De Martino, it is fantastic to see you up there in the chair. I do not think I have spoken before when you have been in the chair, not that I am hoping for any support during today's contributions.

I rise to speak on the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. From the outset can I acknowledge the work that the member for Brighton has done preparing the bill briefing for today and his reasoned amendment, which sets out a number of understandable concerns we have with the implementation of the bill we are debating today. From the outset can I say that the coalition does not oppose this bill. I think the talking points were drafted for the government before they realised that we were not going to oppose this bill, because from the contributions from the other side you would not know that the coalition is not opposing the bill before us today. In fact we took to the last election a commitment to legislate targets. We are committed to a net zero economy. It is understandable therefore that you would track along that progress how you are going to achieve that ultimate target of net zero emissions in our economy.

But what this bill does not do is actually provide for any consequences if the government do not meet their targets. There are very ambitious targets in the coming years, and I will come to that throughout my contribution today. But looking at the extent of the emissions reduction targets, the renewable energy targets and of course the wind targets that many of my colleagues have spoken about today and the concern of there being no plan to get there, there are no consequences in this piece of legislation for the government if they do not meet their targets. That is something that highlights the lack of understanding and detail on the implementation from those opposite when they are actually trying to put into place their policy objectives.

I spoke in my inaugural speech in this place about the importance of climate change and action on climate change in my community and making sure that we are taking action on climate change but also how important it is to make the transition one that provides affordable power, reliable power and of course clean power. All three parts of that are absolutely essential if we are going to achieve a net

zero emission whilst bringing the community with us and whilst ensuring that the lights do not go out and that Victorians, whether that is individual households or small businesses, can actually afford to pay their power bills.

Last week we saw more than half a million Victorians lose their power, and it is incumbent on all of us in this place to make sure that we take responsibility when we are implementing policy, and that is why on this side the house the member for Brighton has put forward a reasoned amendment that seeks to make sure that the implementation of this plan is one that achieves affordable, reliable and clean power. The system collapse which led to more than half a million Victorians going without power has had real-world consequences for every single person impacted. We have heard in this place today a number of those implications, whether that is loss from their small business or loss of food or whether that is individuals not being able to have their power at home. These are real-world consequences, and it is incumbent on us when we are putting forward policy objectives like the climate targets in this bill today that we understand how they are going to be implemented and the impact of that implementation.

The reasoned amendment here takes into account the importance of energy being affordable at a time when Victorians are experiencing a cost-of-living crisis right across the board. A 25 per cent increase in power prices over the last year for Victorian households and a 17 per cent increase for Victorian businesses is not acceptable. We have heard contributions from those opposite claiming that Victoria has the lowest wholesale prices in the country. Well, that is cold comfort to those Victorians who have been paying 25 per cent more in their power prices in the last 12 months. And particularly for small businesses already under pressure from increased rent thanks to the government's land tax increase and from their increased WorkCover premiums, a 17 per cent increase in power prices is simply too much for them to bear at this time.

Looking at the various targets in this piece of legislation today, if I turn briefly to the government's wind targets, from the detail in the bill the government intends to introduce targets of no less than 2 gigawatts by 2032, 4 by 2035 and 9 by 2040, yet we have seen over recent months the complete collapse of the Labor government's wind strategy. We have seen the federal Labor government step in and say the Port of Hastings cannot be used as the base for their wind plan and their wind policy. So despite putting these targets into legislation and holding that up to the light so as to be seen as action on climate change, there is a complete lack of detail as to how these targets will actually be implemented.

Further to that, the government's plan to focus their investment decisions around the revamped SEC and put in place what is a back-to-the-future, undetailed, unfunded election promise around the re-establishment of the SEC will only result in the private sector being crowded out when it comes to investment in the renewables we need to meet these targets in the long term. The transition to net zero emissions is going to be a very difficult journey right across the economy, whether that is in our electricity system, whether that is in our agriculture system or whether that is in our transport system. This will be a very bumpy journey and one that needs a detailed plan as to how we are going to meet it and a commitment right across the board that at the same time we are going to prioritise affordable and reliable energy.

When we look at the SEC and the investments that this body has decided to take to date, and when we look at the \$245 million that has been invested in the Big Battery, that was a commitment that the private sector was already going to make. The \$245 million from this government, taxpayer dollars, was an unneeded commitment to that project. The private sector was already making the investment, and now we have \$245 million of taxpayer money being put into a project that was already proceeding. The SEC does not need to step into this space. We have record amounts of investment in renewable energy when it comes to the private sector. It is going to need to be maintained to 2030. It is likely going to need to be doubled again out to 2040 and then doubled again to 2050. And the risk from this government is creating a 'back to the future' body that will crowd out that private investment at a time when we need it most.

The other focus of the SEC, as many have spoken about here today, was the nearly \$400,000 that was spent on SEC-branded merchandise. I do not think that includes the jacket, was probably pre-election, but the government has spent \$400,000 on yo-yos, jelly beans, bags, pens and notebooks – jelly beans for the SEC. When over half a million Victorians had a power outage last week, when we have got a 25 per cent increase in power prices for households and a 17 per cent increase for small businesses, the priority of this government is to spend \$400,000 on promotional material for the SEC. It speaks volumes to the priorities of this government and speaks to why the member for Brighton has moved the reasoned amendment here today.

We have a responsibility as the opposition to make sure that government policy is being implemented in a way that is efficient and that is a good use of taxpayer dollars. Looking at this bill today, there is no detail as to how that will be the case. Making sure that we are achieving our net zero economy over the next 25 years is a priority for all of us in this place, but we must make sure that it is done in a way that is affordable and reliable and in a way that brings the community with us. We must make sure that we are looking at how we transition to a net zero economy, and it is incredibly important we make that commitment to the Victorian people.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (16:57): Well, what a brilliant speech that was. Wasn't it just a trip down memory lane of grand fields of Liberal policy supporting net zero apparently, forgetting the past, forgetting anything that is relevant in terms of where they come from and their stock as Liberals, who for a decade have torn to pieces –

Michael O'Brien interjected.

Tim RICHARDSON: Hasn't Mr 11 per cent found his voice? He has been a bit active, the member for Malvern. I hope he gets up, because no-one remembers you, mate. No-one remembers you. I mean, they might remember me, but they do not remember you, mate.

The member for Kew made a couple of references to the Liberals' support for policy here, and I will go to that, because I had a bit of time when I was in the federal space to watch how Liberals carry on when it comes to climate change. You remember Tony Abbott, the Prime Minister who said that in some quarters of the community, climate change is good. While the country was literally getting hotter with more variable weather events, Tony Abbott said that it was good policy – it was good somewhere that it gets a little bit warmer. Then we had the Nationals give a spirited defence. I would love to see the Leader of the Nationals there with Barnaby Joyce as they talk net zero together. For anyone that watched *Nemesis* the other night, did you see that amazing poetry in motion while the Liberals and Nationals tried to find some sort of reference to climate change policy? That is the party that comes in here and talks about supporting net zero. The only reason they support net zero is because of the fear that the teals are on. Let us call it for what it is: the only reason there was not a national energy guarantee was the fear around the political consequences.

When I was an adviser in climate change, we were doing it because it was the right thing to do. It was the right thing to do for the planet. It was the right thing to do for industry and jobs. We were doing it and bringing in a price on carbon when everyone was tearing it to pieces. When everyone was going after the government at that time, we were putting in that important policy. So now it is great to see that Liberals and Nationals are coming forward and supporting this. But let us not forget 2018 and the lead-in to that campaign. The Shadow Treasurer at the time – he is at the table. He is very sprightly; he is trying to get up and about at the moment. But remember their policy was literally to build new coal-fired power stations. Remember the member for Kew said 'Let's leave it to market forces; let things go' in that first speech.

Members interjecting.

Tim RICHARDSON: No, no, the current member for Kew in her first speech said it is market forces. Well, the then Liberal candidate for Frankston had that absolutely wonderful speech where he said, 'Oh, we'll leave it to market forces to build new coal-fired power stations.' David Speers said at

the time at Sky, 'But we don't have any reference for it. No-one is building new coal-fired power stations now. Who's going to do it?' He said, 'Oh, it'll be the market.' There were seven iterations of this before he finally said that it was the Liberals who were going to build new coal-fired power stations in Victoria. I wonder what the member for Malvern thought at that time as Shadow Treasurer. That would have blown a hole in their shadow costings at the time. I mean, that was the year that they were building freeways into the air, remember? It was a bit of a wild time. So I am glad five years on they have finally seen the light of day. They saw it first. Remember Liberals and Nationals put politics first and the state second. They have finally seen that it is in their political interest to now support action on climate change, even though it is the right thing to do from a policy standpoint.

As members have reflected, this is a really ambitious agenda of this government. It is something that we have taken to the Victorian people. The SEC will be a nation-leading policy. It will set our state up for the future. It sends the strongest signal to the economy and to business that we are here investing in renewable energy. There is a really important part where we have such a substantial part of our Victorian economy funded by government, and we send that signal. We do it through procurement contracts and we do it with our building agenda, big builds and hospital builds in the health sector. We see it in education and we see it in housing. You need to send a signal to the economy, to the markets, that you are open for business in the areas that you focus on as a government. The SEC could not be more of a bold policy. It says, 'Invest in Victoria. You'll have a partner that supports long-term investment in renewable energy and transition.' That is the real key to sending that signal and legislating targets and putting that in place. That is what this government has done. We have taken it time and time again.

You will remember only a few years ago the then opposition leader, the member for Bulleen, was strongly opposed – as was the member for Caulfield – to supporting a renewable energy target. They voted down legislation in this place. They chastised it – belittled it. If you then listened to the member for Kew's speech today, you would think, 'It's just a parallel universe that we're experiencing here. It's just an epiphany, finally, that science-backed empirical evidence on climate change stacks up.' If only it was not because the teals were on the tear and got within a few percentage points of seats in the east. The demographic change now with gen Zs and millennials is so substantial that they have to front up and actually have policies that are in the interests of Victorian people and the constituents that they try to represent. No, it would not be about that, would it? It must actually be about what is the right thing to do. But I am very sceptical about the position that they put forward as well.

This reasoned amendment, which I do note is a bit of a ranting waffle at the clouds at the last minute to say, 'Let's just put some dot points down and chastise this bill.' Putting a reasoned amendment in is to block the legislation. I went to 101 in the 58th Parliament, and I think that literally the definition of 'opposition' is to move a reasoned amendment. The fact that you can have a bet each way and then start to oppose it is quite curious.

But let me talk about the transition that is happening now and the jobs that will be created – 59,000 jobs – out of the SEC. It is a pipeline of investment and a transition that will see us move from those old, ageing technologies into a renewable future. That is what Victorians voted for. They voted for our renewable energy targets, they voted for the SEC and they want to see the implementation of this. You recategorise when it suits your political purpose of the week. For years the coalition would chastise the Greens political party and the Labor governments and Labor parties for linking extreme weather events to climate actions and outcomes. They would say, 'You're politicising it. You can't call that out. You can't say that.' It was not until Nationals constituents were pleading with their so-called party representing their constituencies and saying they were being smashed by floods and absolutely mauled by droughts and extreme weather events that the Nationals started to talk about climate. Finally, the Liberals have come to that, after literally a couple of years ago the Prime Minister walked in with a lump of coal to chastise the chamber and said, 'We need to move towards calling out some of these extreme weather events and the need to transition into the future.' But then with that freak wind event, which is referenced in the reasoned amendment, and the 530,000 people that went

off-line, to try to link that to some of this bill I think is disingenuous, given where they have gone for the length of their engagement in this political space.

Yes, we are going to see more extreme weather events. Yes, we are interconnected with a national system and an international consequence on climate action. But we need to do our part. We need to do everything we can to support this transition into the future and invest in technologies and send that stronger signal. It starts at households, where we have seen a million solar home households. We have seen our massive investment in wind across our state and across our communities, and we want to see more and more as we scale up that investment as technology in storage and batteries gets even better into the future.

I am really proud to be part of a government that has not walked away from its commitments to Victorians to invest in renewable energy into the future. I go to the member for Frankston, the Acting Speaker. We have seen and been briefed by the CSIRO and others on the impact of an inland sea inundation and groundwater surging. It has a huge impact on our communities and their livability into the future. At the time these maps came out they were really confronting. They are probably even more so now since their adaptation some 10 years ago to recent briefings. It is a signal that this is ever present and upon us now. In legislating targets and the pathway to that, some of the technologies will evolve over time. We have seen that, particularly in battery storage and solar capacity, as industry experts have set up out my way in Braeside and in that Monash business cluster. A year in solar is like dog years – it is seven years exponential growth and development. Storage technology is absolutely outstanding. Some of that work that is going on and some of the technological advancements will evolve over time, and having an SEC, sending a message to the economy that we want to encourage research and development, we want to lean in, we want to be the state leaders in this space because we do not have the resources and assets that other states can call upon in their scale, is interrelated with jobs and that transition.

We know the unit prices for renewable energy will come down further and further and that ageing brown-coal generation just continues to be more and more unreliable and more costly. This is a really important piece of work that has gone on for a decade of legacy. We took it to the 2014 election. We have been consistent in policy from day one. We have not just rocked up because it is in our political interests; we do the hard yards in the Allan Labor government. I am really happy to see this bill enter this house and wish it a speedy passage.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (17:07): I too am speaking this afternoon on the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. For anyone following at home – I am sure there are still some people who watch Parliament – the bill does two main things. I will outline what the bill does, and then I want to talk about some amendments that we have to the bill.

Firstly, the bill puts a bunch of renewable energy and emission reduction targets into law. These are targets that the government had already announced and committed to prior to the last election, but now we are putting them into legislation. They are an improvement on the targets that existed before those announcements, so that is a good thing, and we absolutely support that. It also adds some additional targets for specific things such as offshore wind and energy storage, which we also support and which we also think are quite good.

I want to commend Minister D'Ambrosio for this piece of legislation. I do want to note, though, that the targets still fall short of what the science says is necessary to protect us from the worst impacts of climate change and for Victoria to do its part in staying within the limits of 1.5 degrees of warming. I think it is important to remind ourselves that that is actually what governments agreed to at the Paris climate talks a few years ago – a global agreement to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees. Unfortunately that agreement that was made in Paris is slipping away from us as governments that agreed to it in Paris come back to their constituencies, to their home states and their home countries and set about implementing policies and targets that fall short of what they agreed to in Paris. A

reminder: what we agreed to in Paris was not just for some amorphous aim. It was to protect us from the floods, the fires, the sea level rise and the extreme weather that we know is coming with climate change and that places like Victoria are already experiencing. We know what it is like.

Again I mention that I want to applaud the Minister for Energy and Resources and Minister for Climate Action, because I think she is genuinely trying her best to increase the ambition here in Victoria and then drag some of the other states in that direction as well. No doubt it is a hard job given the years and years of inaction we have had under previous governments, both Labor and Liberal. We had a whole heap of inaction, so we have had a long way to come. I applaud her for doing that hard work, but I also think it is important to tell the truth about what our policies and targets do and not judge them just by what is possible or what is politically feasible but by what the science says is necessary, because that is why we are all here, right, to try and get the outcome. And we are not just talking about something small here. We are literally talking about whether we are doing enough to save ourselves, our kids and our grandkids from a world that is filled with catastrophic events that will make their lives extremely difficult. We are creating a world that will be fundamentally different for them than the world that we all grew up in. That is what is at stake here.

Victorian Labor's current targets are to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, so in six years, by 45 to 50 per cent below 2005 levels. Keep that number in your mind: 45 per cent by 2030. That is what our targets are in Victoria, but the latest scientific analysis shows that to do our part in Victoria to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees we need to do 74 per cent below 2005 levels. We are at a 45 per cent target in Victoria – that is Labor's policy – we need to ratchet that up to 74 per cent to do our part. Victoria's target for 2035 is 75 per cent and then net zero by 2045. These are definitely a significant improvement on previous targets, but again it is important to measure these things by what the science says is necessary, not by what we have done in the past.

That phrase, net zero, is really important here – Victoria wants to get to net zero by 2045. But I want to point out that net zero is really not a well-defined term by most governments and companies who like to use it. It sounds great, but what does it actually mean? In Victoria, for example, like most other places, legislation allows the use of offsets to reach net zero. It also allows the use of technologies like carbon capture and storage (CCS), which are supposed to take carbon out of the atmosphere but are not proven, anywhere in the world, to reduce emissions at the scale which is needed. We have pumped millions in taxpayer funding to fossil fuel companies to try and figure out whether carbon capture and storage works. It is in fossil fuel companies' interests to keep asking governments for money for these unproven technologies. It is a bit of a cover for fossil fuel companies to keep polluting, because it is fine as we can just store all the carbon underground, but it does not work. The Gorgon project in WA shows just how much it does not work.

This is a problem, not defining net zero and being able to use offsets and CCS as part of net zero. It is a problem because this government, or perhaps future governments – we have to think about future governments as well – can use tricky accounting methods to say they are reaching net zero while in fact still allowing us to emit more emissions than we say we are. I do not say this because I want to be distrustful. As I mentioned, I genuinely think this minister cares about doing the right thing here even when it is hard. But I say this because these carbon accounting tricks have been used many times before, including by the Australian government, most famously as part of what was called the 'Australia clause' in previous UN climate agreements. Australia had a special clause by which they could use special accounting tricks to emit a lot more emissions than they were really allowed to, and it was used to avoid our responsibility to actually reduce emissions.

If we do not define net zero, if we do not put some guardrails around it, there is nothing to stop current or future Victorian governments doing the same, because reducing emissions is hard. Across all different sectors – we have got agriculture, we have got cement, we have got transport, we have got stationary energy, we have got land use and forestry – there are many sectors that emit carbon emissions. It is hard to measure. It is hard to count. It is easy to have a little out clause to say, 'Oh, we'll just offset some of that. There you go, net zero. Everything will be okay.' But the atmosphere

does not work like that. The atmosphere does not look at our books and say, 'How did you account for it?' The atmosphere only knows the real emissions that were put into it, and that is what is driving global catastrophic climate change.

Offsets are frequently used to get to net zero. They are kind of a cheap and easy way for companies and governments to say they are getting to net zero, but not all offsets are the same. There has been some really good recent work that shows that most offsets are actually virtually worthless and they just allow governments and companies to keep emitting carbon pollution at will while the planet continues to become overheated.

As I mentioned, assessing our emissions is difficult. Sectors like agriculture are quite hard to measure and difficult to transition, through nobody's fault. We also have, for example, a whole heap of oil and gas infrastructure in Victoria – in our waters and on our land – that is retired but not yet decommissioned. People might not know this, but in Victoria we have virtually no laws that govern how oil and gas companies have to decommission or clean up their infrastructure at the end of their life, so there is a bunch of oil and gas infrastructure in our oceans and on our land across Victoria that is leaking methane into the atmosphere – one of the most potent greenhouse gases. This infrastructure is leaking an unknown amount of methane into the atmosphere that we are potentially not even counting in our official emissions.

This is complex, it is complicated, and defining net zero, putting some guardrails around it, is going to be really important. For these reasons I have proposed an amendment to this legislation which says that independent expert advice needs to be sought by the minister in deciding and defining what net zero actually means and that this advice must include an assessment of whether technologies like carbon capture and storage are actually going to realistically take carbon out of the atmosphere and whether any offsets proposed to be used will actually realistically and effectively reduce emissions. I will ask for those to be circulated in a moment when I talk about another part of my amendments.

The legislation we have before us as it stands says that the minister or the Premier can decide what net zero means, and there is no requirement for independent expert advice in determining how many emissions are actually attributable to Victoria, how we define net zero or how much we are counting offsets and technologies like carbon capture and storage. I think that needs to change. These are very sensible amendments. I hope the government will be able to support them here or in the other place. They are actually based on a similar provision in the legislation whereby currently when the minister is setting our emission reduction targets, which are also in this legislation, the minister already needs to seek independent expert advice. I am just basing these amendments on that similar process. It is not a process that has not happened before. It is something that the government is used to doing. They have got processes in place. They have a panel that they have set up to look at the scientific evidence for what our emission reduction targets should be. We can use a similar process to determine the amount of emissions attributable to Victoria and then what net zero means.

I also have amendments which increase our renewable energy targets; I am sure that will be of no surprise to the chamber. Currently the Victorian Labor government is putting their new renewable energy targets into this legislation – 65 per cent renewables by 2030 and 95 per cent by 2035. We are very pleased to see these increased targets come before Parliament and the progress we have made in Victoria in moving towards renewable energy. There is still a long way to go, and hopefully we can meet these targets. I know it has been tricky to get on track to meet these targets, but I am very pleased with the progress that we have made and hopefully we can meet and exceed these targets; however, even the federal government has more ambitious renewable energy targets than Victoria. Victoria wants to be seen as a leader, but in fact the federal government has stronger renewables targets than Victoria.

The Greens of course would love to see 100 per cent renewables by 2030. That has been something that we have called for for a very long time – for many years. If we had started our transition back then when we first started calling for it, perhaps we would be on track for 100 per cent by 2030. But in the

absence of this early fast action to get us to 100 per cent renewables I would think that at least Victoria should be able to have targets that match the federal government's, which is why my amendments today are to increase our targets to match the federal Labor government's – that is, 82 per cent by 2030; so rather than 65 per cent, aim for 82 per cent – and then we believe it is very reasonable and sensible to add a target of 100 per cent by 2035, which is also in my amendments. Now, under standing orders, I wish to advise the house of amendments to this bill and request that they be circulated.

Amendments circulated under standing orders.

Ellen SANDELL: I would like to, in my final few minutes, talk briefly about the second part of the legislation. I have talked about targets. I have talked about net zero. As well as legislating those things, this bill does something that climate advocates have been trying to get governments to do for years now all across the country, and that is make sure governments take climate change into account when making planning decisions. With this legislation, planning schemes and planning scheme amendments must consider climate change. That means that when land is rezoned, for example, or amendments are made to planning schemes, climate change must be considered, both what causes climate change and also the effects of climate change.

We hope that it will prevent developments in areas we know are subject to severe climate impacts, such as, for example, inappropriate development in known dangerous flood zones. This is something that has been obviously a huge issue for us over the past few years. We also hope it will prevent new land uses that make climate change worse, such as approving new fossil fuel developments. We do need to still wait and see whether this will actually have the effect that we hope for, because as the current legislation stands, it only applies when land use changes, such as a planning scheme being amended. For example, if a new coalmine or gas drilling is proposed in a zone where it is already currently allowed – so it may be an industrial zone where there is already an as-of-right entitlement for a mine or for drilling – it will still be approved because that land use is not necessarily changing. This legislation will not solve everything. There is still a long way to go in terms of a climate trigger to make sure that we are not approving new fossil fuel developments, but it is a start and finally an acknowledgement that we simply have to consider climate change when making decisions in government and all across government. Planning, energy, transport, agriculture – climate change will affect all of it, and climate change needs to be considered in all government decisions. This is a good change that starts to consider climate change in the planning rules, so I would like to thank the government for making it.

I hope that the federal Labor government looks at this and decides to do the same, because when the Greens put forward proposals for a climate trigger at a federal level – just as recently as I think last week or a few weeks ago – unfortunately the Albanese Labor government rejected those calls for a climate trigger in our federal planning laws, which would do something very similar to this bill. So I very much hope that they are looking at what is happening in Victoria and looking at this as a good idea, and I hope that these kinds of ideas are adopted federally as well as in Victoria. On that, I would like to commend the bill to the house. I look forward to continuing discussions with the government about the very sensible amendments that we have proposed. The Greens will not be supporting the reasoned amendments put forward by the Liberal Party.

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (17:24): I rise to speak on the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the contribution made by the member for Monbulk earlier on this bill, an impassioned and reasoned take on the bill that is before the house. There is no doubt that the climate crisis is one of the most significant challenges we face as a state and indeed as a country and as a species. If it is not clear already, both in the science or in the lived experience of Victorians, the climate is changing, leaving our state exposed to increasingly severe droughts, fires, heatwaves and floods. We know that just last week many parts of Melbourne experienced the most violent storm event in at least a decade, and the evidence tells us that these events are set to become even more frequent and more severe. It is incumbent on us as the government to take action to keep Victorians safe, whether that is protection

against pandemics or indeed the climate crisis. On this side of the house we do not sit idly by and let the market flip-flop. We take strong action and make clear the direction Victoria is headed in, giving certainty to households and industries. Thanks to the Allan Labor government, our state is headed towards a brighter, more sustainable future.

We are meeting the climate crisis with some of the world's boldest climate action, and that is something all Victorians should be proud of. But it is a journey that did not begin with the introduction of this bill, because this bill is one small part of our government's rich tradition and bold climate action that started back in 2014 and continues to this very day and will deliver lasting benefits to generations of Victorians to come. Our landmark piece of climate legislation, the Climate Change Act 2017, was passed by this place back in 2016 and came into effect a year later, in November 2017. The act represents a significant step in our journey to bold climate action by enshrining our long-term emission reduction targets of net zero by 2050 into law. It also requires us to set interim emissions reduction targets and produce a climate change strategy every five years. Make no mistake about it, the Climate Change Act has supercharged Victoria's status as a leader of decarbonisation not just in Australia but across the globe.

It is interesting to note, though, that not everyone wanted this to be the case. Some unfortunately wanted Victoria to remain in the Stone Age and linger under the climate incompetence of the Abbott, Turnbull and Morrison days. The Liberals and Nationals voted against the Climate Change Bill back in 2016, and I want to recognise some of the former noes, including the former Liberal members for Box Hill, Burwood, Ringwood, Mount Waverley, Forest Hill, Bayswater and Ferntree Gully. They comprehensively rejected the science and then the Victorian people comprehensively rejected them, because in Victoria we believe in climate science. We recognise that bold climate action is a huge opportunity to transform our state for the better. Between 2005 and 2021 we drove down Victoria's emissions by almost a third while our economy grew by more than 40 per cent, a case in point that climate action and the renewables transition is not economically crippling, like those opposite want us to believe. It is economically transformative.

This bill goes further by enshrining our interim emission reduction targets into law, including a cut of up to 33 per cent by 2025, up to 50 per cent by 2030 and up to 80 per cent by 2035. Importantly, it also brings forward net zero to 2045, which makes us a world leader and blows targets from the likes of the EU, Japan, Canada, Switzerland and Luxembourg out of the water. It is these legally enshrined targets that are set to deliver one of the world's most rapid decarbonisations right here in Victoria.

We are putting our money where our mouth is. We know that energy generation is responsible for half of Victoria's emissions, which is why the Allan Labor government has delivered \$3 billion since 2020 to accelerate the transition to renewables. In Victoria we currently have just over 5200 megawatts of large-scale renewable energy projects online, but thanks to our investment we have another 7500 megawatts of projects approved and on the way. That will more than double large-scale renewable generation in our state, and it is in addition to more than 4000 megawatts of rooftop solar, much of which is funded through our terrific Solar Homes program. We are truly paving the way on emissions reductions, especially in transition to renewables. The best part is these are not just numbers. Our renewables investment is delivering tangible results to our community, and from next year all government electricity needs will be powered by renewables – everything from schools to hospitals and metro trains and trams to the lights in this building. That is a terrific achievement, and it is just the beginning.

The bill before the house also supercharges our renewable energy transition by enshrining targets in law. This includes an increased 2030 target from 50 per cent renewables to 65 per cent renewables and 95 per cent renewables by 2035. We are also enshrining targets for energy storage, with 2.6 gigawatts of storage capacity by 2030 and 6.3 gigawatts by 2035. Plus we are setting strong offshore wind targets, with 2 gigawatts by 2032, 4 gigawatts by 2034 and 9 gigawatts by 2040. It is a terrific investment in Victoria and in Victoria's future, because our investments in emissions reductions will drive \$9.4 billion of economic activity in our state through to 2035, supporting almost

60,000 quality jobs in the process. That is huge news for young Victorians looking to set themselves up for a brighter future and a sustainable career in renewables and also in the electricity industry. And we are turbocharging those benefits by bringing back the State Electricity Commission with our initial \$1 billion investment, delivering 4.5 gigawatts of power from renewables. Not only that but the SEC is focusing heavily on building up our skilled workforce and partnering with schools, TAFEs, universities and the union movement to create quality jobs for Victorians, including 6000 traineeships and apprenticeships. To get it happening the SEC is completing a detailed business case and preparation for the SEC's Centre of Training Excellence, and we will begin implementation from next year. It is a huge win for our renewables transition, for emissions reductions in Victoria and for Victoria's economy. Make no mistake, the bill before this place is all about setting and strengthening the legislative framework to make it all happen.

As a government we are already kicking goals, but we will not be stopping any time soon, because our planet, the Victorian community and the thousands of skilled renewable workers deserve nothing less than a bright sustainable future. There is a power of work underway in this space, not just by the Victorian government and the SEC but also by the terrific team at the Electrical Trades Union, and I am proud to be part of the Allan Labor government that will continue to back it all the way. For these reasons and so many more, I am proud to commend this bill to the house.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (17:31): That was a lovely speech by the member for Glen Waverley. I am happy to rise today to talk on the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. The contributions have been very interesting today, and I am going to start off by referencing the local communities that went through the catastrophic weather event last week. My community copped a flogging like a lot of other communities did – obviously like the members for Monbulk and Gippsland South – and it really was quite damaging to a lot of people and a lot of businesses that they lost power and mobile phone coverage and everything else, and I wish those businesses all the best. And obviously the family in Mirboo North of the farmer that died there, my thoughts and prayers are with that family, and I hope they can move forward after what we experienced.

I will come back to the bill, and it is interesting today that a lot of the contributions have been talking about climate change and that this bill will strengthen that commitment from the government. We do not oppose this bill, but I heard the member for Monbulk earlier in her contribution, and when we talk about climate change I start to get a little bit frustrated. Not that I do not want a better, cleaner environment – I honestly do. I think it is beholden on all governments to leave their communities in a better place than they find them. But when we talk about climate change and when we talk about reduction in carbon I do find a little bit of hypocrisy in the government's narrative, because when we talk about the reduction in carbon there was one industry that we had that had international studies done about how it was part of the carbon reduction plan, and that was native timber. Native timber got axed by this government. Native timber has proven time and time again to reduce carbon. I have said this in the chamber many times. They pull down the trees that are full of carbon. For every tree they pull down, they plant another three or four that reduce carbon. That must be putting a hole in the government's plan, as has the wind towers not being able to go off the Port of Hastings now.

So I think the government does have a couple of challenges here. If we really, really, really cared about the environment and if we really wanted to put our words into actions, I would suggest to the government to somehow get timber back on that agenda. It reduces carbon, and that is what we are here to do. That is what we want to do. We want to get to net zero, so why get rid of an industry that was contributing to that? Obviously in my electorate and electorates in Gippsland that had a big impact on those regional communities.

But I will come back to this. When we talk about the catastrophic weather event we had the other day, it is not the first catastrophic weather event we have had in Victoria. I remember back in the early 1990s we actually had a cyclone go through Warragul and do much the same damage as what happened in Mirboo North, so it is not unusual. Are they getting more extreme? Possibly. Are our

bushfires hotter? Possibly. Is our flooding more than what it used to be? Absolutely. I do not disagree with any of that, and I never would, but I think what we have to remember in all of this, as the government is – let us talk about the catastrophic weather event.

What I think we need to start looking at because of climate change is protection of assets. That is very important. If you have got a 30-metre tree 10 metres away from a powerline, the smart idea would be to pull that tree down because we know if we get another catastrophic event like we had the other day, we are going to lose power. We had 530,000-odd people without power in our community, so wouldn't we now start to look at legislation to allow people to remove trees to have asset protection? To me that makes common sense. If we want to go into the future with a target of renewable energy, then what we should be doing is also protecting the asset. It is so important that we do not have a repeat of what happened last week, which has put businesses under pressure. They have lost money. They have had to throw out food. We need to protect the asset, and the best way to do it is to start having clearance zones around powerlines. Have a clear space.

When we talk about climate change and we talk about our bushfires, we need to manage the bush. Our fires are getting greater. They are more intense. We see it every year. This year we lost more homes, so we need to manage the bush as well. They are all things that we should be considering now going forward when we talk about climate change. It seems a little bit like we are doing this here, but we are not doing the action out where we need to do it, out protecting the assets and everything else.

So sometimes I think the government's ambition is probably ahead of its ability in a lot of respects, because the ambition is there. The ambition is to put these targets into legislation, but it is the ability to make sure we deliver it and we end up with cheap, clean renewable energy. That is what Victorians want. We also want power prices to come down, and at this point in time power prices have not come down. Power prices are up 25 per cent – 25 per cent – so our renewables are not working at the moment. It is not bringing the price of power down. It may eventually. I do not know when. I do not know what the final cost is going to be; I have no idea. The government is investing in this and it is putting a lot of eggs in one basket, and I hope for the sake of the Victorian public that power prices start to come down very soon, because the cost-of-living pressures now in Victoria are absolutely astronomical.

The Port of Hastings has been an absolute debacle for the government. We are talking about wind generation. As far as this goes the Port of Hastings was the golden egg for them. Now the federal government has come out and said, 'Well, you can't do that there,' so that is going to put that agenda behind. They have got to find another site, and I did hear talk about Geelong being mentioned at one stage. Do you know the problem with that? To run the boat to transport the wind turbines down to Gippsland South costs €300,000 to €400,000 per day. That is the quoted amount, so you can convert that back to Australian dollars. So if we were going to start putting this in Geelong, why wouldn't we go somewhere closer?

In this last couple of minutes I have got I want to talk about the planning aspects of this bill, because no-one is touching on this at the moment. I am a little bit concerned about the planning aspects of the bill because councils in this state are struggling with planning permits and getting planning permits out. This government wants to build 80,000 homes a year, so will this bill complicate the planning process more so it jams up more applications in councils? Because councils are not brave enough to take on government. It is as simple as that. This government has criticised councils time after time about how long it takes to get planning approvals done, but the problem is the councils are following government legislation and government regulations. Now, is this going to impact on that? Is this going to make that more complicated so that we have got applications tied up in our local councils for years and years and years? This government has to consider this when implementing this bill.

The member for Brighton has put through a reasoned amendment that is listed here on the paper. I do not have time to go through it all. But I think on the planning side of this the government really has to look carefully at it to make sure that it does not impede development and people have a very clear

message of what is required, because at the moment I do not think it is a clear message. The government needs to get that clear so that planning approvals can go through, and maybe just maybe, although it is absolutely doubtful, if they get this right, they might hit their 80,000 homes a year, but I doubt it.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (17:41): It is lovely to follow the previous member. I certainly take a great deal of pleasure in rising to speak on bills like this one, the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. It is quite a mouthful. But it is always lovely to follow contributions from those opposite. They are usually quite negative and dismal when it comes to talking about climate change, so I am going to pep it up here, because I have got some great things to say.

The member for Point Cook over there quite clearly talked about his community in Point Cook having a very high uptake of the Solar Homes package. I would say that my community in Truganina overtook Point Cook with the number of solar panels they put on their homes, thank you very much. I pretend that Cranbourne over the other side of the bridge is not really pipping, I think, Truganina at the post after Tarneit in the uptake of the Solar Homes package. It really shows that hundreds of thousands of families have not only embraced our Solar Homes package to reduce their energy bills but also truly believe in climate change, want action taken and understand that that package is indeed delivering action on climate change.

But the purpose of this bill before the house is to again build upon our government's incredibly ambitious climate action and renewable energy targets. Over the past five years – it will be my sixth year this year – I have stood time and time again in this place to talk about the importance of taking action on climate change but also the importance of having an ambitious plan when it comes to tackling climate change and setting renewable energy targets. We heard the member for Point Cook pointing this out to the member for Malvern, the member for Kew and the member for Sandringham, quite rightly, and asking them, 'What is your plan? Do you have a plan?' We have an ambitious plan, and that is what this bill is about.

There could not be a better time to be in this chamber talking about our government's commitment to tackling climate change and bolstering Victoria's renewable energy infrastructure. The events of last week were absolutely catastrophic. I do want to start my contribution by saying that my thoughts are with those communities affected because of that catastrophic weather event and in particular the family that has lost a dear loved one. My thoughts and my heart go out to those communities.

I was little bit upset to hear that my children last Tuesday told my mother on the phone that they were absolutely terrified coming home from school. My mum was pretty quick to let me know how disappointed she was in my husband and me for allowing them to come home on the trains, but they were truly frightened by that catastrophic weather event that was unfolding in the city at that time.

I also really want to thank the true heroes of this state. Time and time again their tireless, tireless efforts rebuild communities that are hit so hard by natural disasters, which are becoming so much more intense and frequent because of climate change. Those true heroes of Victoria are the SES workers and volunteers, who are still out there right now, as the Premier quite rightly reflected, providing aid, assistance and support to affected communities, and they will certainly be on the ground for some time to come.

We saw last week just how vulnerable our traditional energy suppliers really are to extreme weather, and that weather was extreme. Folks were talking about it not just being wind and wild weather but it being tornado and tornado-like. We know it is something that we are facing more and more as the impacts and effects of climate change are getting worse, and we are seeing more and more of these natural disasters happen each and every single year. Rather than talk about that and coal-fired power plants and things that those opposite always want to talk about, I think it is important to reflect that bills like this are all about us being able to set ambitious targets, meet those targets, have a real impact

on climate change and increase our renewable energy supply. Those things, as the member for Point Cook quite rightly pointed out in his contribution, are things that time and time again the Victorian community, no matter where they are, have voted for. They want to see action taken and want to see ambitious plans.

I have mentioned before in this house that working in the energy sector was where I spent 13 years prior to becoming a member of Parliament, working across the energy sector on things like pricing resets, policy regulation and lobbying governments for change in legislation, laws and rules. It is why as I stand here I find it quite amusing to talk about and see the discourse that has erupted at seeing several transmission towers pulled down by catastrophic wind and how the obvious solution talked about in the media or now being debated and conversed about is the undergrounding of the entire transmission network. I think there has been some great conversation recently about the cost of that but also indeed about how when you need to do work to those lines you go ahead and dig them up and find where the faults are. I think if you look to somewhere like Auckland you can see what that scenario can look like. People were left without power for five weeks because they could not find the faults and fix them. I mention all of this in this place to make the point, especially to those who want to spend their time railing about transmission line projects instead of acknowledging that climate change and the extreme weather events it brings are the real threats that require real action.

Fortunately, what we know is that most Victorians know the solution to most of these issues is to invest in a strong renewable energy system. That is what this bill is about, and that is exactly what we are doing here. When it comes to our country I feel really proud to say that Victoria is without a doubt leading the nation in relation to climate action. We were the first jurisdiction in this country, let us not forget, to legislate an emissions reduction pledge based on 2005 emission levels and one of the first in the world to legislate for net zero. In 2021 we saw a 32.3 per cent reduction in emissions below 2005 levels, which means that we have smashed through our 2025 renewable energy targets, and this has given us the confidence to make even more ambitious targets when it comes to emissions reduction and renewable energy targets.

That is what we have done so far, and we know that that is now being replicated by other states. As someone who spent a long time in Queensland – I went to uni there and even had my children there – I am very pleased to see that the Queensland government has now decided to follow our lead and legislate an emissions reduction target of 75 per cent by 2035. I have to say that is a really big deal for Queensland. They are slightly different, and I do not just mean in geography or size, to us here in Victoria. There are many things that we can probably say over dinnertime conversation, and I am sure my colleagues in this place will no doubt be sure to tell me some of those running jokes about Victoria and Queensland, but for a state like Queensland, which for many is seen as the home of our country's coalmining industry, it is a really big deal for them to be going ahead and legislating an emissions reduction target of 75 per cent by 2035. That is because Victoria has led the way. Legislation like this is a really good example of not only what can get done but of how doing so delivers massive economic benefits for households and businesses. What this bill does is it puts our renewable energy targets, including net zero emissions, into legislation and embeds them in our framework.

I could talk about this for a very, very long time, but I know I have only got about 50 seconds left. What I do want to say to folks, particularly in the Truganina community out in Wyndham, is how very thankful and very proud I am that they have had such a huge uptake in our Solar Homes program. I know that families absolutely have loved this program. I have had the minister out time and time again to visit homes in Wyndham, and when you talk to families, they could not wait to build their house and put a solar panel system on their roof. Indeed when you come out to Wyndham and it is wall-to-wall houses, and if you are up high enough it is just wall-to-wall rooftops, what you can actually notice out there – it is quite distinct – is the number of solar panels that are indeed on the top of people's homes. I commend the bill to the house.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (17:51): I am delighted to rise to make a contribution on this climate change and energy legislation. I do note the member for Kew when she pointed out that the

government's speaking points – I have been listening intently to the debate – were clearly written before they knew our position is a not-oppose position. Because I want to be clear: we on this side of the house support renewable energy, but at the same time, not at a cost that would drive the cost-of-living crisis even higher for Victorian families. If it is managed properly, you can have both. You can have renewable energy, and you can have it not at a cost that is going to send our cost-of-living crisis even higher.

Yes, we know the bill will bring forward the long-term emissions reduction target for net zero greenhouse emissions from 2050 to 2045. We also know it will legislate interim emissions reduction targets of 28 to 33 per cent by 2025, of 45 to 55 per cent by 2030 and of course of 75 to 80 per cent by 2035. Even though we are still currently ahead of our emissions reduction targets, with a 32.3 per cent reduction as of late last year, we know this bill will increase the renewable energy target for 2030 from 50 to 65 per cent. This means that the government will now aim to have 65 per cent of electricity generated by renewable energy sources or converted from renewable energy sources by 2030.

Well, we saw last week how this government's bloody-minded attitude will affect all Victorians, because Labor thinks they know best, and every other opinion does not matter. So last week it was the wind, and I understand it was the wind. I am not denying that it was the wind that caused all the problems, but what is next? Next it will be too many clouds, so the solar panels are not working. What will be next after that?

A member interjected.

Tim McCURDY: Well, there will be no wind blowing. There will be no wind blowing, and then the turbines cannot turn. There will always be a reason under this government. Instead of planning in advance and saying how can we mitigate against all –

Sarah Connolly interjected.

Tim McCURDY: You've had your turn. Listen up; you might learn something. Why does this government always want to blame somebody else? As I say, it was wind last week. It will be something else next week and the time after, and at the same time they will continue to drive energy prices up and up and up. As we know, they have gone up by 25 per cent this year.

Again I say that this side of the house supports renewable energy and generation; it supports renewable energy targets. It is also the only side that is serious about exploring all avenues of renewable energy, including the use of hydrogen gas and research into potential energy generation. The Labor government is closed-minded and only willing to accept wind and solar as their solution, disregarding the huge environmental damage and the production costs of panels and turbines. All Victorians, as I say, are paying a massive price for this. Power bills are skyrocketing. That cannot be denied, although those on the other side will deny it. Power prices are going through the roof, all because this woke government wants to lead the world in renewables but to hell with the cost of living for Victorian families. We encourage innovation, and we would invest in new technologies, not shut down debate and stifle creative, entrepreneurial minds. Solar and wind are options that we can use to meet our targets into the future but let us not restrict ourselves to those options.

The OECD includes many renewable energy options such as hydro, geothermal, tide and wind sources and also energy derived from solid biofuels, biogasoline, biodiesels and municipal waste. Many of our European counterparts, as well as the US, Japan and Korea, utilise nuclear energy as a form of clean energy too. But let us have a look at some of those options. Hydro – we cannot use that if the government is refusing to build any more dams. We have asked time and time again in this place about Big Buffalo. If we increased the size of Lake Buffalo to Big Buffalo – the land has already been purchased – we could use that as an opportunity for generating more hydroelectricity. I certainly hope the new Premier is more amenable than her predecessor when it comes to looking at the extension of dams for the generation of hydroelectricity.

There is obviously geothermal, tide and wave, biofuels – biofuel is a fascinating one. In my electorate there is a local council who want to invest in an incinerator. That will allow them to become a waste manager for other LGAs in the region and turn all their rubbish into electricity. Not only will this enable them to increase their revenue from selling electricity into the grid, but it will also reduce landfill. But due to this dogged and delusional obsession by the Minister for the State Electricity Commission and the government with wind and solar, the willingness to invest in this project from the government is zero – again, all while we are still tracking on our targets. We might be leading the way, but all it takes is one bad day to take out the entire grid.

When occasions like last week happen, there are massive disasters in specific areas, and we know that and we all feel for the people who live in those regions who have been badly affected. I had a guy from Invergordon call me last week. His energy bill spiked on one day. His monthly bill is usually \$160 a month, and that is with his split system air conditioner going. On Tuesday last week, 13 February, for one day it was \$113.09. On Wednesday it was back to \$3.24, so these measures have consequences when we have situations like we had last week, and we need to mitigate against those.

I want to touch on a few local renewable projects, particularly about the planning. In part 3 of the bill clause 18 provides the Minister for Planning with a power to issue written directions to planning authorities in relation to matters of climate change. Let me tell you about two renewable projects in my patch. One is in Meadow Creek. It is a 330-megawatt solar project on 566 hectares of prime agricultural land just out of Wangaratta. The other is in the beautiful Kiewa Valley. It is a BESS, a battery energy storage system, a 400-megawatt proposal. The Meadow Creek and Dederang communities both support renewable energy. They love renewable energy, and they want to support it. But they also believe the places that have been chosen to have these projects in their backyards are not the right places and there should be more communication. I am concerned that the planning minister has too much say in how these can roll out. Each of these communities just thinks the location is wrong. The location has been chosen because of the high-voltage transmission lines that were put there in the 1960s, and today's farmers and families should not be subjected to and inconvenienced, their livelihoods threatened, their properties devalued, their insurance risk going up – and the health risks – by the high-voltage transmission lines that go through their region. Surely we can look at other practical ways of how to make this happen.

The other thing about the planning that the member for Narracan spoke about is that for every project that is above 1 megawatt – just to fill you in, a wind turbine is going to be about 2 or 3 megawatts, so basically every decent solar project is above 1 megawatt – the referral authority is the state government, the planning minister, which means local communities do not have a say. Local government authorities do not have a say. It comes down to the state government and the planning minister, and it is either their way or the highway. That is a concern I genuinely have about making the rules tighter and giving more rules to the planning minister.

In the Dederang example, Mint Renewables have been hired. They have been here for 5 minutes, and they have been trying to engage and talk about the battery system. They are not very good at engaging. As I say, they have been here 5 minutes. They will fly off into the sunset and they will onsell the project or pass it on to a proponent, and then the rest of the community will have what is left. It will be imposed upon them – the eyesore, the health risk and the fire hazard – for the next 20 or 30 years. To put a finer point on that, Paul Ingram was notified by Mint Renewables that this proposal was going ahead 1.5 kilometres away from him, so he did a risk assessment, as you would, and he looked at the Victorian Big Battery fire in Moorabool, down in Geelong. Surprisingly, there are only two documents that he can find, a report on technical findings and a statement of technical findings.

The report on technical findings describes the document as a summary, but he cannot find the main document that talks about the fire, and we all know about that fire that took about three or five days to put out. That is what the concern is – we are having trouble and Paul Ingram and these community groups are having trouble trying to find more evidence about batteries – the best systems. Paul was elected as president of the community group Friends of the Alpine and Kiewa Valleys Inc, and can I

say this small group speaks on behalf of 200 people. We had 200 people at the Dederang hall; the Dederang population is about 10 or 15 people, and they had 200 people there. We are going to get another opportunity because they are doing it again in March. I certainly encourage Mint Renewables to come along this time, because they refuse to engage with us. They refuse to engage with the group that want to ask questions and confirm some of the information that has been requested. On the website they say:

We aim to work smarter and faster, focussing on effective decision making, execution of quality projects and developing strong relationships with our partners and stakeholders ...

Well, can I say Mint Renewables offer none of the above. They are sneaky, they are secretive and they are firmly on the side of the proponent. They really need to sit down with the action groups and discuss this project.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (18:01): It is a pleasure to rise this evening in support of the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. This bill extends Victoria's commitment to taking decisive action on climate change, because those on this side of the house, unlike those on the other side of the house, understand that this is not just good environmental policy but good economic policy as well. It opens up markets to us and makes us competitive in international markets where if we continued to rely on fossil fuels – on gas – those markets would be very quickly closed to us. I will return to that point a little bit later in my contribution.

It is only us on this side of the house – it is only the Labor Party – that will take decisive action on climate change, because we know deep down that those opposite are controlled by elements within their party room that do not believe in the science of climate change. They have come in here today and spoken at length about the fact that they do not oppose this bill, but let us be honest: I am standing here right now looking at reasoned amendments written on the back of an envelope in the member for Brighton's office this morning that basically says, 'We're just going to amend it so that we can't pass this bill until you jump through all of these hoops that I've written on the back of my envelope.' Do not come in here and gaslight the Victorian people by saying that you support this bill, because if you did those amendments would not be on the table.

Victoria is leading the way on climate policy – not just leading the way in Australia but leading the way on a global stage. We are the first jurisdiction in Australia to implement and legislate a whole-of-economy pledge model based on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris agreement. That is incredibly significant. The reason that we do this is pretty simple: we understand that the most efficient and cost-effective form of energy is renewable energy, and the more of that that we have in our system, in our grid, the cheaper energy becomes.

You can ask the people of my community in Tarneit West, where I had the pleasure early last year – about a year ago, February 2023 – to attend the site of the first neighbourhood battery with the Minister for Energy and Resources at the time, Lily D'Ambrosio. This was unveiled in Tarneit only about 500 or 600 metres from my home, where a commitment from the Labor government of \$800,000 put in place the first neighbourhood battery for my community. The 120-kilowatt battery soaks up the excess energy created from rooftop solar panels. The member for Laverton earlier spoke about a really large uptake of those solar panels in places like Tarneit, like Melton, like Truganina and indeed in the south-east as well. I think Tarneit may have the largest uptake of that solar panel program here in Victoria.

A member interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: The second? Well, we are close. What this neighbourhood battery will do is soak up the excess energy made from that rooftop solar and store it in a battery, and then at peak times it will have the capacity to power 170 local homes. The people of Tarneit and the people of Tarneit West understand how important renewable energy and its storage is, unlike those opposite.

The science is unequivocal, and our experiences in Victoria have starkly highlighted the urgent need for sustained and ambitious action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To that point, in my

introduction I spoke about the fact that this is not just great environmental policy, it is great economic policy as well. Those opposite, in both parties – in the Nationals and in the Liberal Party – want to speak to us about gas, want to speak to us about fossil fuels and want to speak to us about baseload power. I am sure they are aware that on 1 October last year the EU created the carbon border adjustment mechanism. It is a tool for the EU to put a fair price on carbon emitted during the production of carbon-intensive goods. Right now the CBAM, as we will call it, is in its trial stage. There is no price at the moment on imports, but there will be in 2026. At the moment, the goods that are included are things like cement, steel and iron, fertiliser and things of that nature, but you can bet your bottom dollar that after 2026 the scope of that will be significantly increased.

Those opposite in the Nationals want to talk to us about gas and want to talk to us about fossil fuels. Well, guess what, our largest export to the EU is food and fibre – it is dairy, it is meat; it is food and fibre – so if we do not rapidly transition to a renewable energy economy, you are going to price your own constituents out of one of the largest markets in the world. You will not be able to export to the EU because you will be priced out of it, you will be tariffed out of it. It is as simple as that, and if the EU have done this, you can bet your bottom dollar that there are other economies, there are other markets, around the world that will do the exact same thing.

Having a large amount of renewable energy in our system is not just good for existing businesses. Indeed what it does is open up Victoria as one of the most competitive marketplaces in the world. Why would you not want to come and invest in a place like Victoria, where you have a market like the EU available to you at a really low cost because of our capacity to make things using renewable energy, as opposed to other countries? We are really lucky in Australia; we are incredibly lucky. To the north we have got sun, to the south we have got wind – it is as simple as that – which gives us an incredibly large capacity to create and generate renewable energy, to manufacture and make things using that renewable energy and to have one of the most competitive marketplaces in the world. As I said, this is not just good environmental policy, it is absolutely fantastic economic policy and will set Victoria up as one of the most attractive places to invest in the world in the decades to come.

This bill is a continuation, as I said, of our nation-leading climate change agenda. Essentially what it is designed to do is transition us to a net zero economy. Our Climate Change Act 2017 has become model legislation that governments right across Australia and indeed the world have looked to when developing their own climate legislation. I mean, why wouldn't they? As I said, we have the most ambitious climate targets in the world. The upgrades to the Climate Change Act, soon to be named, will make Victoria one of the 21 subnational or national governments in the world to legislate a net zero target by 2045 or earlier. But, as I said, the opposition have opposed our agenda every step of the way. Every time we bring a bill forward in this place on climate change, they either flat oppose it or propose the sorts of ridiculous amendments that the member for Brighton did. I commend it to the house.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (18:11): I am happy to rise to talk on this Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. Let me just address some of the things that the member for Tarneit has spoken about in his contribution. I do not mind being called, and I often call myself, the member for Australia's food bowl, because one of our biggest exports is food and fibre. But as you will see in the reasoned amendment submitted by the member for Brighton, point (6) explains the impact on agricultural land, and we are already seeing this with the VNI West project, which I will speak about very soon. This point talks about the government's offshore wind policy directions paper of March 2020, which shows that, to meet net zero targets, up to 70 per cent of Victoria's land will need to have wind farms. This means land is going to be taken out of agricultural production, which means that affects not only food security in this country but also the attraction to invest in this state, which the member for Tarneit spoke so glowingly about. How does that attract food producers and fibre producers who are already on their knees with the things that have been implemented recently and possibly things that are to come in the future?

It is a high-risk industry. You have got storms. Last week in our patch, yes, the wind was horrific at the height of the grape harvest. Stone fruit is still being harvested. Nut harvest has just started. Thankfully we did not get any hail. If we had have got hail last week, it would have wiped us out completely – which affects everyone. It affects the agricultural businesses; it affects consumers at the check-out. We are not opposing this bill. We are not the evil climate change deniers and renewables deniers that we have been painted to be. Things are evolving here, and if those opposite would actually listen, they would understand that we agree that things need to be cleaned up. We are just asking for it to be done in a pragmatic, commonsense way – with a bit of pragmatism and a bit of transparency for the public. That is all the public want. That is all we want. Creating climate policy based on ideology rather than common sense makes no sense whatsoever.

We are all about being cleaner. In fact in the Mildura electorate we have got enormous investment already into wind and solar by private companies that have invested in hundreds of hectares of dewatered land – and it is dewatered because of the last round of water buybacks, so they could acquire that land. For those solar farms – and this is a bugbear of a lot of dryland farmers – council rates are subsidised. They are not subject to all of the same taxes and rates that traditional farms are subject to in a lot of these councils when you start drilling down to it. We are just asking for common sense, and I will keep saying it.

All we want to see is a little bit of balance and a little bit of transparency. Point (4) of the member for Brighton's reasoned amendment talks about setting out a plan to upgrade the 57-year-old transmission infrastructure, noting that some of the 13,000 electricity transmission towers are damaged and that experts warned the government in 2020 of the risks in extreme weather events. We saw that in the events of last week right across the state. In my patch, of course, we have had power distribution lines fall down, and not because of trees outside of easements that were too tall and have not been managed so they do fall inside those easements, but distribution lines that actually have just fallen in the wind and have cut off electricity.

A member: Where?

Jade BENHAM: Happy Valley Road in Robinvale, because I was there and I saw it. There are photos on my social media. While I was there, the power went out in the entire town of Robinvale while we were at basketball. It was 37, 38 degrees that day, and of course our juniors were playing basketball in the heat of the afternoon – no power, the air conditioning went out. In my day, not a problem because we did not have air conditioning anyway. However, there were questions about whether we keep on, and of course we are country folk – of course we keep on keeping on because the kids wanted to play basketball. However, on my way home I saw the powerline that had come down and our wonderful volunteers, our wonderful volunteer CFA fire brigade and our SES – Powercor were already on site – were more than happy to chat and to say we might want to avoid the area, all of that kind of thing, so I really thank our volunteers for their efforts last Wednesday.

That was literally just a powerline coming down. There are no trees around – it is beside a vineyard, it is in an agricultural area, but it cut out that entire Happy Valley and it affected in town as well. It was not out for that long so of course everyone is kind of going, 'There are communities way worse off than we are', but my point is the infrastructure needs upgrading. When we talk about the VNI West project, there are professors – professors Mountain and Bartlett – who have submitted a plan B which makes far more sense than again going into agricultural land and native forests to construct an entirely new network, and using existing easements. They are doing it in New South Wales because we can see it; it is literally on the border now. It has come down and there are new towers right beside the existing towers using existing easements. It is right there, we can see it, and it is ready to cross the river at Red Cliffs. It makes sense. I normally would not credit New South Wales with doing things that make any sense, but it works, and why on earth we would not continue that when we cross the river is just bizarre.

I will go back to the events of last week. I was thanking the Robinvale volunteers who did a magnificent job all through the night informing the community. Their socials are really good. I also want to thank the Charlton SES and the CFA. Charlton got absolutely smashed. Driving down here on Sunday actually – I was in Charlton on Sunday – the trees that have fallen and the branches that have fallen, it is pretty devastating. So the SES, the CFA and emergency services were fantastic once again. CFA are still waiting on plans for their new fire station, because they had such a big turnout to their old station that has no female change rooms and no female toilets. I have seen it before, so again I want to reiterate the urgency for that, because there are many more female CFA members now so the upgrades that have been planned for and for which land has been acquired need some urgent attention. The Wycheproof CFA also had a very busy week with the dry lightning. They do the same thing – they keep everyone up to date with fantastic updates on their social media. So thank you to all of those fire brigades, the SES, our volunteer emergency workers and our first responders.

I also want to note point (7) of the member for Brighton's reasoned amendment, which talks about transparency on climate measures. Now, there is lots of talk, even in the Greens amendments, which the member for Melbourne referred to as 'sensible' – I have yet to see anything sensible. Point (7) of the member for Brighton's reasoned amendment is actually point (8), because there are two point (6)s, but it talks about transparency and a website with live measures covering emissions. These are just really simple, commonsense things so the public can see and we can all see live measures covering emissions, renewable energy, battery storage and wind energy – everyone can see it. You know what, the public actually do not mind what is in the message as long as they get a message that is transparent and honest. More often than not they are happy to receive that news as long as they can see it. So it is common sense. We are not the evil climate deniers that the other side would have us be. In fact we are all for renewables. It is happening in our regions already. We just want a commonsense way to move forward. That is all we ask for.

Darren CHEESEMAM (South Barwon) (18:21): It is a pleasure that I rise this afternoon to make a contribution on the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. I must say that I think over the 15-odd years that I have been a member of Parliament, both here and in Canberra, I have made many dozens of contributions about the importance of responding to the challenges of climate change. We know the science is absolutely clear that we need to take decisive action in every single jurisdiction across the globe to respond to these challenges and that if we do not take those very serious steps that we need to take, the planet will be almost unlivable for Australians in many parts of the globe and we will of course threaten the biodiversity of our planet.

When we reflect on the last 15 years, what we see is a privatised energy system in this state that has predominately, for the last 50 years, relied upon cheap coal-fired power. That has turbocharged the Victorian economy for many decades. The reality, though, is that some 50 years after the last investment was made in coal in this state, not one single investor would be prepared to make further investments into a technology that is no longer supported anywhere across Australia, and that is the absolute reality. When we look at the Victorian energy network, we have had almost all of our energy generation historically in the eastern side of the state, and the distribution network has been built to transport that energy from the east of the state throughout metropolitan Melbourne and into our regional centres.

We are now, as a consequence of responding to those challenges of climate change, building a new network that will support the delivery of that renewable energy to businesses, to families and to communities throughout our state. We are making significant investments to help support that, and we are reversing a lot of the public policy decisions that were damaging to our economy made by the Kennett government. We are bringing the State Electricity Commission back, creating that employment opportunity for so many Victorians where of course that energy in effect will be owned by Victorians and will be driving the energy needs of our state. As a consequence of that, we need to legislate to provide certainty to investors to make sure that happens, to make sure that we deliver the

investment framework in this state that will enable those energy companies to invest, to build those networks and to build those energy generation wind farms, offshore energy and the like. In order to do that, our government has chosen to set very ambitious targets to send very clear signals to the market about that journey that we need to go on as a society.

Now, disappointingly, the Liberal Party and the National Party continue to take every single step that they can to resist this transition that we need to go on, this journey that we need to go on to respond to those challenges of building the generation capacity that our state needs into the future to supply the energy that our state needs. For the last 15 years at least the Liberal Party and the National Party have taken every single step that they can to make that journey as difficult and, to be frank, as expensive as they can. And into the future, future generations will, I think, hold the Liberal Party and the National Party in contempt for the continuation of the climate wars that they started when Tony Abbott was the Prime Minister of this country. That is something that I know Victorians will never support at the ballot box. They will never, ever, ever support the coalition when it continues to adopt this approach.

Our government recognises these challenges. Our government has made substantial reform to make sure that Victorians have that opportunity to have renewable energy that they own on their own homes. The reason why we have got those arrangements in place is because providing Victorians the opportunity to generate their own electricity that they can use is of course a cost-of-living measure and it is important in terms of responding to climate change.

Whenever I hear members of the Liberal Party and the National Party talking about these challenges, so many times I hear them talking about nuclear energy – so many times. It was only about a decade or so ago now that we saw a nuclear reactor in Japan that went off – that is right, Fukushima – and we have seen this happen in other countries at other times. Nuclear energy is not a solution for our country. It is not an action that is supported by the Victorian community or in fact I think any community, realistically, across Australia. We have an abundance of opportunity with respect to renewable energy – an absolute abundance – whether it be the millions of rooftops we have throughout Victoria, whether it be the very significant countryside that we have, or whether it be the amazing solar resource our country has or indeed the very significant and expansive coastline that we have.

From hearing the debate over a very long time now, the reality is that the global economy is shifting on this, and countries realistically have one or two choices: one, to remain competitive and to get into the renewables race and compete against other early adopters of technology, or alternatively, to risk the consequences of energy insecurity and risk the consequences of other countries taking punitive action against countries, such as Australia, which are not at this stage doing enough. That is why we have strong targets. That is why we take every opportunity to send investment certainty to the renewable energy sector, because we want to be a world leader. We want to take up every single opportunity that we can to drive renewable energy into our grid. That is why we want to make those profound changes to the structure of our grid so that it can carry that renewable energy that people want to generate and sell to the Victorian economy. We need to send clear signals to investors that we are serious about this journey that we need to go on. That is why this bill and the work that has been undertaken over the last decade is so important to our economy and our community.

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (18:31): I rise today to speak on the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023, a bill that we do not oppose. The bill makes amendments to the Climate Change Act 2017, the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Act 2017.

The amendments to the Climate Change Act alter the act's title to the Climate Action Act 2017; bring forward the long-term emissions reductions target for net zero greenhouse gas emissions from 2050 to 2045; and legislate interim emissions reduction targets of 28 per cent to 33 per cent by 2025, 45 per cent to 50 per cent by 2030 and 75 per cent to 80 per cent by 2035. The amendments to the Planning and Environment Act require consideration of climate change when certain planning decisions are made about the use and development of land under the act and for other purposes. This includes

greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets and increasing climate resilience, as well as providing the minister with some discretion in directing planning authorities in meeting the above. The amendments to the Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Act increase the renewable energy target for 2030 from 50 per cent to 65 per cent. This means that the government will now aim to have 65 per cent of electricity generated by renewable energy sources or by converting renewable energy sources into electricity by 2030 – ‘aim’ being the main word in that sentence. They introduce a renewable energy target of 95 per cent by 2035, an energy storage target of 2.6 gigawatts by 2030 and 6.3 gigawatts by 2036 and offshore wind energy targets of not less than 2 gigawatts by 2032, and there is a bit more detail which you have all heard so I will not repeat it.

While I do understand the need for addressing emissions and renewable energy targets in our state, there still remains far too many concerns with energy supply and reliability, particularly in regional areas like my electorate. It was incredibly unfortunate seeing much of our state left without power following extreme weather recently. While this has been an enormous impact on people right across Victoria, this has been what parts of my electorate like Euroa, Longwood, Violet Town, Ruffy, Nagambie and Strathbogie have been dealing with for over four months now, if not years. Barely a week after an outage on Christmas Eve affected 2200 customers, the region was hit by another major outage on 2 January lasting up to three days for some of the 2150 customers impacted. In the two months following that outage there were a further 17 unplanned outages in the town of Euroa alone. Residents in some of the worst-hit towns in my region say they experienced up to 90 hours of power outages in January and December with cuts ranging from several hours to several days in some cases.

Of those outages reported throughout summer, just a fraction were blamed on the weather. There have been outages when it is cold, outages when it is hot, outages when it is dry, outages when it is wet, outages when it is windy, calm and still. There is more than just a weather issue. Many of the issues in my region are due to there being a single line of supply running from Benalla to Violet Town through to Euroa and spreading out across the surrounding region, traversing 1200 kilometres of powerlines running off the longest feeder line in the state. One disruption can cut off 5000 homes from electricity. Despite the fact that this supply line has been known as the most problematic in the state since the 1970s, nothing has been done to correct the problem. Upgrading this infrastructure is essential and will go a long way to preventing the frequency of these outages. People’s health and safety, their ability to operate a business and their general wellbeing are all significantly compromised when there is a lack of reliable power.

I have listened to the distress of residents with a disability being stuck in their motorised chairs; people unable to get their car out of their garage during a crisis; pensioners with expensive medication unable to be refrigerated and expiring; people with sleep apnoea tormented nightly, unable to sleep without a working machine; and businesses going broke because they cannot operate.

Since the outages began in my region I have met with more than 300 impacted community members at local town hall meetings. I have met with the AusNet CEO and the Minister for Energy and Resources to discuss how this matter can be improved and also how this dangerously poor service delivery can even be acceptable in the first place. I will continue to put pressure on AusNet and this government to ensure residents in my region are not left in the dark as these outages continue. During these meetings I gladly shared a binder featuring all the personal stories that residents had shared about the outages, including information from recent petitions. I hope both AusNet and members of the state government have had a serious read about the significant impact this issue is having. Sharing the personal toll that these outages were having on our community was so important, and there are more I would like to share briefly now.

Natalie in Euroa told me:

My concerns aren’t just for myself but for the elderly, especially those living by themselves.

I have a number of neighbours I check on every time the power goes out as they lose all contact because their phones go down and they don’t drive.

There are many vulnerable citizens in our area that deserve better and while many have bought generators, it's just not possible for some to do this.

It worries me that I won't always be home myself to check on these dear people in my community and what would they do if they need help.

It's long overdue for upgrades.

Irene in Euroa said:

I ... use a CPAP machine for sleep apnoea and ... suffer dreadfully the next day from fatigue and brain fog when the power goes off during the night and am unable to use the machine.

My neighbour who also uses a CPAP machine sits up all night when the power is out as he is too fearful to sleep without the machine as he might die.

For so many our health and general well being are suffering.

Irene is one of 20 people I have spoken to about the torment of not having a working CPAP machine.

Lib in Longwood said:

The experience of repeated power and mobile outages has been both frustrating and almost unbelievable in this day and age.

I have lived and worked in remote rural communities throughout SA, Central QLD and Victoria in the past and never experienced the number of power outages as I have in the last 7 months since moving to Longwood.

Judith in Nagambie said:

My husband is quite disabled and is suffering from terminal cancer.

Our main issue with the constant power outages is that we lose all our phone and internet connection.

Ausnet advise to keep our phones charged, which we do, but this doesn't help when the whole system goes down.

As we are elderly, in our eighties and have health issues, this becomes quite stressful and frightening.

We have been promised upgrades constantly over the past few years, to no avail.

Ross in Violet Town said he recently moved from Melbourne to Violet Town and works from home for a global organisation. He said:

I have been here for just over a month and the power outages have been numerous and causing some angst from my employer.

When I say the outages are dangerous, I am not exaggerating. The ongoing power outages in my region have highlighted how dependent our community is on a reliable energy supply as well as showing the serious risks that come into play when outages happen. With our phone lines and internet connections being impacted, emergency services like CFA and SES have struggled to communicate and respond to emergencies. We saw the same thing happen when the floods caused havoc on the energy supply in previous years. Residents are unable to contact each other and are left in the dark as they struggle without power, light and in many cases water or a regular food supply.

Sadly, the solution is not as simple as asking everyone to use a generator. Hospitals like Euroa Health are running off generators in order to provide essential health services to the region; however, they require diesel to run them. Most fuel stations in the region do not have their own generators, and their bowsers have been rendered useless when the power is out. This is forcing the hospitals to travel long distances to larger towns that are still able to keep their petrol stations open. It is ludicrous. We had situations this summer where local brigades were not able to be notified of nearby fires and residents were not getting critical emergency warnings. Locals were literally required to walk outside, hope the wind was blowing in the right direction and smell the air to see if there were bushfires nearby. This is simply not acceptable and not sustainable. It has to be fixed, and it is a matter of urgency.

In Victoria a recent study shows that electricity prices have increased by 28 per cent compared with July 2022 prices. It also reports that in Victoria gas prices have increased nearly 100 per cent, and

170 per cent since 2009. These rises are hard to justify when people within my electorate are not even able to get reliable power, as they deal with outages every other day. This is having a significant impact on rapidly increasing cost-of-living pressures, which are already made worse by outages. They are shutting down businesses, eating into food storage and preventing residents from being able to work from home. Addressing our unstable power system must happen soon, and preferably through a public and transparent inquiry.

These are just a few of the hundreds of responses I have received directly from members of my local community. As you can see, the issues and impacts felt by these outages are varied, but all are equally concerning and there are far too many, forcing my community to live in dangerous and unhealthy conditions, whether it is loss of business, risk to health or general stress and impact on wellbeing. These outages must stop, and our energy reliability must improve.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (18:41): I am pleased to have the opportunity this evening to contribute to debate on this important bill, the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. This Allan Labor government knows and understands of course that our planet is changing, and we know and understand that climate change is indeed occurring as a result of human impact over time. We know and understand that as a globe we are warming and will face many and varied dire consequences from failing to act and doing nothing. We understand that real action to tackle climate change, to drive down energy prices and to create renewable energy based on the advice of science, based on the advice of experts, those who work on the field each and every day, is what is needed. That is why, as other members have referenced in their contributions on this piece of legislation, this government has in record terms invested in solar, invested in wind, invested in battery energy and storage and of course created the Victorian renewable energy target, with the creation of thousands of jobs along the way, not to mention the bringing back of the SEC.

Compare and contrast that to the decade when we saw an LNP federal government with no leadership in this space, a federal government that was more than happy for a decade to ignore the science, to sit back and to simply let – well, I do not know what it would have been. Market forces? It was just a policy vacuum with no programs, no initiatives, no leadership – and leadership is the critical word in this space, because there was nothing for a decade. Just imagine where we would be as a country if for those 10 years we had had federal leadership in this space. Just imagine having a partner in Canberra – which thankfully we do now – that was prepared to invest in solar, in renewables, in science and tech and not having this ideological war for 10 years with our states. What we know and understand is that we as a Labor state government were never prepared to wait, not for a second, for leadership to come from, at the time, the LNP in Canberra. We needed to get on and make those investments, bring in legislation and invest right across our state in renewables to ensure that we were addressing matters of climate change but also creating clean energy that drives down prices for consumers and making sure that we were working with our community. I have said, and I know that many other members have said it in this house before, that when we speak to local communities – when I go out into my electorate and speak about solar – and we speak about many of those areas that people know and understand, it is something that genuinely generates excitement. But also, equally importantly, being able to drive down the price is incredibly important.

Let us put all that aside for a moment and just think about the week that we have seen in this state – a very challenging week for a number of communities. A short, sharp, severely intense storm wreaked unbelievable damage right across the state. Members have spoken about this in the house, and there have been multiple reports from a number of communities. Our emergency services agencies have of course done an outstanding job. Like others I do want to take the opportunity to thank our emergency services for the work that they have done in responding to both the fires and the storms and all of the damage that has been done. I also want to acknowledge the outstanding member for Monbulk and other members of the chamber that have done a really stellar job this week, including the Premier and the Minister for Emergency Services. I see the Minister for Energy and Resources and Minister for

Climate Action is at the table; she has also, I think, done an exceptional job this week in responding to and working with local communities.

We know and understand that events like the one that happened on Tuesday night of last week will indeed become more frequent. We know and understand that these events cause great devastation, as I said, in a very short space of time. But what we will not do is play politics with these issues. We will not scare people, we will not cause division and we will not put fear in communities, because we know and understand that these matters are indeed above politics. They are about safety, they are about support and they are about working with local communities to make sure that we are doing everything that we can to support them in their time of challenge and indeed their time of need. We understand that that is the most important thing that you can do with local communities, and of course that is exactly what remains our focus.

Other members have mentioned a range of functions that this bill performs. The bill will amend the Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Act 2017 to increase the 2030 renewable energy target from 50 per cent to 65 per cent and set a new target of 95 per cent by 2035. The legislation will set Victoria's energy storage targets to at least 2.6 gigawatts of energy storage capacity by 2030 and at least 6.3 gigawatts by 2035. It will set Victoria's offshore wind energy generation capacity targets to at least 2 gigawatts by 2032, 4 gigawatts by 2035 and 9 gigawatts by 2040. It will also enable the minister to exclude certain energy storage facilities that would not count towards the energy storage targets and require the minister to report to the Parliament annually on the progress towards renewable energy, energy storage and offshore wind energy generation targets.

The bill will amend the Climate Change Act 2017 to bring forward the date of Victoria's long-term target for net zero emissions from 2050 to 2045 and legislate Victoria's interim emissions reductions targets of 28 to 33 per cent below 2005 levels by 2025, 45 to 50 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, and 75 to 85 per cent below 2005 levels by 2035. On top of that there will be the streamlining and the delivery of key products under the Climate Change Act, namely aligning the timing of the emissions reductions pledges with the climate strategy and the renaming of the act to the Climate Action Act to reflect this government's approach to mitigating climate change. There are also amendments to the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to introduce a new objective to provide for climate policies and obligations, including emissions reductions targets and climate resilience, to be considered when decisions are made about the use and development of land.

What we know is that these provisions and a number of others that are contained within the legislation before the Parliament go to real action on climate change and supporting our communities indeed to be safer – not just to be safer but also to be generating clean, renewable, reliable energy. We are making sure that we build upon that record of strong investment that we have delivered time and time again through successive budgets and right through the journey of being in this place.

Certainly in my time in this place I have watched real action on climate change – action to drive down prices to protect our planet – only led by a Labor government. I have watched record investment in renewables – again, solar and wind – only driven by a Labor government. And we have seen real targets set and met – you have got it again – by a Labor government. What we know and understand is that delivering real, tangible and practical solutions to what are incredibly complex problems, both for a growing economy and a growing state, and making sure that we are providing the legislative framework but also the initiatives, the projects and the investments into renewables are most important.

But we will not do what those opposite want to do in this space – and that is of course play politics and divide communities. We are about supporting communities and making sure that we are doing everything we can each and every day both in this space and across all of our portfolio areas – in health, in education, in transport and in energy – to make what is a great state even better and even stronger. This is why this bill and many, many others before the house are incredibly important. I commend the bill to the house.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (18:51): I rise to talk on the Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023. I thank the member for Brighton for his input this morning, and I note that we do not oppose but we have some reasoned amendments moving forward.

Listening to people talk about climate change you would think – as someone that represents the seat of Morwell, where we generate the power with our electricity grid coming out of the Latrobe Valley, providing power for the state of Victoria – that from what we have heard I would not be one that would be backing that we do need this. But climate change is real, and we do need to make sure that we have change. Anyone here today would think that I eat coal for breakfast and I poop briquettes at night-time, but I do not. My role as a politician is to make sure that I do leave the community in a better place when I am done in this place.

I note that the purpose of the bill is to bring forward some long-term emission reduction targets for net zero greenhouse gas emissions from 2050 to 2045. I think everybody in the chamber realises that we need to go down this path to look after our environment so we can leave our children with a better planet than what we have now. We need to make some sensible changes. The emissions reduction targets are to be raised: 28 to 33 per cent by 2025, 45 to 50 per cent by 2030 and 75 to 80 per cent by 2035.

The issue that we are trying to articulate here is about the time line for bringing the renewables on board. From talking with the power industry down in the Latrobe Valley and people that work, pardon the pun, at the coalface, we think that the time line is unrealistic for having our renewables up and going – to have our solar panels covering the countryside and to have our wind turbines set up in the ocean to connect to our grids. At the moment we have nothing at all in place for our wind turbines. We see some sprinkled around the countryside, but the time line to bring it all on board just does not marry up when the power stations are set to close.

We did have a catastrophic weather event during the week, which everyone has spoken about, which caused our ageing transmission lines to go over, which is unfortunate. People were left without power, and townships, which we have heard spoken about, were left without power. Thankfully they have, only recently, come back online. When the transmission lines went over, Loy Yang A down in my patch lost all four generators, which is unheard-of realistically – that a generation facility like Loy Yang can lose all four generators. In conjunction with that, talking with a couple of the other power providers down there, Loy Yang B and Hazelwood went very, very close to losing their generators also. We talk about catastrophic events, and I do not want to make light of the issues that were in Mirboo North and around the state, but if they all go down, we do not have any power whatsoever. What saved the state from that going down – from a total shutdown – was that the two coal-fired power stations did not go offline, so we had power, but we were also lucky enough to be able to have the gas turbines kick in to restore power to Victoria to make sure that we had a constant power supply going to the parts of the state that were not impacted by the transmission lines going down. This bill is trying to make our energy targets and our emission targets better, and they are the two sources that this bill is trying to give an end-of-life date to of 2035. Every time I stand up I try not to be sensational or anything like that or be a doomsdayer, but our power stations are going to shut in 2035, and at the moment our renewables are not matching coming online, so we need to make that happen.

Our renewable precincts opportunity around our ageing power stations – we have got the Hazelwood battery, which I know the minister sitting at the table here, the Minister for Energy and Resources, has been down to see and commission. It has got a capacity of about 30,000 houses that it can hold for a 1-hour time frame. As that moves out and makes the power constant, it then recharges. That has a massive footprint, that battery. Anyone that has not been down there, if you are heading through the Latrobe Valley and heading to Gippsland for a holiday down to Lakes Entrance or down to Metung you can actually see the battery from the highway. So it is a huge footprint that we are going to have to have right across the state with everything that we do, because we are going to go for renewables and obviously we need to store the power.

One thing I would love to know is if the batteries are only going to last for 1 or 2 hours, what if we had, as just recently, an international performer that wanted to come to the MCG at night and wanted to put on a 3½-hour performance? How big would the battery have to be? That is an answer I cannot get. How big would the battery have to be at the MCG to run night footy, to let everybody go and see Tay Tay? They cannot put a figure on it because I do not think they know. The tennis that we have over Christmas and the New Year at Melbourne Park – how big is the battery going to have to be there for everyone to watch night tennis? It is things that I think about and my community thinks about all the time. Yes, we need batteries and we need solar and we need wind farms to bring online our renewables, but where do we store it all and how big is the footprint going to be?

That is why we are so passionate in the country about getting this right as we introduce renewables and get our emission targets right, because we are the ones that end up having to look at the wind turbines that are 300 metres high. The blades are 150 metres each, so that is 300 metres, which is taller than the Rialto building. We are going to have these on our coastline, so we in the country and on the coast are going to have to look at these, and then we are going to have 80-metre towers for our transmission lines coming in. It seems that the people in the country get all the bad stuff with the renewables, which we have to look at and deal with on a daily basis. Between Melbourne and down here, we see you getting the benefit of the clean energy but we are putting up with the actual visual pollution of the towers and also of the solar panels.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Housing

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (19:00): (521) My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Housing, and the action I seek is for the minister to explain why houses owned by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing in South-West Coast have been sitting vacant for over two years despite being perfectly suitable for occupation. Last week a little girl and her family touched the heartstrings of our community with their story of homelessness. Consequently many people have shared where unoccupied homes are in Warrnambool that are owned by the department of housing. I have personally visited a number of these properties for myself and directly verified this to be true.

Nova, the little girl I mentioned, has cerebral palsy. Nova is in a wheelchair, communicates via a device and is unable to walk or attend to her own activities of daily living. Nova is a bright, charismatic and talented eight-year-old girl who is ingrained in our local community, participating in many activities, such as being a member of Warrnambool's famous Find Your Voice choir. Nova's mother passed away recently, requiring her father Doug to cut back full-time work to care for his two children Nova and her brother Archie, who is seven. Unable to make a living as a teacher any longer due to the intensive needs of parenting a disabled child, Doug was unable to make mortgage repayments, the bank foreclosed and they lost their home.

Since then Doug, Nova and Archie have been couch surfing, and during the school holidays he even lived in a paddock. I am not going to demean the dignity of this family by describing the intensive needs of Nova and her activities of daily living, such as her hygiene needs; however, with my nursing knowledge I know that by not having a home and not having a kitchen to prepare her meals from vegetables et cetera and for her not to be able to get around safely we are compromising her long-term health significantly. We are also putting at risk her father's ability to care for her long term, because he is unable to lift her safely when he is stuck in a place that does not have the facilities needed for lifting her in a way that will not cause him harm long term.

Following a public call-out, my generous community have paid for him to stay in a motel for two weeks. This is no long-term solution as Nova cannot manoeuvre her wheelchair around the motel room, so after school this effectively makes her bed-bound. None of this is good for Nova's skin integrity or her mental wellbeing. When I met Nova she begged me for help to find them a roof over their heads. Doug put down his name on the public housing waiting list years ago. Following my direct approach to a minister last week, Doug received his first call. Yesterday Doug received another call, which informed him that it would be years before he was able to access a home. What a disgraceful failure by this government. How much more vulnerable could this family be? This family needs a solution now. The system is broken under Labor. There is simply no excuse. Nova needs a house now.

Bayswater Secondary College

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (19:03): (522) It is one of the biggest upgrades to schools locally, and now the new classrooms and facilities at Bayswater Secondary College are open for business. Construction started back at the end of 2022, and the first day of school this year saw students in for the first time enjoying the new facilities. Now it is time to officially open the new buildings, so the action I am seeking is for the Minister for Education to join me out at Bayswater Secondary College to officially open them. The new digs include new middle and senior school buildings, replacing old with modern and bright spaces, which now means the staff and students there will have the facilities they deserve.

I have long been a proud supporter of this school and recognised back when first elected in 2018 the need to back this school community in. That is why I was proud to deliver funding for and co-chair the Bayswater education plan with other local primary schools, to secure funding for this build and to work alongside their fantastic principal Liz Swan to get things done. I am extremely proud of this school and everything they have achieved, and I have loved watching their growth. I cannot wait to have the minister out.

Goulburn Valley Vending Service

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (19:04): (523) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public and Active Transport, and the action I seek is that the minister retract the decision to enter into a vending machine agreement with Coca-Cola Europacific. This decision will result in the loss of business for a long-term Shepparton business owner. Mr Greg Coghlan has owned and operated Goulburn Valley Vending Service at two regional rail stations, including the Shepparton station, for over two decades and has been given just 30 days notice to vacate, which effectively shuts down his operations with no warning or consultation.

Greg and his team have been an integral part of our local economy, providing a reliable and efficient local service. The decision to replace his small business with that of a multinational corporation has a significant impact on Greg's livelihood and that of his three staff, and as you can imagine, it was a shock to be told that he no longer had a business with just 30 days notice. Greg is bewildered by the lack of consideration and transparency of the procurement process, which led to this contract being given to a multinational company. This is not a position that he planned to be in, and it is due to no fault of his own. Greg was not given an opportunity to provide a proposal to continue his successful business and faces an instant loss of income. Greg has mentioned that he would be keen to have a chat with the minister and to work with the government. Small businesses are the backbone of communities and they have faced significant challenges in recent years. They need to be valued and supported, and once again I urge the minister to retract this decision.

Planning policy

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (19:05): (524) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Planning, and the action I seek for the minister to join me and meet with my Bellarine communities about the new planning review for Victoria. Planning has always been a lively topic on the Bellarine, and when meeting with various community associations, business organisations and constituents,

planning is raised as one of the top priorities. The community has absolutely welcomed the work done to protect the Bellarine through the implementation of the DAL – declaring Bellarine part of the distinctive area and landscapes statement of planning policy – but we know that work is also underway to look at the bigger picture for Victoria, and growing well is a priority for this government. It is a commitment for me to have the community part of the conversation and solutions for their own future. As we develop a new plan for our cities and towns and what our regions should look like in the coming decades, I am eager to listen to and also have the minister hear directly from my constituents. Being the first ever whole-state plan, setting out to further improve our housing affordability and choice through to 2050, I am confident to say that Bellarine would very much like to be part of this and be engaged. I would like the minister to meet with Bellarine communities to discuss the new plan for Victoria, what this may mean for Bellarine and how they can be involved in the community and consultation process.

Bayley Birds

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (19:07): (525) My adjournment is to the Premier, and the action I seek is to call on the Premier to join me in offering words of support and congratulation in celebrating the work of the Bayley House auxiliary club, the Bayley Birds. Bayley House is a not-for-profit organisation based in Brighton that provides exceptional support for people with an intellectual disability. Each year the clients put on an incredible Christmas show. Several hundred Brighton residents, Church Street traders with all of their staff in tow, and families of Bayley House clients fill one of the biggest halls in Brighton to sing, laugh, dance and often shed a tear. The most recent concert was an incredible event, but it was also a little different. Many more tears were shed as the Bayley House auxiliary club, the Bayley Birds, announced their retirement after 50 years of volunteerism.

Premier, in February 1973 Mrs Ditridge had the idea of putting an advertisement in the local paper, seeking support from other Brighton mothers to start an auxiliary and fundraising club. The advertisement led to four women, who worked on fundraising at the children's hospital, responding. Three of the four women are still part of the group: Gwenda Hance, Margaret Templeton, and Janet Walter. After the four women met with the Bayley House board, and then Brighton council, the Bayley Birds were formed. The group is currently led by founding member Faye Barrow. Over the last 50 years the group, which at times included up to 15 women, have made a life-changing impact in my community and on the clients of Bayley House.

Amongst their many good deeds the group has fundraised \$1.5 million in support of Bayley House. That fundraising has come through many incredible events, including grand balls at the Hyatt Regent. Menzies Rialto and Kingston Heath Golf Club, tennis days, fashion parades, card luncheons, golf club luncheons, film nights, open gardens, quiz nights, fetes, Christmas concerts and weekends away with the Bayley Birds' husbands, affectionately called the Dicky Birds.

When Faye Barrow announced the retirement of the Bayley Birds at the most recent Christmas Concert, she said:

We, the Birds, have given our very best because Bayley House is a special place and will always remain as a special place in our hearts.

The Bayley Birds are right – Bayley House is a special place. But I say to the birds, you too have a special place in our community's hearts. Genuinely, thank you.

Point Cook community hospital

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (19:09): (526) My adjournment is for the Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure and Minister for Ambulance Services, and the action and that I seek is for the minister to provide an update on when the designs will be released for the Point Cook community hospital. We love our community hospitals in Victoria, and the Point Cook community hospital will be no exception. It will be a small public hospital on Dunnings Road, right in the heart of Point Cook. It will provide the everyday health services our community really needs. This important

investment in health infrastructure in the community that I represent in the south-west of Melbourne will take pressure off nearby hospitals but also provide the health services that people really need close to home: dialysis, chemotherapy, day surgery – those things that you want to access every day. The community hospital will also assist in meeting increased demand for the medical services that are growing as our community grows. I cannot wait to see the impact the community hospital will have on the community I represent, and I look forward to the release of those plans.

Gippsland rail line duplication

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (19:10): (527) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the action I seek is that the minister visits the community of Bunyip in my electorate and speak with the residents impacted by the station works being completed there. I brought up this matter of the duplication of the line between Bunyip and Longwarry before with the previous Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the answer I got on that occasion was about works in Stratford, which is 200 kilometres away from Bunyip. So this time I hope the new minister can actually give me a reason why the duplication of the line has not been completed. This line was federally funded by the Liberal–National federal government to the tune of about \$490 million, and I believe the state government put in about \$30 million. My community will want to know why this duplication has not been done.

But there is another part to this adjournment. The fact of the matter is that the works that have occurred at the new Bunyip station are impacting the residents there. This is why the minister has to come. I have at least 10 residents there that now get flooded every time heavy rains occur, and the worst part for one poor fellow is that when his house gets flooded it comes down the new driveway, goes straight under his house and the water sits. Now he has got mould in his house, in a bedroom where his daughter sleeps.

The design of the drainage of this new station is not right for the residents, and they are getting washed out every time it rains. So I urge the minister to come down there. I have written him a letter, and I would like the minister to come down and meet with the residents to hear their concerns about all the works that are going on plus the fact that the duplication has not been completed. We have platforms on either side, but we do not have the tracks, so the trains cannot improve their timetables. If the minister could come down, meet with the residents and listen to their concerns about what has been going on, I would really appreciate that.

Frankston Hospital

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (19:13): (528) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is for the minister to come and visit the Frankston Hospital redevelopment. The \$1 billion Frankston Hospital redevelopment is progressing very well, at a very fast pace, and when completed it will be the largest hospital redevelopment outside of the Melbourne CBD. The Frankston community deserves facilities that are flexible and can meet the changing needs of the community for decades to come and a hospital that is accessible, welcoming and inclusive. That is what we are delivering. There are boots on the ground, and there are cranes in the sky that you can see from the city at night.

Once the redevelopment is complete it will create a range of new employment opportunities in the healthcare sector, meaning more jobs for doctors, nurses and support staff. I would love to invite the minister down to visit Frankston to view the progress of this absolutely amazing facility, which is employing a ton of people at the moment.

Hopkins Street, Footscray

Katie HALL (Footscray) (19:14): (529) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is for the minister to meet with me and to provide a briefing on the options available to deliver better safety outcomes for road users along Hopkins Street in Footscray. As a fellow inner-west resident, the minister is aware that this stretch of road before the river crossing

is a busy connection to the port and the city. The Joseph Road precinct is being developed by the Maribyrnong council, but with thousands of residents expected to move in in coming years, along with St Monica's Primary across the road, this section of Hopkins Street will continue to be a busy thoroughfare. I have met with residents of the Joseph Road precinct whose homes border Hopkins Street who are advocating for safety upgrades on this stretch of road. And just as the minister has done before just up the road at the intersection of Hopkins and Moore streets, our community once again is asking for safety improvements on important thoroughfares that provide passage from the inner west into the city.

Rental accommodation

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (19:15): (530) My adjournment tonight is for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, and the action I seek is for the government to stop landlords from getting away with renting out unlivable properties. We have got this legislation, the Residential Tenancies Act 1997, and it is meant to protect renters, but right now it is just about as effective as a screen door on a submarine. Labor rolls out legislation or makes announcements, as they have done recently, claiming that they are going to save the day for renters. But what is the point when the laws that we have already got are not being enforced?

Renters are still living with soggy floors, with faulty electrics, with broken windows and with mushrooms growing inside. I mean, we love our ecosystems in the Greens but not inside our bedrooms. Some renters are flying blind when it comes to their rights, but most of them are too scared of losing their homes to make a fuss. They know that the landlord has the upper hand, and Labor has made sure that it stays that way. Even if renters have done their homework and know their rights inside out, they are still seeing landlords and property managers defying the rules without any consequences. Labor is letting landlords make a mockery of the good work that they have done. I give credit where credit is due. There have been some good announcements, and I am really looking forward to the rental reforms that are coming up this year, but right now renters feel as though there is just no point bothering. They will just keep breathing in fungus spores and heating their homes with their gas ovens rather than spending the time and the money and the stress of going through a losing battle at VCAT or, even worse, facing homelessness.

That is why today I am asking the minister to create an enforcement system that actually takes the burden off renters – they should not be taking their landlords to court – a system that forces landlords to comply with the law so that every renter has a healthy and safe home to live in.

Responses

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (19:17): The member for South-West Coast raised a matter for the Minister for Housing in the other place regarding vacant housing and unoccupied homes. She is seeking an explanation for why houses for up to maybe two years have been sitting vacant when they could be occupied by those who need somewhere to live. The member for Footscray raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety seeking a meeting with her and a briefing on options to provide better safety in Hopkins Street in West Footscray in her electorate. The member for Shepparton raised a matter for the Minister for Public and Active Transport seeking that the minister retract a decision in relation to entering into a vending machine contract, a decision that has left the incumbents without the opportunity to continue providing a service that has been valued in the local community in the Shepparton area. I will make sure that matter is passed on to the Minister for Public and Active Transport.

The member for Bayswater raised a matter for the Minister for Education seeking that the minister join him to officially open the significant redevelopments at Bayswater Secondary College, which I had the chance to visit many moons ago with the member for Bayswater. I am pleased, with principal Liz Swan, to pass on the request to the Minister for Education and Deputy Premier. The member for Brighton raised a matter for the Premier seeking that the Premier join him to give thanks for the great

work of Bayley House and to meet the Bayley Birds, who for over 50 years have raised some \$1.5 million as an auxiliary club for people with disabilities and disability services in his electorate, and to support the amazing work that they have been able to achieve. The member for Bellarine raised a matter for the Minister for Planning seeking her to join the member for Bellarine in her electorate to brief and discuss with the community a new planning review for Victoria. Like all issues and matters in the Bellarine electorate, the local community have a great interest, I know, in community safety matters. I am sure the Minister for Planning will be keen to join the member regarding the new planning review for Victoria.

The member for Narracan raised a matter for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure seeking a meeting with residents in the Bunyip area. Works at the station are affecting many of the residents. There has been flooding and other examples that have affected local residents, and the member is keen for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure to meet with those Bunyip residents and discuss the effects of the works on the local residents. The member for Point Cook raised a matter for the Minister for Health seeking an update on the availability of the designs for the new community hospital and when they will be released in his electorate of Point Cook, and I will pass that on to the Minister for Health. The member for Richmond raised a matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs asking that the government take action to stop landlords being able to advertise and lease unlivable properties.

The member for Frankston raised a matter for the Minister for Health seeking that the minister visit the Frankston Hospital redevelopment, one of the most significant redevelopments in our state for health services. I know the member for Glen Waverley had guests in today, one of them being a nurse who has had her three-month anniversary of working at the Frankston Hospital. The member for Frankston is well attuned to the significant development works that are happening in Frankston. I am sure the Minister for Health is looking forward to joining him there to check on the progress of works very soon.

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

House adjourned 7:21 pm.