



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Thursday 7 March 2024

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

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Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Mary-Anne Thomas

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury

Members of the Legislative Assembly
60th Parliament

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel ¹	Mulgrave	ALP	McCurdy, Tim	Ovens Valley	Nat
Battin, Brad	Berwick	Lib	McGhie, Steve	Melton	ALP
Benham, Jade	Mildura	Nat	McLeish, Cindy	Eildon	Lib
Britnell, Roma	South-West Coast	Lib	Marchant, Alison	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Colin	Bundoora	ALP	Matthews-Ward, Kathleen	Broadmeadows	ALP
Bull, Josh	Sunbury	ALP	Mercurio, Paul	Hastings	ALP
Bull, Tim	Gippsland East	Nat	Mullahy, John	Glen Waverley	ALP
Cameron, Martin	Morwell	Nat	Newbury, James	Brighton	Lib
Carbines, Anthony	Ivanhoe	ALP	O'Brien, Danny	Gippsland South	Nat
Carroll, Ben	Niddrie	ALP	O'Brien, Michael	Malvern	Lib
Cheeseman, Darren ²	South Barwon	Ind	O'Keeffe, Kim	Shepparton	Nat
Cianflone, Anthony	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Pallas, Tim	Werribee	ALP
Cleeland, Annabelle	Euroa	Nat	Pearson, Danny	Essendon	ALP
Connolly, Sarah	Laverton	ALP	Pesutto, John	Hawthorn	Lib
Couzens, Christine	Geelong	ALP	Read, Tim	Brunswick	Greens
Crewther, Chris	Mornington	Lib	Richards, Pauline	Cranbourne	ALP
Crugnale, Jordan	Bass	ALP	Richardson, Tim	Mordialloc	ALP
D'Ambrosio, Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Riordan, Richard	Polwarth	Lib
De Martino, Daniela	Monbulk	ALP	Rowswell, Brad	Sandringham	Lib
de Vietri, Gabrielle	Richmond	Greens	Sandell, Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Dimopoulos, Steve	Oakleigh	ALP	Settle, Michaela	Eureka	ALP
Edbrooke, Paul	Frankston	ALP	Smith, Ryan ⁵	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Famham, Wayne	Narracan	Lib	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Foster, Eden ³	Mulgrave	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
Fowles, Will ⁴	Ringwood	Ind	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Groth, Sam	Nepean	Lib	Theophanous, Kat	Northcote	ALP
Guy, Matthew	Bulleen	Lib	Thomas, Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Halfpenny, Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Tilley, Bill	Benambra	Lib
Hall, Katie	Footscray	ALP	Vallence, Bridget	Evelyn	Lib
Hamer, Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Vulin, Emma	Pakenham	ALP
Haylett, Martha	Ripon	ALP	Walsh, Peter	Murray Plains	Nat
Hibbins, Sam	Prahran	Greens	Walters, Iwan	Greenvale	ALP
Hilakari, Mathew	Point Cook	ALP	Ward, Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Hodgett, David	Croydon	Lib	Wells, Kim	Rowville	Lib
Horne, Melissa	Williamstown	ALP	Werner, Nicole ⁶	Warrandyte	Lib
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

¹ Resigned 27 September 2023

² ALP until 29 April 2024

³ Sworn in 6 February 2024

⁴ ALP until 5 August 2023

⁵ Resigned 7 July 2023

⁶ Sworn in 3 October 2023

Party abbreviations

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

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Thursday 7 March 2024

The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 9:33 am, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.

Bills

Emergency Management Amendment (Port of Melbourne) Bill 2024

Introduction

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (09:34): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Emergency Management Act 2013 in relation to emergency risk management arrangements for the Port of Melbourne and for other purposes.

The main provisions of the bill are as follows: the bill seeks to amend the definition of ‘critical infrastructure’ in section 74B of the Emergency Management Act 2013 to include the Port of Melbourne and the definition of ‘major critical infrastructure’ at section 74B to include the Port of Melbourne. The bill further seeks to amend section 74J(2)(a) of the act to provide that the Victorian register of critical infrastructure must contain the Port of Melbourne.

In Victoria the Minister for Ports and Freight or the Governor in Council decides whether or not to or remove items from the register of critical infrastructure. The Port of Melbourne is in reality the single most critical infrastructure asset for our state. This bill is much needed as the Port of Melbourne has seen major disruption due to cyber attack, industrial action and protests, with little action from the Allan Labor government. The bill is necessary because while the port may in fact be included in the register of critical infrastructure, this information is difficult to obtain. More importantly, the port’s inclusion on the register must not be left to the discretion of the minister or subject to an executive order.

The bill that I introduce will ensure the Port of Melbourne’s status as significant critical infrastructure is explicitly recognised in law. This bill is critical to amend the register to mandate the inclusion of the Port of Melbourne. Robust arrangements to protect the security and operation of the Port of Melbourne are vital, and there should be no possibility that the port could be removed from the register if in fact it is already included.

The bill I introduce recognises that any disruption to the port like we have seen in the last few months affects every single Victorian to the tune of a \$4 a week per household increase to the cost of living per year. Recently the Treasurer of Victoria has stated that disruptions to the Port of Melbourne were nothing more than a minor inconvenience.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for South-West Coast, introducing a bill is not an opportunity to go into the detail of the bill. It is a procedural debate about why the bill would be introduced. I would ask you to stick to the procedural debate.

Roma BRITNELL: This bill is important, and it seeks to amend the register to ensure the government is always keenly attuned to the importance of the Port of Melbourne to Victoria’s supply chain and economy while also ensuring the appropriate action is taken to protect critical supplies passing through the port.

This bill is critical as independent research demonstrates that the recent disruptions to the Port of Melbourne resulted in a \$84 million a week cost to the economy – hence much greater than a minor inconvenience. The criticality of this bill, which seeks to stress the vital importance of the Port of Melbourne, is clear in the view of –

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, the member on her feet I think is defying your ruling. As you have indicated, it is a narrow procedural debate, and the member should constrain

herself to talking about why this bill should be introduced on a day when we have a very full business program of government business that has already been agreed to by this house.

The SPEAKER: The member for South-West Coast had not strayed from the procedural debate after I ruled. I remind her that it is a procedural debate.

Roma BRITNELL: The criticality of the bill, which seeks to stress the vital importance of the Port of Melbourne, is clear. In fact during the recent industrial dispute 100,000 containers at one point were sitting off the coast, unable to be unloaded. Many of these containers held goods that are vital to manufacturing or critical to Victorians – for example, insulin. This bill I introduce will help ensure that this critical infrastructure is not held to ransom like it has been by protesters in recent weeks. This bill is critical as Victoria Police were sadly not backed by the Allan Labor government during the recent disputes and were prevented from acting in a timely manner. In fact nowhere else in the world is so bereft of laws, such as move-on laws, that are needed to support the police.

The urgency of this bill is clear as Victoria is dependent on imports and exports. In fact there are only 12 days of fuel available in this country, so any disruption to the Port of Melbourne is much greater than just a minor inconvenience. This bill is needed as it will ensure the Port of Melbourne has the status it needs. The bill is urgent as the Allan Labor government must recognise how fragile the supply chain and logistics industries are. Clearly the Premier and her ministers are ignorant of this important fact.

In summing up, the Port of Melbourne needs to be added to the Victorian register of critical infrastructure. This bill is much needed. If the port is already listed as critical infrastructure on the register, the Allan Labor government must explain their complete lack of action during recent disruptions. Victorian households and businesses suffered immensely during these disruptions. The Allan Labor government should act – or decide whether they can act – and they should be deeply ashamed. Due to incoming vessels, further protest action at the Port of Melbourne is likely from tonight onwards. The Allan Labor government needs to act today.

Darren CHEESEMEN (South Barwon) (09:39): I can only assume that this pitch today made by the member for South-West Coast is really a pitch to the Liberal Party to become their new deputy leader.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is a tight procedural motion, not an opportunity for the member to display how grubby he is.

The SPEAKER: That is not a way to raise a point of order, Manager of Opposition Business. The member for South Barwon knows that this is a procedural debate, and I will not tolerate frivolous points of order during this debate.

Darren CHEESEMEN: I think we have just seen another deputy leadership candidate here on his feet. The reality is if the Liberal Party wish to introduce bills and have those bills carried through this chamber, they need to go and win elections –

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Speaker, the member for South Barwon has deliberately defied your previous ruling.

The SPEAKER: The member for South Barwon will stick to the procedural debate.

Darren CHEESEMEN: The reality is if you want to be able to bring bills to this place and you want to have those bills succeed, the simple reality is you need the numbers, and the way that you get the numbers in a democracy is that you go out and you win seats and you bring more seats to this chamber than what the other side does. And this of course is a point that I have made on quite a number of occasions. All bills need to go through a proper process where you seek advice from the relevant departments and where ministers bring propositions to the cabinet and then ultimately to the chamber. That is how you go about legislating in this place. Now, we know of course that the Leader of the

Opposition is under tremendous pressure in this place, and there are all sorts of people who are seeking to knock him off, and there are all sorts of people who are seeking to be –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is an outrageous abuse of relevance on the procedural motion.

The SPEAKER: The member for South Barwon will come back to the procedural debate.

Darren CHEESEMEN: The procedural debate is very clear. If you want to bring a bill to this chamber and you want it to succeed, the reality is you need to have the numbers in this place – that is a very clear principle – rather than grandstanding, which we see week in, week out from those in the opposition; that is, time wasting and taking every opportunity to frustrate the government in getting on with our important legislative program, a program that we have time and time again taken to the Victorian people through elections. We have an important agenda this week to get through, and we do not want to see this chamber having its time wasted, denying the opportunity of the government to get its legislation through. We know there are all sorts of pressures over there amongst a whole lot of different people –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I draw your attention to standing order 110, and I would put to you not only that the member is now defying your ruling but that this is tedious repetition.

The SPEAKER: Procedural debates by their nature can be repetitious. The member for South Barwon will come back to the procedural debate.

Darren CHEESEMEN: As I say, there is all sorts of pressure over there and there are all sorts of people that are trying to get the numbers. What we know of course is the leader is a dead man walking.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, under standing orders 119 and 120, I am deeply concerned that the member just used the word ‘dead’ in relation to a member of this place. Considering the increase every year of the danger to members of Parliament and what they experience, I am extremely concerned that that word is both unparliamentary and objectionable, and I would ask you to counsel the member.

The SPEAKER: I will take the point of order on notice, Manager of Opposition Business.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (09:45): Look, I am quite concerned. If the words of the member for South Barwon genuinely represent the views of the Labor government, we are in a one-party state. We are in a one-party state where no party other than the Labor Party is allowed to introduce ideas for debate in this place. No party other than the Labor Party is allowed to introduce legislation and propose it to the house. Now, whether a bill is ultimately passed or not of course depends on the will of the majority in this chamber – that is democracy. But I say to the member for South Barwon: gagging people from even introducing ideas to discuss is not democracy, that is dictatorship. And that is what the member for South Barwon has just argued for. It reflects poorly on him, and it reflects very poorly on an arrogant, tired Labor government that has been in power for too long and believes the only voice that matters is its own.

This is a bill that is important, because the Port of Melbourne is one of our most critical pieces of infrastructure. It is our trading gateway to the rest of the world, yet we have seen it shut down because of protests for various reasons. We have seen protests over foreign affairs. We have seen protests over climate change, and there is the threat that Extinction Rebellion are apparently going to let loose in Melbourne again next week. That is why it is important that this bill from the member for South-West Coast be introduced today and be considered today. Our critical infrastructure is just that – it is critical – and the government will not even clarify whether the Port of Melbourne is designated on the Victorian register of critical infrastructure. The member for South-West Coast has got every reason to question whether it is, because if it is in fact already on that register, why hasn't the government used the powers that flow from that to protect the operation of the port?

We have seen it shut down in various guises for various reasons over recent months, and the danger is that it is going to happen again, potentially as early as next week. I was going to say I would hope that nobody here would support the efforts of the Extinction Rebellion protesters, but we know the member for Melbourne has already said that she does actually support them. I could not disagree more with her. But particularly in the light of the fact that a poor woman had to give birth on the side of the road because of the absolute outrageous selfishness and irresponsibility of those protesters, I would hope that even the member for Melbourne might reconsider her position in relation to supporting Extinction Rebellion. They have made clear threats that they are going to be taking action again in Melbourne next week, and that is why it is important that we protect our critical infrastructure in the face of such threats.

This government has absolutely refused to give police move-on powers despite the fact the Chief Commissioner of Police made it quite clear he would like to have them back. So if the government will not at least give the police move-on powers – and they should – then how about we actually debate a bill about protecting the Port of Melbourne, about protecting one of our most critical pieces of infrastructure? We cannot allow the Port of Melbourne to be shut down by protests, be they environmental protests or protests about foreign affairs. Obviously there is a legitimate right to protest under industrial law, and this does not affect that. So I am sure for all those opposite who are worried about what their union paymasters will say, do not worry about that – legitimate industrial action is still protected under these laws, but we are talking about illegitimate protests, protests designed to shut down our critical infrastructure.

The Port of Melbourne – there could not be a more important trade thoroughfare for this state. It used to be the biggest port in the country. I think since Labor has got into office we have lost that mantle to Sydney, which is a great shame. Of course the Port of Melbourne used to be publicly owned, but the great socialists opposite decided to privatise it, so it is now in private hands. But that does not mean that the government does not have a responsibility to protect its operations.

The member for South-West Coast has done exactly the right thing in seeking to introduce a bill to protect the Port of Melbourne – to protect it ahead of Extinction Rebellion protests coming in as early as next week. For the government to seek to deny the opportunity to debate this bill shows you they are not interested in debating ideas, they are not interested in democracy, they genuinely think Victoria is a one-party state – and shame on them for thinking that.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (09:50): I do not think anyone in this house, except perhaps for the members of the Greens party, doubt the criticality of the Port of Melbourne, and it is a shame to see them siding with those who seek to shut it down. Can I just dwell briefly upon the irony of the members opposite, the members of the Liberal Party, the heirs to Peter Reith and Peter Costello – and I believe the Shadow Attorney-General was in the Treasurer's office for a time – the heirs to those gentlemen, coming in here talking about the Port of Melbourne being shut down when they were the ones who locked out the stevedores in 1998. The idea that they should come in here, lecturing us as the government about the criticality of the Port of Melbourne –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is a procedural debate.

The SPEAKER: The member for Greenvale will come back to the procedural debate.

Iwan WALTERS: Thanks very much for your guidance, Speaker. I will dwell upon the procedural motion at hand. As I say, I do not think there is any doubt about the significance to our economy of the Port of Melbourne, which is already designated as critical infrastructure. The member for South-West Coast has come in here seeking to railroad the government business program, which was agreed to on Tuesday. We are looking forward to an important debate in this place about the regulation and operation of private security in this state and the County Court. While there is no doubt about the criticality of the infrastructure that the Port of Melbourne represents, it would be I think taking the debate too broad to discuss the history of the Port of Melbourne and the impacts of Sir John Coode in

deepening the Yarra to enable the Port of Melbourne to become our nation's most significant port. But I do want to just dwell upon the fact that we have a government business program that was agreed to in this place. That is not to diminish the significance of the Port of Melbourne, but there is a way of addressing these issues.

The Minister for Ports and Freight is working tirelessly with stakeholders, including the port operators and the Maritime Union of Australia, to ensure the safe operation of the port. Victoria Police have been working closely with the minister, with other arms of government and with their federal counterparts, and it is disappointing to hear the Shadow Attorney-General and the member for South-West Coast verbal and criticise our police force. The Minister for Police has made it very clear that he is working closely with the Chief Commissioner of Police, and all powers which have been requested have been provided. So I back in the minister –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, standing order 188: personal reflections are unparliamentary, and the member just made a personal reflection against the member for South-West Coast.

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

Iwan WALTERS: While there might be more movements in and out of the Leader of the Opposition's office than the Port of Melbourne –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker: relevance.

The SPEAKER: The member for Greenvale will come back to the procedural debate before the house.

Iwan WALTERS: I think the key point here is that there is a government business program that was agreed to on Tuesday that the people of Victoria have elected us to discuss and debate. The provisions of the government business program include the debate that I alluded to before regarding the regulation of private security, which is an incredibly important issue in our state. We have marked 20 years since the death of David Hookes in 2004, the rationale for the Private Security Act 2004 having been brought into this place at that point. There are an array of issues in the private security industry that require fixing, that require attention and that require improved regulation. That is why the government has brought that bill on for debate today in this place. It is an important piece of legislation.

It does not mean that the Port of Melbourne is in any way not critical infrastructure and not a significant piece of both our state and national economy, but there is a way of doing things in this place. The Minister for Ports and Freight is working tirelessly to ensure the integrity of the port, working with stakeholders like the Maritime Union of Australia, Dubai Ports World, who operate the port, and others to ensure that it is not shut down. I would urge all members of this place to ensure that we are advocating for the Port of Melbourne. I reflect particularly upon the Greens party in this place and suggest that they take a lead from others and seek to ensure that the port is not shut down and that it can continue to be the main port of entry for so many goods in and out of Australia and a key part of Victoria's economy and critical infrastructure.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:55): I rise to support the member for South-West Coast's private members bill to protect our ports. The Shadow Minister for Ports and Freight has been a strong advocate to ensure that our ports stay open and are able to trade. But what we have seen is our ports hijacked by these left-wing loonies, who do absolutely nothing, who want to stop vital freight being able to end up in Melbourne. What does that mean in terms of cost? We all know that this vital freight not coming through can cost – back to our cost of living – up to \$4 a week for every single householder. That is what happened when we saw our ports being held to ransom for days, and the government did absolutely nothing and the minister did nothing.

The member for South-West Coast has a very, very important job to hold this government to account in bringing a private members bill to the table, and that is what opposition does. I remind the government that it was only a few months ago that the member for Berwick brought a private members bill for machetes. The government back then called it a stunt, but now what we have is the government responding to our call, on machetes, to bring legislation forward. I would hope that when it comes to this particular legislation they will vote for this private members bill today that the member for South-West Coast is putting forward – or at least, if they do not, they will act pretty quickly to protect our ports, because every single day that our ports are not protected costs every single Victorian taxpayer in a cost-of-living crisis. If this government care about cost of living, they will ensure that ports are able to operate.

We see in other states that the police are able to break the protesters down and ensure that vital freight gets to where it needs to go in terms of being unloaded – not here in Victoria. What we are seeing is now the Chief Commissioner of Police Shane Patton saying that we need laws because the government are not providing them. We need to ensure that we have the powers so Victorians can feel safe and also vital infrastructure like the ports is able to operate. This opposition has been very up and about when it comes to providing opportunities for the government to actually do something.

I remind those in this chamber that yesterday we spent 4 hours talking about grammatical errors in a bill – 4 hours trying to fix grammar in a bill. What is more important, ensuring that vital infrastructure gets unloaded from our port or fixing some grammar in a bill? I am all up for ensuring that the grammar in a bill gets tidied up, but let us prioritise the work in this chamber. I think most Victorians would be absolutely horrified to think that this government has run out of ideas and has got to fix grammar in bills rather than bring vital bills into this house to ensure that the community feels safe, that vital infrastructure gets unloaded and that we are able to tackle the cost-of living crisis which we have in this state because of the Allan Labor government.

It is a classic example. You can see it costs \$84 million per week to the Victorian economy, the Port of Melbourne being held to ransom, with 50,000 containers not being able to be unloaded because of the four-day picket line. We have heard Extinction Rebellion and others want to do it again and again and again. We have seen certainly, when it comes to the Zim containers, Palestinian protesters up and about saying that these had critical weapons – I mean, heaven forbid. They had agricultural product that was going from Victoria, as an export, to other countries – actually, not even Israel.

What do we have – we have the left-wing loonies wanting to hold our ports to ransom. If this government cares about the cost of living, if this government cares about trade and investment and if this government cares about restoring confidence in our economy, what it will do is support the member for South-West Coast and ensure that we promptly debate this bill and ultimately support this bill. It would send massive confidence to all of those people that are trying to trade and invest here in this state if this government would actually do something and our police could have the powers to respond. At the moment our police are working with one arm tied behind their back because this government will not give them the powers to do anything. When the police commissioner says on radio that they desperately need the powers to act, that should be an absolute example that this government is not giving them the powers that they need. We are at an absolute all-time low when it comes to community safety, and this government needs to finally do something about it.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (10:00): It is great to rise on the procedure debate, and – shock, horror – we will be opposing the member for South-West Coast's position for a couple of reasons. It goes to a couple of points around procedural interventions that have been made over recent weeks. The previous intervention that we had around machetes, that procedural intervention, was against the position of the chief commissioner about powers that were put forward and things that were said. This is the inverse now, and what we see in the procedural motion is that whatever is in the clip – so whatever is in the news of the day – becomes then the going theme of whoever will offer up their ideas and streams of consciousness to the house. It is not normally the way that governance goes. Normally you take a considered and measured approach, like considering whether the provisions under part 7A

of the Emergency Management Act 2013, which have been explicitly designed to deal with emergency risk, are appropriate. Are they in place? They are used as part of that vital and critical infrastructure protection, and I think the member for Greenvale covered that off really critically.

To see how this plays out, because the chief commissioner of course put Extinction Rebellion and others that are disrupting our state on notice, I think is a better approach – to be considered in the way that we bring bills, considered in the way that we put legislation forward, which has all elements of involvement, including from the maritime union, Victoria Police, the stevedores and everyone working towards a greater outcome. That is how you do considered policy, not procedural debates that then waste the time of the Parliament, where after a little while we discover the huge gaping holes that have not been consulted right, like we have seen in other procedural debates and interventions. They surely have not gone through shadow cabinet, because some of them you could drive a truck through. You go, ‘What’s the real intention of this then?’ I think it is more about platforming individuals, because those that front up with the procedural motions have a vested interest in that. You notice the member for Brighton trying to get a bit more airtime as he goes through –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I would ask you to bring the member back to the motion before us.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mordialloc, come back to the motion before the house.

Tim RICHARDSON: Earlier in this week there was a concern around the time that was allocated on a particular bill around the State Electricity Commission. We saw a lot of discussion around people wanting to front up and make their contributions on that bill. Then, when 5 pm hit, the whole speakers list fell to pieces. It was vacated, completely gone. There were 5-minute contributions. So for the actual contributions that were made, the time that was allocated was greatly sufficient despite those protests.

Then we see these procedural interventions that stop members from making their contributions on bills that have been put forward for the two weeks, that have been shown to communities and that people expect us to front up and speak on. It is not the way you govern. It is not the way that you bring forward considered things. It is not to say that members cannot bring their private members bills. The Greens have. The member for South-West Coast has brought forward a procedural intervention, and we will vote on whether the procedural motion goes forward. I do not want to predict the vote, but I have got a sense of how it might go, like the other procedural interventions before. But it has had a crack. It has been put on the notice paper. The member for South-West Coast has platformed, and if that is a pitch to go for deputy leader, then I am the number one ticketholder. I was number one for the member for Eildon. I thought, ‘Harshly done, but go for it. Have a crack.’

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

Leave refused.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (25): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O’Brien, Michael O’Brien, Kim O’Keeffe, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Jess Wilson

Noes (56): 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, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Sam Hibbins, 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, Tim Read, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ellen Sandell, 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

Motion defeated.

Documents

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Auditor-General – Results of 2022–23 Audits: Local Government – Ordered to be published

Building Act 1993 – Cladding Rectification Levy Review Report under s 205LO

Cladding Safety Victoria Act 2020 – Review Report under s 45.

Committees

Parliamentary committees

Membership

The SPEAKER (10:10): I have received the resignation of Kim O’Keeffe from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee and Ellen Sandell from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee effective from 6 March 2024.

Motions

Middle East conflict

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (10:10): I move, by leave:

That this house:

- (1) notes that, since this house resolved on 17 October 2023 to ‘stand with Israel’, the following has occurred: the Israeli military has killed or injured over 100,000 Palestinians, causing a growing humanitarian catastrophe; and
- (2) does not support the state of Israel’s continued invasion of Palestine.

Leave refused.

Business of the house

Adjournment

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (10:11): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday 19 March 2024.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

Moonee Valley Festival

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for Medical Research) (10:11): It has been a heartwarming couple of weeks in the Niddrie electorate. First, I had the pleasure of attending the very much revamped Moonee Valley Festival, coming back after a six-year hiatus. A highlight of the day was definitely the citizenship ceremony, which for the very first time was held outside. With the Melbourne weather being perfect on 24 February, it was just sensational – we welcomed 120 new Australian citizens. It was a particularly moving moment seeing the crowd come together singing *We Are Australian*, waving the Aboriginal flag in one hand and the Australian flag in the other. I received an email from a community member who said they had been a globetrotter and had been to several

citizenship ceremonies but this one was by far the very best: 'It could not have been a better day.' And I could not agree more.

Helping Hands Mission

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for Medical Research) (10:12): It was also very exciting to attend the official opening of Helping Hands in McIntosh Street, Airport West. This is a wonderful service that the Allan Labor government has contributed \$350,000 to to help them transfer to McIntosh Street, Airport West, to continue supporting 70 families every day with their community pantry, supported also by the wonderful LaManna at Essendon Fields. With their employment and education programs and Gaye's Vintage Shop, Helping Hands is a wonderful icon in the Niddrie electorate. Its new home in McIntosh Street, Airport West, will ensure that it goes on to service the local community for many years and many decades to come. I congratulate Melanie and all the team at Helping Hands.

VicRoads

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (10:13): Imagine driving on the road for three weeks with a licence that has not expired, totally unaware that your licence has been cancelled by VicRoads without them notifying you. Truck driver and freight business owner William Neale from South-West Coast recently had his licence downgraded from a heavy vehicle licence to an ordinary car licence – and get this, he was not even told. He drives a truck, not a car. On 16 February William received a letter from VicRoads that was dated 10 February. The letter stated that from 27 January his truck licence was suspended. Yes, you heard me right: the suspension occurred 20 days prior to William receiving the VicRoads letter and two weeks prior to the letter even being written. William has now suffered a loss of income due to VicRoads' incompetence, and he has been unable to run his business and work as a truck driver.

This shows, plain and simple, how Labor have allowed the mismanagement of VicRoads, which they partially privatised to pay back their debt. Imagine the risk to his business if he had had an accident – his insurance would not have covered him, and he would have lost everything. The privatisation of VicRoads has created nothing but grief for William and placed William in a position where for three weeks he was unknowingly unlicensed and uninsured. That is not good enough, and it is time Labor got serious about fixing the mess at VicRoads before more true-blue truckies have their lives turned upside down by bureaucracy gone mad.

Trentham ambulance services

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (10:14): I rise today to celebrate several big wins in my electorate of Macedon. Last Friday I was delighted to be in Trentham with Ambulance Victoria, Sabatino Constructions and Cr Brian Hood, mayor of Hepburn shire, to announce the delivery of a new ambulance community officer branch. Since 2020 the Trentham community has been served by dedicated volunteer members of the community emergency response team – people like Kim, Dave and Mynette. But with increased demand, the upgraded ACO branch will employ paid on-call first responders, making it easier to recruit more local members and enhance patient care. Once complete, the new facility will include a training room, rest areas for crews and space for a new ambulance vehicle. This is a huge win for the Trentham community, and I am grateful to all who have played a role in achieving it. I particularly want to call out Ethan Brown. Ethan has been a tireless advocate for ambulance services for the people of Trentham in the time that I have been the member for Macedon. Ethan was unable to join us on that day for a very good reason – because he is off doing his nursing degree at university. So, Ethan, thank you so much for your advocacy, and thank you for your commitment to joining our healthcare workforce here in Victoria.

Macedon electorate community sport

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (10:16): The Allan Labor government has also been delivering much-needed sporting infrastructure at Riddells Creek and at Daylesford to support community sport, which is central, absolutely critical – it is the lifeblood of country towns, and only an Allan Labor government will continue to support it.

International Women's Day

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (10:16): On International Women's Day I want to give a big shout-out to all of our fantastic women that are doing wonderful things in my electorate of Caulfield and across the state. I want to particularly acknowledge some of the women, including Ronit and Ramona Chrapot, who will be coming into Parliament later today, a mother–daughter duo. Ronit is championing the Women's International Zionist Organization, and Ramona's social media stuff is fantastic on 'Did you know?' Get on it.

Could I also give a shout-out to Daniela Markovic from Community Information and Support Glen Eira, Kerry Rendell from Connect Local, Sharon Lowe from the Social Blueprint, Tracey Burt from Caulfield South Community House, Romi Kupfer from the Centre of Jewish Artists, Danielle Eyssens from SES Glen Eira, Krizia Garrido from Kitty Rescue Squad, Gali Blacher from the Good Box, Belle Goldman from FoodFilled, Maureen Shulsinger from Emmy Monash, Naomi Levin from the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, Joey Thomas from the B'nai B'rith Mitzvah unit. The list goes on: Leah Boulton from Pathways Melbourne; Raizel Fogel from Haven for Mothers and Babies; Michelle Kornberg from Caring Mums; Kathy Kaplan – fantastic job at Impact for Women; Lee-at Jacobson from the Jewish Professional Women's Network; Lisa Ezekiel from the National Council of Women Australia; and our 'Bring them home' crew, including Natasha Blumenkranc from Project 10,000, Talya Rotman, Nirit Eylon, Halleli Kimchi and Moran Dvir. Thank you to all of you.

Werribee Football Club

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Economic Growth) (10:17): With footy starting back this month for the 2024 season, I am really pleased to offer my best wishes to the mighty Werribee Tigers. Last year I updated the house on the team's marvellous season, with the club winning 16 of 18 regular games played, which was a tremendous effort. The club secured a spot in the grand final, unfortunately not going to that last stage and coming in second, runners up to the Gold Coast Suns.

The Tigers are already hard at work, so I am full of optimism for the season. With preseason and practice matches, winning Saturday's game against the member for Pascoe Vale's team the Coburg Lions – I expect to be seeing the member for Pascoe Vale wearing the Tigers tie at some point – and almost doubling their score, 44–84, it is great to see the CEO for the club Mark Penaluna and players back again with enthusiasm to continue their great work this year with a premiership in mind.

The Werribee Tigers are an important part of the social fabric of our community and have been a staple part of my electorate, bringing the community together since the team was formed in 1964. They are more than just a football club; they organise engagements in schools, sports and holiday clinics, women's football, and offer kids programs that build diversity and inclusion. I am proud to stand with the Tigers, and I wish them all the best for the season.

Euroa electorate State Emergency Service units

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (10:19): I want to express my sincere appreciation for all the SES units across Euroa electorate, who continue to show incredible courage, composure and expertise even in the most challenging circumstances. In towns like Euroa, Seymour, Benalla, Heathcote, Murchison and Kilmore the local SES units have been at the forefront of all recovery efforts, from floods, storms

and power outages to car accidents. So often with accidents in small towns the first responders are neighbours, friends and loved ones, making this an incredibly tough role for these volunteers to have.

In January the Euroa SES diligently responded to more than 50 call-outs in a single night after heavy storms wiped out power for much of the town. For a town of just 3000 people this is an incredible demonstration of local volunteers stepping up to help their community. This week I met with John Koutras, the unit controller for SES Kilmore, and witnessed their rapid response to a code 1 rescue call, the most severe and often life-threatening situation. Within 7 minutes Cheryl, Simon, Kerry and John sprang into action, leaving their day jobs without hesitation to aid someone in distress. This is a small unit yet one that has already been called out to 191 requests for assistance in the year to date.

I call on the Treasurer to offer our SES units protection from funding cuts and provide security to these volunteer forces that are saving lives each and every day. Our SES units continue to do amazing things with a limited budget.

The Heights Kindergarten

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (10:20): I am pleased to speak about my recent visit to The Heights Kindergarten on Morang Drive in Mill Park. It was lovely to read *Muddypaws* with the four-year-old kinder group and receive a wonderful drawing from Chelsea, which now sits on the fridge in my electorate office. Jenny and her team are doing fantastic work and now will be able to do even more with the \$6000 bush kinder grant they received under the Allan Labor government's bush kinder program. Bush kinder programs are delivered outdoors at places including parks, bushland and beaches, giving children a unique opportunity and freedom to learn through play in the outdoors. While we do not have any beaches near Mill Park, we certainly have many reserves and the beautiful Plenty Gorge, and it will be a wonderful way to get kinder kids into nature. Jenny and her team have some exciting ideas for the program, and I am excited to see it get up and running very soon.

Linda White

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (10:21): I also want to take this opportunity to recognise the passing of former Senator Linda White. With 25 years as assistant national secretary of the Australian Services Union, she was a formidable unionist with a heart for working people and equality for women in work. In our party she was a fighter for gender equality and central to securing the affirmative action reforms, making our party so much better for it – you only have to look at the wealth of women that we have here that are really driving the fantastic reforms that speak to women in our community. I had the great fortune of working alongside Linda and the clerks reform group and the ASU. Life can be unfair and, in this case, heartbreakingly so. Vale, comrade. We will miss you.

SUV regulation

Tim READ (Brunswick) (10:22): Paris is about to triple its parking fees for large SUVs – up to €18 per hour in a bid to stop these bulky, dangerous and polluting vehicles from filling the inner-city streets. Here in Melbourne we are seeing more and more Ford Raptor and Dodge Ram oversize utes bulging out of their parking spaces into adjoining roads and bike lanes or struggling to negotiate roundabouts on smaller streets. Typically containing one occupant, they rarely seem to be full of essential cargo or tools. You can even see this autobesity affecting the SUVs in our parliamentary car park. They are expensive, often costing well over \$100,000. They are big, often over 2 tonnes and 2 metres wide, and they are dirty. If SUVs were a country, they would be the sixth largest emitter on earth. And they are dangerous, with their high fronts creating enormous blind spots. A child is eight times more likely to die when hit by an SUV compared to a passenger car. So I encourage the state government to act swiftly to stop these truckzillas from taking over our inner city, using whatever fees or regulations are necessary. For inspiration the government should look at a motion currently before Yarra City Council, which may be about to do just this.

Ivanhoe electorate funding

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (10:23): We will just go around the grounds of the Ivanhoe electorate, of course bounded by the Darebin Creek and the Yarra River.

\$3.2 million for the Macleod Park redevelopment is going to be great for the Macleod Junior Football Club, the Eagles. In particular that demolition has almost been concluded. There is \$1.5 million from the Allan Labor government, and they have had a fantastic year down there at the junior football club, including my daughter's team. They are the reigning premiers as we head into the football season this year.

At Viewbank Primary School we have now concluded almost \$11 million in upgrade works. I am looking forward to seeing the new administration and classroom block, which is a \$6.9 million redevelopment, which we have just about concluded. I am sure we will get that open at the start of term 2 with principal Bill Kersing.

Banyule Primary School has \$12.38 million for permanent classrooms. That project has now almost concluded, and I am sure we will get that one open next term. That builds on the almost \$4 million that we bid to conclude the school hall.

We have also got the Tarakan public housing state – 130 new homes, a \$63 million investment. We are opening that next week with Minister Shing in West Heidelberg. That has created some 669 new jobs. It is a fantastic development, and I am really looking forward to that bringing so many new families – 130 new homes – into West Heidelberg.

And of course Heidelberg Primary School has a \$14 million commitment for the redevelopment of that amazing school in Heidelberg, and I am looking forward to seeing how we go in the budget on that one. But we will be getting the job done.

Community Keys

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (10:25): Beth Williams of Yarra Glen is just one of those people who gets an idea and does not let it go. Her project, Community Keys, is a winner. With a small grant from the council, Beth is establishing pianos in public places across the Yarra Ranges, with a piano outside the Memo in Healesville being the first. Beth, a classically trained opera singer, along with her husband Simon Walkenhorst, a classically trained pianist and Hargreaves Hill beer brewer, wowed the crowd with their singing and playing. Joining the entertainment were Vasudha Harte, Nicole Broughton and her partner Anthony. Vasudha is one of the many people who can play the piano but does not have one to play. Problem solved: duck into Healesville and tickle the ivories. For children walking past, seeing that piano might spark an interest and encourage them to have a go. Pianos are being progressively rolled out in Yarra Glen, Lilydale, Mooroolbark, Belgrave and Monbulk.

Tayla Street

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (10:26): Flowerdale's Tayla Street is an impressive young woman with a string of victories in her chosen sport, flat track racing. On her motorbike Tayla has won three Australian pro open women's titles, five consecutive Victorian women's state titles, a South Australian title and numerous top 10 final positions at national and state level in pro 450 and pro open. Some of her victories have been against men in the open races. While Tayla has done so well at the age of 24, the sport is not one that is financed, so she has the difficult task of seeking sponsorship to allow her to compete but is always open to opportunities, and I hope everybody listens to her.

Victorian Mosque Open Day

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) (10:26): Like many of us on Sunday 25 February, I was really pleased to attend my local mosque at Newport

for the annual open mosque day. I was pleased to also be joined by the Minister for Multicultural Affairs Ingrid Stitt. The minister and I toured the mosque, spoke with members of the community and were shown around by the committee members, the imams and of course the legendary Bachar Houli. There was great excitement about the recently opened Islamic Centre college, which is currently taking students from prep to grade 4 and will continue to grow into the future.

Williamstown Open Water Challenge

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) (10:27): It has not just been that occurring in the Williamstown electorate. This past Sunday I was on Williamstown Beach at 7 am bright and early to attend the Williamstown Open Water Challenge, which was organised by the Williamstown Swimming and Life Saving Club. This was a wonderful community event with competitors of all ages and their families gathering on the beach for a day of competition, community spirit and fun, so thank you to the club for having me along.

Williamstown Local Port Area Plan

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) (10:27): Let us not forget too that Williamstown has a long, rich maritime history. Our government is working hard to preserve this and strengthen the area into the future through the *Williamstown Local Port Area Plan*. Last year community stakeholders gave feedback on the use and function of the port facilities and the environmental and economic benefits, and from their input the port area plan was developed. I am pleased to be part of a government that is planning for the future of the Williamstown maritime precinct.

North End Bakehouse Shepparton

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (10:28): I rise today to congratulate Matt Aylett and his team at North End Bakehouse Shepparton, who have been awarded Australia's best vanilla slice and hot cross bun at the 2024 Baking Association of Australia awards. This is not the first time North End Bakehouse has won these awards, previously winning Australia's best hot cross bun in 2021 and 2022 and best vanilla slice in 2023. However, this is the first time a bakery has won both titles, the best hot cross bun and vanilla slice, at the awards. What a fantastic achievement. From humble beginnings back in 2014 with just three staff, the bakery has flourished and now employs 12 staff and is embarking on opening a second bakery in Mooroopna in April. People are flocking from near and far to taste Australia's best hot cross bun and vanilla slice, and I encourage you to come to my electorate and do just that. Well done to Matt, Shekiah and their wonderful team.

Mooroopna Primary School

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (10:29): Last week I attended a session with grade 6 students at Mooroopna Primary School who have been participating in the parliamentary WebEx information sessions. It was fantastic to hear the students so interested in politics, and it was a joy to share my experience so far as well as answer their questions. I also had the pleasure of presenting the school badges to the school captains Psalm and Charlotte, school leaders Zara and Sophie and house captains Lily, Scarlett, Stella, Victoria, Marcus, Willow, Maliyah and Tahlia.

Container deposit scheme

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (10:29): Today I rise to congratulate all those in my community who are keenly supporting the container deposit scheme. Since the launch of the CDS locals in my community have jumped on the opportunity to increase recycling, reduce litter and earn some cash for themselves, their communities and charities, with the reverse vending machine at Craigieburn Central being the ninth

most used site across all of metropolitan Melbourne. It is terrific to see the enthusiasm around this initiative and the positive change it makes to the environment and the community.

Across the state Victorians have returned more than 220 million containers, which amounts to \$22 million back into the pockets of families, while in my electorate there have been 5.7 million containers returned, which equates to \$570,000 invested right back into our community through refunds and donations. A number of local organisations have already signed up to receive donations as part of this scheme, meaning club members, volunteers and the general public can make a contribution to an organisation of their choice. These organisations include the VICSES Craigieburn unit, Craigieburn Little Athletics, Craigieburn Falcons, Merrifield Panthers Sporting Association, Wallan Football and Netball Club and Second Chance Animal Rescue. I am sure that more clubs will sign up and join this program as it continues to grow. Locals can return their containers at several sites across Craigieburn and Wallan, and I thank both Tomra and Visy for operating these refund points. I encourage all Kalkallo residents and community organisations to get on board the CDS and bring more of these environmental and financial benefits to our community.

Warrandyte Cricket Club

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (10:31): It has been a busy past few weeks in Warrandyte. Recently I attended Warrandyte Cricket Club's Pink Stumps Day, which helped raise more than \$40,000 for the McGrath Foundation. A big shout-out to Katie Taubert for her devotion to our community.

Run Warrandyte

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (10:31): On Sunday I had the privilege of attending the annual Run Warrandyte, which is a brilliant community initiative that raises funds for our local community. Run Warrandyte has raised over \$132,000 for local clubs, charities and schools, including the Warrandyte Football Club, Warrandyte Netball Club, Warrandyte Cricket Club and the Warrandyte Junior Football Club. I would love to commend the efforts of these sports clubs and their strong community advocacy, which has realised tangible outcomes. To name a few, thank you to Phil Treeby, Brad Byrnes, Jeff Evans, Owen Humphries, Karina Vitiritti, Luke Warren, Dave Molyneux and Jimmy Harris for speaking up about the best position for the container recycling vending machine, and most of all to Manningham mayor Carli Lange for your excellent work. I love seeing wins for our community.

Warrandyte electorate Country Fire Authority brigades

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (10:32): I would like to give a shout-out to the courageous CFAs in my electorate, Wonga Park CFA, South Warrandyte CFA, Chirnside Park CFA, North Warrandyte CFA and Warrandyte CFA, which deployed or sent volunteers to the Beaufort fires. I was speaking to one of our CFA volunteers, who said, 'We're going in to help them now, but it makes me emotional to think that they'll all be there for us when we need them.'

Jeff Mawkes

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Development Victoria, Minister for Precincts, Minister for Creative Industries) (10:32): I rise to mourn the passing of Mr Jeff Mawkes, who was the much-loved president of Watsonia RSL, on 11 December last year. In 1969 Jeff was called for national service and was deployed to Vietnam as a gunner in the 8th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. Jeff was proud of his service in Vietnam, though he like many other soldiers experienced a level of post-traumatic stress disorder, something that he spoke about once he returned. When he joined the Watsonia RSL in 1972 it became a place for him to relax and unwind with people who had had the same experiences that he had had.

Before and after his service in Vietnam Jeff served the Victorian police force, which saw him work as a detective and in close personal protection of the Prime Minister, premiers and other VIPs and hold

leadership roles with the riot squad and as a police negotiator and as part of the critical response team. Members of the Watsonia RSL recall how, as much as he worked hard in his early years in the police force, he certainly also played just as hard. His service as president of Watsonia RSL exemplified his strong work ethic, commitment to service and his warm and friendly nature. I feel privileged to have known him. In particular I extend on behalf of my local community deepest sympathies to Jeff's wife Tricia, his four children, six grandchildren and many, many friends in the Watsonia RSL community.

Carrum electorate schools

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for the Suburbs) (10:34): Congratulations to Nikita Collins and Liam Byl, the 2024 school captains at Skye Primary School. Congratulations to Mila Mahardika and Amelia Derks, the 2024 school captains at Belvedere Park Primary School. You have taken on an important responsibility, and I know you will be wonderful role models and you will work hard to support your peers to be the absolute best they can be.

Dunkley by-election

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for the Suburbs) (10:34): It was a big weekend in Dunkley. Congratulations, Jodie Belyea, Labor's outstanding candidate to replace our very dear friend and colleague Peta Murphy, who passed away in December 2023. Thank you for their extraordinary effort to so many volunteers and supporters. Peta knew and loved the Dunkley community so well. She understood what is important to our local community and why we are elected to Parliament – to be the best representative for all members of our community, to put our community first, to fight with everything we have got to make life better and fairer and kinder and to help everyone to reach their full potential. I was reminded of this on the polling booth last Saturday when young Poppy came to visit wearing a Peta Murphy T-shirt. I know Peta's kindness and support has made a profound and lasting difference for Poppy. That was Peta Murphy to a tee. I know Jodie will pick up where Peta left off, and I could not think of a better person to do so.

International Women's Day

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for the Suburbs) (10:35): Tomorrow is International Women's Day. Thank you to so many women in my life who inspire me every day with their extraordinary drive and ambition to make life better and fairer. To the inspiring women in my office who are helping to shape the future for Victoria – Brigid Sammon, Phoebe Harrison, Giselle Osborne, Katie Gompertz, Hayley Presnell, Lauren Johnson and Nadia Oosthuizen – thank you.

McMahons Road–Burwood Highway, Ferntree Gully

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:35): 'Whatever, mate. Heard it all before. Believe it when I see it. Not in my lifetime. You're all the same. Never keep your word.' These are all things that people said about the McMahon's Road–Burwood Highway project, and it is now officially open. This was long talked about by others, and only the Allan Labor government have gotten on and delivered this project on time. If you drive along Burwood Highway through Ferntree Gully, there is a new signalised intersection and there are four legs of pedestrian crossings – it is a thing of beauty – new lanes right around it and dedicated right-turning lanes. It is fantastic. Come on down. Check it out for yourself. Delivered, and it is only thanks to a Labor government.

Wantirna College

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:36): At Wantirna College the new double-court competition-grade gym and the new performing arts spaces are set to start construction in term 2. I was out there with acting principal Carrie Wallis, a fantastic human being and a great educator. This school deserves every single cent of this funding. It is going to make a huge difference, and I cannot wait to see construction get underway in earnest.

Bayswater electorate housing

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:36): It was great to be out with the Minister for Housing in Wantirna South recently as well, where we have delivered \$40 million to help build 118 new social housing dwellings, one of many projects helping to put roofs over people's heads. As a local member I will never shy away from advocating for more social housing. It is a critical thing that this government delivers, and I am very proud of our record.

Kent Park Primary School

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:37): And a very quick shout-out to the new student leaders at Kent Park Primary School. I was very impressed with the Q and A session. I asked what they think great leadership entails: one of them said tolerance – some great answers. The future is bright indeed.

Kangan Institute and Oasis Horticulture

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (10:37): A celebratory December day in Devon Meadows – 34 employees, 34 certificates, 34 handmade graduation hats thrown sky high, smiles beaming bright. In an industry-first partnership, Australia's largest producer and distributor of bedding plants, Oasis Horticulture, with the renowned Kangan Institute developed and then successfully delivered a groundbreaking training program onsite, on the job. Knowledge and expertise elevated, opportunities wingspanned across this nursery – a clarion call to others in the sector to do the same. Thank you to the Kangan team, Oasis and the stellar graduates for the invitation to join with you for this joyous ceremony. I was honoured to present certificates and delighted in the many conversations.

Massive congratulations and a big shout-out to Lisa, Sarah, Brad, Kelly, Denise, Jacqueline D, Jacqueline G, Natasha, Sonia, Janene, Amanda, May, Jennifer, Jaydenne, Belinda, Samantha, Janet, Bree, Kathryn, Melanie, Louise, Priscilla, Bradley, Belinda, Georgia, Nicole, Serena, Zoe, Leigh, Penelope, Channaren, Natalie, Rebecca, Gvido and to Oasis manager Stephen Lade, a graduate too. All now have a nationally recognised cert III in horticulture, an incredible achievement and one to relish with pride individually, as a team, as a workplace and as a vocational education and training provider. You are all so inspiring, leading the way. Wishing you all the very best of everything on this wonderful trajectory of all things green, living, cultivating and community.

Pakenham electorate storms

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (10:38): In February our area was hard-hit with storms. We are a resilient community, but I want to formally recognise the efforts of the SES, CFA, Victoria Police, Cardinia council, powerline workers and of course our locals, who all stepped up and worked tirelessly to keep us safe, reconnect the power and clear our roads.

Upper Beaconsfield Village Festival

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (10:39): On a more festive note, I was proud to open the Upper Beaconsfield Village Festival. With community and sustainability firmly at the centre of all planning and activities, the Upper Beaconsfield festival leads the way. A big thanks to Odie and his team of volunteers for such a wonderful event.

Pakenham electorate ministerial visits

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (10:39): It was terrific to have ministers and parliamentary secretaries visit the Pakenham electorate this month. The Minister for Transport Infrastructure and the parl sec, the member for Sunbury, came to view the progress of the new Pakenham station and level crossing removals. I had the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence in Pakenham to hear firsthand from caseworkers who work at WAYSS and the Orange Door, who do an amazing job delivering support to our district and people in need. The Minister for Education and I officially opened our newest primary school, Kurmile, in Officer.

Pakenham Auto Club

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (10:39): I recently took my kids to the Pakenham Auto Club to brush up on their driving skills and whip around the khanacross course. What an amazing family-friendly club, and the instructors are great at coaching the kids. We all had an absolute ball.

Beaconhills College

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (10:40): Last week I went to Beaconhills College with the mayor of Cardinia Jack Kowarzik to explain the three levels of government to the grade 4s. The kids were so engaged and asked so many wonderful questions.

Pakenham electorate housing

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (10:40): Lastly, I went to see the 16 new independent living units in Pakenham.

Monbulk electorate telecommunications infrastructure

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (10:40): It was a challenging time for residents across my electorate of Monbulk following the storms of 13 and 22 February. Almost all residences lost power for a time after tornado-like winds tore through the area, and where the power went out the mobile towers soon followed when their very limited battery backups ran dry. Nothing makes a person feel so vulnerable and at risk of harm as losing their access to making a phone call, especially in times of emergency. To not be able to call 000 for up to three days is beyond the pale. It is dangerous, and it can only lead to disastrous outcomes.

My constituents across the Dandenong Ranges are, to borrow a term from the new member for Dunkley, ‘hills tough’, but we do not believe that we should be isolated from all communications because mobile phone companies have not bothered to invest some of their eye-watering profits into hardening their infrastructure. On 14 February, while none of us could make a phone call without driving for up to 25 minutes to pick up a mobile phone signal, Telstra posted a \$1 billion profit. They can certainly afford to invest in building resilience into their mobile phone infrastructure. The technology exists, they have the money; they just need to take our safety seriously and do it.

I call on Telstra, Optus, TPG and Vodafone to improve mobile phone coverage across the ranges and eliminate black spots, to take steps to deliver more resilient infrastructure, to ensure mobile telecommunications are maintained during prolonged power outage periods and to restore coverage faster when coverage is lost. It is time to tell telcos: power the towers.

Berwick electorate telecommunications infrastructure

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (10:41): I join in the call on Telstra – and we also should call on the government – to fix the black spots down in Clyde North.

Bills**Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024***Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (10:42): I rise to speak on the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024. I will go through what this bill is about and some of the conditions that we will be considering and having a look at through this. I will start off by saying the opposition will not be opposing this bill. We will raise some concerns, but they are minor concerns with some of the elements of the bill and how it is structured.

The purpose of the bill is 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 to the operation of the Drug Court division of the County Court and for other purposes.

I was going to put some examples in here talking about private security. Obviously, we went through our consultation. I did not think speaking to Wadda and Dazza at the Bezza pub was probably the best consultation – they asked me to leave when I was 18, 19, 20 and 21. I can tell you the work that they do is fantastic. They quite regularly would escort me out of the Berwick hotel, which may have given me a good reputation in Berwick, so it was not a problem back at the time.

We do understand how important our security is – our security officers around Victoria and the work they do. But because they do on most occasions wear a uniform, we have to ensure that the people in those industries are the right people, that they are people of good character, because when people are in trouble, when they are having issues in the street, no matter where they are, if they see someone in uniform, generally we want them to have the security and feel safe to be able to walk up to them and ask them for assistance. This also extends to the private security inside licensed clubs. We need to make sure, again, that they are of good character and that they have the training and understanding so they will not incite or increase violence whilst in those venues, and I will go through some of those examples later on.

The main purposes of this bill are to amend the Private Security Act 2004 to provide for a new licensing system for the private security industry in relation to applications for and the renewal of a private security licence and in relation to complaints about the conduct of a holder of a private security licence; to provide for offences in relation to subcontracting; to provide for a code of conduct for holders of private security licences; to require a risk management plan to be prepared before a security activity is carried out; in relation to the appointment of special counsel under part 7 of that act; 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 to consequently amend other acts.

I am going to speak mostly on the private security section of this bill, and I know the member for Malvern will be directing more of his comments towards what has been happening in the Drug Court. But I can say from experience of seeing the Drug Court operations as a whole I think most people in this house would support the Drug Courts, what they are doing and some of the actions they have taken, particularly around the different style of sentencing that they are giving people who are entering the justice system due to habits of drugs and trying to work out ways that we can identify the issue, not the crime that happened after, because if you can solve the drug issue, as a rule of thumb you generally solve the crime a lot more easily. So the Drug Court division and the Drug Courts generally have the support of the Liberal and National parties here in Victoria, and opportunities to expand that or extend it I think would be on the whole mostly supported.

As background, a well-trained and regulated private security workforce is crucial to protecting and promoting community safety across a wide range of activities. The following quote, which can be attributed to a security industry group, aptly illustrates this point:

Private security industry performs an important frontline role in safeguarding the interests of Victorian businesses, government and the broader community. There is a growing reliance by the Victorian community on the services provided by the security industry, whether protecting crowded places, providing security at sporting events and concerts, hospitals, critical infrastructure, utilities, military bases, licensed premises, shopping centres, ports, airports, courts, cash management and transportation, installing alarms, access control and video surveillance systems, monitoring alarms in accordance with Australian Standards or physical security measures.

Just by that alone you can see that the broad range of the security industry is and always has been something for the whole of the community. But it is expanding, and we are seeing it expand in many different communities. A lot more people would have an alarm at home now. More and more people in our community are having those alarms monitored. More and more people are having cameras installed at home, whether that is external or internal, and that is why it is really important that when

we do have people coming into our homes, installing cameras and monitoring our systems, we have a system in place or a licensing system that ensures that those people are of good character.

Sad but true at the moment too is that a lot of our communities are seeing an increase in crime, and I can speak specifically on one down in my electorate, Alira estate. Alira estate has seen an increase in crime. Whilst a lot of it has been burglaries, there has been an increase in home invasions or aggravated burglaries – so burglaries whilst people are home and cars being stolen. We have had stories where a young group of guys have gone into a house. A grandmother with her two grandchildren were at one end of the house. They have come in with absolutely zero care for obviously who is home, with the sole intention of stealing cars.

This is becoming a bit of a habit, an increase in crime across our state, where we have seen these figures jump to over 5000 annually. They are scary numbers when we have got home invasions above that number of 5000, approaching 6000 very fast, and I have no doubt this year it will probably reach that 6000, on the current trend. If you go back only a few years, that was as low as 1900, so it is a big change in what we are seeing in crime. What does it do? When you have a burglary and you come home and your house has been broken into, generally that unsafe feeling or feeling of insecurity is just within that household. You might mention it to your neighbours, but when it is becoming home invasions, that fear is generated through the whole street.

Alira estate got to a stage where they were very concerned about these crimes, and they understood that they were not getting the police service where they were, not because of the Victoria Police members, who work very, very hard in trying to respond out there. But there are a lot of vacancies at Narre Warren station, and we do not have the Clyde North police station that was promised by the Labor government in 2018 and 2022 and is yet to be delivered. Members of this community want to take matters into their own hands – well, they do not want to, but they are – and they do not want to be vigilante-style people in that community where they go out themselves, so they have actually employed their own security to monitor what is going on in the streets in the evening. Sad but true, they are not alone; we are hearing more and more across different parts of the state that people are hiring their own private security people to drive around the street.

We know in this house and many in the community understand that a security guard is never going to have the same powers as a Victoria Police officer. They do not carry the same weapons and they do not have the same self-defence skills, as a rule of thumb, and we want to make sure that those going out there understand what the restrictions are on what they can and cannot do. That is not just for the community, that is also for the person who is going out into that position, because we do not want them getting into a position where they think that they can act like a police officer and have the same powers, because they just will not be protected. I think we have got to be very, very cautious if we are going to end up with private security in these areas. That has happened in the past in different areas. We want to make sure that they have got the training and the understanding, and part of that training is, believe it or not, self-preservation. If you see a specific offence happening, it is not your responsibility as a security guard to get out and try and arrest five people coming out of a house. That is not your responsibility – your responsibility is to call the police – but you can sit, watch, monitor et cetera.

Part of the training and understanding for our security guards who are going out and protecting communities – and doing a great job – is they need to also understand what their restrictions are and what laws will and will not protect them. I think our system at the moment does not quite allow for that training – sorry, it does allow for the training, but that does not mean you have to do that training to be a licensed security guard at the moment. The training is quite narrow, and the industry itself has attracted people who, when they come into the role, do not need a set of skills to come in. They can come in on a lower set of skills than probably, I would say, would be required. I think this bill will address many parts of that.

The industry can be divided up: we have got the protective security sector and the technical sector. The protective security sector encompasses persons engaging in a range of work, including crowd controllers, investigators, cash in transit et cetera. One of the things I do state is that they also do security at sporting events. We all see it. We go to the MCG to the Boxing Day test or the grand final – probably more the Boxing Day test than the grand final – where everybody loves to boo the security guard who grabs the beachball when it is going around the top of the crowd and the crowd are having a good old time. Whilst those security guards will probably be booed a little bit, most people at the MCG would understand they are there for a very good reason.

The one thing I will say from previous experience of working at the MCG as a police officer is that communication between the security and Victoria Police at venues like that is paramount to making sure people are safe. It is for a range of reasons. Number one is that if anything does happen you want to make sure that everybody is on the same page, particularly if there is an emergency where you have to evacuate or move people out of an area. You want to make sure that the staff in those roles in security have the training, the ability and the understanding of what they have to do to ensure a safe way to get people out of the venue or onto the ground, whatever the case may be.

But it can also turn around. I worked at a North Melbourne and St Kilda game where a gentleman had a heart attack when he was just walking through the crowd. Who was the first to respond? It was actually the security. The security are all around there. We want to make sure security are trained, that they have got their first-aid certificates and that they know who to call and what the communication channel is in a venue like that. Doing that means that they can work with not just the police but with St John Ambulance or other organisations who are delivering first aid and that they are prepared for all of those things.

The next section that this goes to is in relation to subcontracting. Subcontracting is a problem at two levels. The first one is it appears in a form known as ‘sham contracting’, where people go out and effectively create a sham contract. This sees the employer trying to hide the employment relationship as an independent contract to avoid liability for employee entitlements. That is just simply not fair, and I understand this is one of the reasons it has come forward. Secondly, subcontracting by larger companies of smaller companies dilutes the control and responsibility at the time and how that could be operating. We need to make sure that we are not diluting who is responsible for delivering services. If you are an organisation that has signed a contract indicating that you will take on responsibility for a community, an area, a venue or a shopping centre – that you are going to deliver services that guarantee certain aspects of safety and that you have confidence your workforce are aware of their obligations – then you cannot just dilute that down and give it to somebody else who may not be in a position to do that. I think it is really important – probably one of the more important parts of the bill. Hopefully it will address this, when you are going down through all the subcontracts, and make sure that everything is completed on time and that the people at the coalface of what is happening understand the training material that is being delivered to them.

Obviously, there were some reports around why we needed to address the private security system, and one of the ones that did come up was the COVID-19 hotel quarantine inquiry final report. This noted the casualised nature of the industry and the associated lack of job security, lack of appropriate training and knowledge in safety and workplace rights, and susceptibility to imbalance of power resulting in the need of subcontractors to source and maintain work. While the inquiry concluded that the overwhelming majority of security guards who worked on the hotel program themselves did so honestly and with goodwill, the inquiry found a number of complaints about the behaviour of some guards in relation to being – I think the term used was – ‘overfriendly’, bullying and consuming alcohol while at work. Obviously, these three things happened specifically around this COVID-19 hotel quarantine but are reflective of what could happen in any organisation or any major event when you need that much security, particularly in a short period of time.

The other thing it did actually highlight at the time was responsibility, and I know this government celebrates shared responsibility. The problem with shared responsibility is there was no accountability,

and I think it is really important that – and I hope this legislation addresses it from within the company organisations, but I hope the government takes it on board as well – when you actually go through a shared responsibility program you still have to have someone that is ultimately responsible. We saw the failings of the hotel security. We saw the failings of the contract, but we never saw who actually signed off on it. To be honest, we do not even know who agreed or looked over these contracts at all, and there were a whole world of issues that we saw happen in Victoria directly related back to that. And that is not us saying it; that is report after report saying COVID came back out of the hotels and the failures of what was happening in there. Again I say it was not a failure of the security guards as a whole on the job. They were called in at short notice – ‘Here’s what we’ve got to do’ – and we understand it was a difficult time. But it was a failing of the contracting and then the subcontracting, and then no-one was responsible for who was doing what in there and the lack of supervision of what was happening within that system.

If it was happening in the COVID-19 hotel system at the time, it was happening in the security industry at the time, and we have seen over time some of the issues that have happened with that. We have been into liquor licensing venues, and we have seen where you have a security guard and they have to wear their security numbers. There are a whole range of conditions within legislation for what they have to do: sign on for their shift, sign off for their shift et cetera, et cetera. But there have been circumstances where a security guard will be signed on at more than one venue at one time. Obviously, we know some of us are good, but we are not that good that we can be in two different spots at one time. The problem with that is you will have a venue where they have got a liquor licence which will state, ‘For the first hundred patrons you have to have two security guards; for every 50 patrons thereafter you have to have another security guard who’s on duty.’ If it is a licensed venue with music, there are all the conditions around the liquor licensing. So to get around that and cost-save and shave off the cost, there were illegal operations happening where they were encouraged by employers to sign on at more than one location. As a rule they generally did that down in Prahran in Chapel Street or over here in King Street, where venues were owned by the same owner or multiple owners who had a pretty good relationship. What they would do is say, ‘If an incident happens at my bar, just make sure you get them over here before the coppers arrive so we can make sure that we’re all covered.’ Cameras these days have made that more difficult, but they have had those issues in the past.

I feel for the person who is the security guard at the front door, because a lot of them are just doing their job to earn their money to make sure they can put food on the table at home and pay their bills. But the pressure from above is actually where those concerns happen, and if the training is better for all of them, they may be able to pick that up and have a bit more confidence to speak up. But it ends up in the position that we saw at Salt nightclub, if you go back in the past, which was understaffed. We have had stabbings, fights and brawls in pubs and clubs where it has been proved that the lack of security was the biggest issue.

We have seen overcrowding in venues. That overcrowding is a huge safety risk – a massive safety risk – to everyone in our community. When you go into a pub and the pub says it is licensed for 300 people, there is a reason it is licensed for only 300 people. It is not just because there are only five toilets or four staff at the bar, it is because in the event of an emergency it is very difficult to get out. We have been pretty lucky here in Australia overall, but every single one of us has seen some video footage at some time of a venue where there has been a fire or something and the fire does not kill people but the crushing of them getting out the door does. And that is why we have these rules in place. I think it is really important that education for the staff is where we are heading to make sure that they are aware of the consequences of their actions and they can go back and have the confidence, again, to speak up, because their training has improved.

The report released just before Christmas in 2020, after the review of more than 70,000 documents and six weeks of hearings, identified flaws with almost every aspect of the Victorian government’s set-up on that hotel quarantine scheme for international arrivals. The findings, including that the majority of security guards, again, acted honestly, contradicted claims made by the Premier of the day

at the start of Victoria's second wave that infection-control mistakes made by security guards sharing cigarette lighters may have been to blame for the transmission of the virus. Justice Coates ruled that none of these workers went to work to get infected with COVID-19; however, systematic governmental failures led to problems. She concluded that a series of factors contributed to the program's inadequacy, including confused governance structures; the failure of ministers, including Mr Andrews, to consider the health risks of a hotel quarantine program; and the Department of Health and Human Services' refusal to accept responsibility despite being the lead agency. I have already gone around the path on that; that is that shared responsibility. When we talk about shared responsibility, we have got to have actual accountability.

We still say it is unthinkable that the government, so concerned about the ability of the private security industry to perform the work required to that standard that it launched a full-scale review, then engaged private security to handle the quarantine work. So not only had they already launched a review, they then went out there and incorrectly blamed the workers rather than the process or the governance of what set that up. The media reported at the time who was engaged with the formal tender process and selected with just 24 hours notice and that the third company used for the hotel program, Unified, was not even part of a preapproved panel of service providers at the time. That is government failure. That is the governance of it. That is not just directed to these organisations. Of course they were going to put their hand up; there was a lot of money up for grabs, and these were organisations that were trying to be out there and make money and create jobs. They were trying to make sure their staff had the employment they needed.

We have been asked to vote on this bill, but we know that the regulations have not been done as yet, so we actually asked when they will be drafted, the regulations for this, and we did not get any response other than 'In the next couple of years.' We think there have been a few years of ability to get this legislation done. At the same time, the draft, even a very informal draft, of the regulations could have come forward to give confidence in what is going to be delivered by the government. It is another example of this government kind of putting some legislation up and going, 'Here's some legislation, and how it's going to operate we'll work out later on – just trust us.' And I have no doubt it generally ends up coming back in here because there is a mistake because it was not well thought out and not a greatly conceived idea. Effectively they are putting the cart before the horse. We need to be putting this in place so we can get the knowledge and understanding of what it is. It is difficult in briefings – and I do not say this to departmental staff; this is a government responsibility. The government should be directing that we start to get those things in place.

We also say that these changes are still two years away. So there are still two years in this time where Victoria Police, the regulator for private security firearms licences as well as controlled weapons, is working on an outdated database that the parent company will no longer support in 2029, and the level of support provided by that company is very limited. The required system changes to implement amendments, particularly to licensing, including accommodation of transitional arrangements, will be costly and time consuming, and the government have not come and let us know how much this will cost. Then the third part of that is: who pays? I think it is a pretty genuine question.

If you are going to change these systems, let us just look at Victoria Police in the past under this government when they have tried to have ICT changes. The LEAP system is so out of date it makes you cringe about what Victoria Police are working with, with their current ICT systems and IT systems. But when this government tried to change them over, they spent \$120 million to try and change the LEAP system and update it, only to in the end go back to what the LEAP system was, and the only way that the company said they could do anything else was with another \$120 million. What was originally around a \$30 million contract ended up costing \$120 million – to go back to square one. Let us say we modernise to become Windows 11 and you ended up back on DOS for \$120 million. It just makes me cringe. It is \$120 million we could have been spending elsewhere.

I do not have any confidence that this government can deliver an IT program for this by the regulated date of 2029, and if they do manage to, we will guarantee, you can mark my word, it is going to be

five to ten times whatever they are estimating at the moment. Then they will go, 'Oh, we're upping the fees for security licences in Victoria, we're upping the fees for training and we're upping the fees for organisations. We're going to tax you more, we're going to take all that tax in and we're not making any money off it. It's not a profit organisation; it's actually just to cover the cost.' But if we went out and got the industry to do it then they could probably, for a third of the price or a 10th of the price, come up with something that is really worthwhile and works, which the government could then effectively just use from there. I think we need to look at the private sector and engage them better for what they are going to do with the ICT systems and the IT systems here in Victoria and then get the police involved after. At the moment we have no faith that the government can deliver an ICT system on time, on budget, and there is every chance that we are back in this chamber to extend the clause and the dates on this because of the fact that they will not have it ready at the time that they have promised.

The new fee structure, as I have said, is another issue not just because of the fact that we do not trust them with the delivering of the system but because they do not have in place at the moment how much it is going to cost, and the new fee structure for companies and individuals is not known. According to the explanatory memorandum:

The Regulations will need to be substantially re-drafted or re-made, requiring detailed analysis through a Regulatory Impact Statement to ascertain what fees are required on a cost recovery model ... It will take time to accurately assess what proportion of their time, on average, is spent on each private security licensing task before fees can be managed.

I do not want to be a sceptic, but I just do not trust this government when it comes to money. We are racking up a massive debt here in our state, as we know. We believe from the Parliamentary Budget Office it is going to be reaching out to \$247 billion, I think it was from memory. It just rolls off the tongue: a quarter of a trillion dollars. The government will be finding any way possible to recoup those costs. We have already seen it. We are seeing it right now. There is not a person in this house – if you have not had this call from someone in your electorate, you are not a member of Parliament. Someone in your electorate has contacted you and said, 'My land tax bill is horrendous. It has gone up by three, five, ten times.' Everyone must be getting it, and when they are getting that, they must understand the cost impact of that. The government is saying it is on the wealthy. They love saying that – 'It's on the wealthy.' But when it goes onto a bill and you get a bill for \$5000 for land tax, that means rent is going up by \$100 every week. So who pays it? The renter. The impact is that those that can least afford it end up paying the most. Landlords in Victoria, whether industrial or residential, are already paying the highest taxes. Interest rates have gone up. They have already absorbed a lot of cost, and now this government wants them to get it out of debt.

That will transfer over to places like this. That is why these pieces of legislation are coming in, partly. They know saying 'Trust us, we'll do our fees to make sure we can put good governance in place and have a no-cost return' is absolutely and utterly misleading Victoria. They will, I assure you, put in place fees that go back into general revenue, and that general revenue will if this government remains either be wasted on the project blowouts we already know they do across this state or be funnelled away to make their budget bottom line look better as they approach the next election. That is what it is all about for them when it comes to that. It is about putting those funds in the right spot to suit the Labor Party, not suit Victorians.

We need to make sure that we are doing these changes, which as I said as a whole we are supporting. I think I have put enough on record our support for the things that we do see to be changed. We do support the fact that these will put protections in place for staff. As I have said before, I think one of the highlights of this is the opportunity to make sure the training and education for security guards across Victoria is improved to give them the confidence, hopefully, to stand up against some of these rogue dealers who are the bigger organisations and even some of the smaller organisations out there.

In that contribution, as I said, we will not be opposing this bill, but we have raised some concerns. I assure you that we will be back here either to change the date or to have an argument about where that

money is going in the future. We want to make sure that it is there to protect our security guards, to protect Victorians with security who are on the street, to improve education and not to pay off a wasteful debt from this government.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (11:10): I am very pleased to rise to speak on this bill, and the bill is the product of a 2018 pre-election commitment to review and overhaul the private security industry – with good reason, I should say. Already today it has been discussed, the issue of sham contracting – I will go into that in a little further detail shortly – and the exploitation of workers. We know that the private security industry does help to support community safety and certainly has an important role in our community, but we need those workers to know that their rights will be protected and that we are looking out for them, and that is exactly why we are delivering these reforms here today on the back of the final report *Review of the Private Security Industry* in Victoria back in 2021. I should say the final report was subject to public consultation via discussion paper during a six-week period and provided 21 recommendations, all of which were accepted by the government. In terms of implementation, work has been underway since the final report was released to fulfil these recommendations, and around half are addressed by this bill. Importantly, and I will go further on that point, the other half did not require legislative amendment and have been implemented or are being implemented in an ongoing way through communication and education. I do want to emphasise that element. I note that Victoria Police and the Police Association Victoria do support this bill. That is very important as well.

Coming back to that issue of education, Victoria Police now sends out a fact sheet with every licence about workers rights and obligations, including where to find out what they should be paid and what their entitlements to leave, superannuation and other matters are. An underlying premise of these reforms is to elevate the professionalism of the industry as a whole but also to ensure that the workers who are providing this support for community safety can know and take pride in the work that they are doing because it will – and that is certainly an underlying premise here – furthermore elevate the way they are perceived in the community as well. By streamlining the licensing system and ensuring appropriate controls around the industry, certainly it is a goal to ensure that these workers get the respect and the conditions they deserve. There is also a further element to do with the Drug Court division within the County Court of Victoria to continue operating for two more years to help address offenders and drug and alcohol dependency. I will speak to that further in a moment, as well noting that it is another significant element of the reforms being put forward through this bill.

In terms of sham contracting, what we were seeing or have been seeing to date is would-be employers asking licence-holders to obtain an ABN so they can be classified as independent contractors rather than taking them on as employees. By doing this, dodgy employers have been able to skirt around the requirements of a genuine agreement. They do not have to pay an award wage, provide for superannuation or WorkCover insurance, and they do not have to provide for leave. I do not have to explain further the rather serious ramifications that have unfolded as a result. Whilst sham contracting is unlawful under Commonwealth and state industrial relations laws, the problem persists in some parts of the industry. That is why the bill will demand that any person listed as an independent contractor must also hold a private security business licence. The requirements will be prohibitively difficult unless a person genuinely runs a business and will create a vital barrier against employers forcing workers to enter into these unfair arrangements.

These reforms will protect workers, increase transparency and ensure providers and contractors are being held accountable, because we know that the nature of these roles is difficult, inherently difficult. You are dealing with sensitive circumstances, on the one hand protecting human beings and also having to – and I say this very broadly – de-escalate circumstances which can pose a significant level of risk, hence the impetus to ensure that this industry has a good licensing system in place and the education elements that are necessary.

On that note, there will be a new code of conduct with enforceable disciplinary action. This will benefit not only the community but workers, providing clear, consistent professional standards and positively

impacting – and I think this is really important as well when we are talking about how these workers are perceived – public perception of security workers. This will be developed by the Chief Commissioner of Police in close consultation with industry stakeholders. So here you can see inherent the goal of elevating the professionalism of the security industry.

Furthermore – and I think this is also a really important element – frontline workers will now be required to take refresher training prior to licence renewal, which occurs every three years, in skills, as has been mentioned in the chamber, such as first aid, safe physical restraint practices and verbal de-escalation tactics, which are critical for workers in these high-risk roles such as crowd control and static guarding. Compulsory refresher training will improve the safety of workers and the public, updating workers on developments in the application of skills and ensuring more effective interactions on the job.

I just want to note that obviously streamlining this licensing system is a large undertaking and one we absolutely must get right, and that is why we have ensured this bill has a substantial lead time before the provisions commence operation. Why – they will ensure we are being fair to those who will need to transition from a registration to a licence, giving them the time to pay the new fees and get ready for the new system, including any necessary top-up training.

In the time I have left I do just want to also touch on the extension of the pilot of the County Court Drug Court. The Drug Court model seeks to address the underlying causes of offending by providing intensive drug treatment services to offenders, and what I think is most important when we are in this context obviously of curbing recidivism and the like or when it comes to people going to jail, being incarcerated essentially for a drug addiction that is not under control and not being appropriately supported, is that addressing these underlying causes enhances the wellbeing and community connectedness of participants by improving their relationships, housing stability and life skills and reducing reoffending. Surely in the very progressive state of Victoria this would have to be in line with our core values in terms of driving better outcomes not only for the community but also for the person in question who has an addiction which is obviously severely impacting their life and life choices, as the case may be.

I should say that extending the pilot of the County Court Drug Court will preserve the benefits that have been derived from the Drug Court's operation for as many eligible people as possible. These benefits include reduced reoffending rates and reduced substance use. I am sure all those in the chamber and broader community can see the wisdom in driving those kinds of outcomes for our community. It will also ensure that the lessons learned from evaluations of Victoria's Drug Courts can be implemented to enhance the operation of the Drug Courts themselves.

A 2014 evaluation of Drug Courts is available on the Magistrates' Court website, and other evaluations have been commissioned by Court Services Victoria. It is really important, obviously, that we are monitoring the benefits. I mean, that is the purpose of a pilot to a certain extent of course, trialling different ways of managing significant issues in communities such as drug addiction in a more progressive and productive way in terms of driving much better outcomes and reducing reoffending, so it makes good sense to implement these reforms as part of this bill. On that note I commend the bill to the house.

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (11:20): I rise to make a contribution on the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024. As we have heard, this bill provides a new licensing system for the private security industry and extends the operation of the Drug Court division of the County Court, which has presently been under a trial for three years.

While we are not opposing this bill, there are concerns in reading the second-reading speech that we have yet another bill coming before Parliament that does not provide the level of detail that we should have as members of Parliament voting on legislation before us. Again we have got what is primarily an overarching framework, and on face value it looks fine; that is why we are not opposing the bill.

But there is a lot of detail here to be sorted out down the track under regulation, and unfortunately we are seeing a lot of these bills coming before Parliament where we have the overarching idea but we do not have that level of detail that we need to vote. I note that the previous speaker mentioned that one of the reasons for that is the government is providing a big lead time for those who want to switch over or need to switch over to this new licensing of our security systems. Those time frames can be built into the legislation. They can be part of the bill. That is not a reason for not providing the level of detail up-front that we should have. I just want to put that point on the record. When we have legislation that comes into this place, let us have all the detail with it. Build time frames into the legislation if we need them, but as members of Parliament on either side, we should be fully understanding the detail that is going to sit under this broader legislation.

In relation to private security, the changes include strengthening the requirements of private security companies when employing staff to ensure they are properly licensed, and companies will now be obligated to provide full details to the customer of all staff consigned to a job. There will be harsher penalties. We need to see the detail on this around noncompliance or assigning unlicensed staff to jobs. Perhaps we might have had a better outcome on the hotel quarantine saga if we had had this system in place back then. We would not have seen the problems that occurred there if we had had this level of oversight in place. I mean, that was a staggering decision when we had the defence services available and putting up their hand to do that job, and we saw the outcome of that.

The security industry indeed is becoming more important, and the hotel quarantine saga is probably one of those examples, but I think when we see the level of what is going on in our communities and societies, with particular crimes showing a significant increase in occurrence, people are relying on the security industry more and more these days, certainly far more than we were a decade or two decades ago. So I guess the goal of this bill to provide a greater level of oversight and strengthen up those requirements is something that we certainly do not oppose.

In relation to the courts, the bill extends by two years the current three-year trial to the operation of the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court. This will make it a five-year pilot. We are not opposed to this, and I am sure the member for Malvern will have more to say on that when he takes to his feet. But what would be good – while we do not oppose the extension, what I would have liked to see in this bill, or the second-reading speech would be more suitable – is an update on how the trial is progressing and the detail of where we are at and what it is shaping up to and looking like. That would have been great detail. Then we would have the basis for seeking the additional extension to the trial.

As stated, the issues that we have with this bill are the time lines and the lack of detail. The shadow minister mentioned in his lead speech that these changes might be up to two years away. It was even conceded by the previous speaker from the other side that there has been a big time lag in introducing this bill.

Victoria Police, the regulator for private security and firearms licences, have even raised a few concerns. They have said that they are working with an outdated database that the parent company will no longer support beyond 2029. The shadow minister advised us that during the bill briefing on this the department said that Victoria Police have not yet determined the full scope and the cost required to make the database fit for purpose. Gee whiz – that is a bit of work to be done. That is an issue that really does need to be sorted. The comment was made that they remain confident in delivering this by June 2025. But, taking nothing away from those people who will be doing that job, the time lines that we have seen from this government and its meeting of deadlines have been quite appalling in a whole range of areas. I cite the bushfire recovery in my patch. It is three years overdue, and we have got projects not even started yet. Admittedly that is not an IT upgrade, but nevertheless it is a deadline. And this government has a horrible, horrible record in meeting deadlines and meeting budgets. I hope we will not be back in the chamber in 2025 debating this because the government needs more time to be ready.

It also would have been good to have the new fee structure included in this bill or at least in the second-reading speech so that we know what we are dealing with. While we support the overall direction of where this bill wants to go and where it wants to take us, the lack of detail just leaves so many unanswered questions. One of those questions, which I think might have been raised by the lead speaker on our side, is whether these changes are going to be for not only private security companies in licensing themselves. What will be the cost of licensing the staff and where will that fall to? Will there be cost recovery for the workers? Will the companies have to pay for that? We are assuming this is all going to be done by regulation in due course, but those sorts of things, that level of very specific detail rather than the overarching, broader commentary, is what we should have as MPs to be able to debate the detail in the chamber. But we do not have the level of detail in a whole range of areas in the chamber. As MPs we do deserve that. We need to have some level of oversight that is going to ensure – and you do that through debate – that this amended legislation is going to work on the ground. We achieve that by debating the detail of it. If done right, this bill will deliver improved outcomes for the security sector, and that is why we support it in general principle, hence our not-opposed position. However, it is ‘not-opposed’ with a question mark – for those reasons. All the cards should be on the table, and we have too many unknowns.

Feeling vulnerable in our community is a horrible feeling. One of the previous speakers, I am not sure which one, spoke about how the feeling of vulnerability in the community is not great. A little while ago I was coming home from the footy – I had actually injured my ankle, so I got home early from a football match to find someone in my home ransacking it. As the adrenaline took over, I forgot my injury for a short amount of time and tried to chase this person down the street. They probably would have got away from me anyway, but that did not help. With young kids and a wife –

A member interjected.

Tim BULL: Yes, I certainly have slowed up a bit since then. The vulnerability that puts on your family when you have to explain to your wife and your young kids that you have had someone in your home – it is a very, very vulnerable feeling that you have.

Unfortunately, we are seeing more crimes of a certain nature occurring in our community, so security companies will continue to play an increasingly important role in making us feel safe and removing those feelings of vulnerability. That is why we support the general philosophy of where this bill is wanting to head, but in closing I would just make the point that we should be in here as MPs on either side scrutinising the detail of all legislation, not having overarching frameworks put in place and things to be sorted out by regulation down the track. I just make that point on this bill.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (11:30): I too rise to support the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024, and in doing so I would like to commend the Minister for Police, his office and the department for bringing this bill to the house. I would particularly like to acknowledge the minister’s long-time chief of staff Kieran Barns-Jenkins for his years of service and effort to the Victorian government. He has recently announced he will be moving on to be a full-time dad.

All Victorians deserve to have the right to feel safe in their communities, and as a government and indeed as a Parliament we should be working every day towards helping make Victoria a safer place, including across my community of Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West. Whilst we are all aware and appreciative of the tremendous role Victoria Police play in maintaining our community’s safety, it is also about a number of other factors, including the way in which our community members are kept safe in places where Victoria Police members just cannot physically be expected to be patrolling and monitoring around the clock, including at late-night entertainment or licensed venues, and the role of early intervention and diversionary programs in our criminal justice and court systems and how they can be leveraged to support crime prevention, offender rehabilitation and community safety outcomes for all.

Essentially this bill is about these two things: (1) it is about enhanced standards and conditions across the private security industry, which has a large presence in maintaining safety across thousands of locations, including pubs, clubs, venues and events across our state on a weekly and daily basis; and (2) the bill is about extending the operations of the County Court Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court, the DATC, which has been operating to promote recovery through rehabilitation of its participants and to protect communities from further substance-driven offending.

Turning first to the amendments in this bill relating to the security industry, almost 20 years ago to the day the Private Security Bill of 2004 was introduced to the Victorian Parliament by then minister for police Andre Haermeyer. The bill replaced the Private Agents Act of 1966 and was the first formal recognition in this jurisdiction of the importance of a robustly regulated private security industry. One of the main drivers of the establishment of the Private Security Act 2004 was the tragic death of cricketer, coach and broadcaster David Hookes during an altercation with a crowd controller outside a nightclub, in St Kilda, I believe. The tragedy brought to the fore the importance of seeking to ensure that those entering the private security industry are properly trained and vetted by police to engage in these important high-risk roles. While the crowd controller in that matter was ultimately cleared of any wrongdoing, the events of that night highlighted the serious risks and potential consequences inherent in private security work and the need for better training and regulation.

Together with a decision from the Council of Australian Governments to require people applying for private security licences to undergo probity checks, the Private Security Act 2004 was a robust and progressive piece of legislation. Over the last 20 years we have seen a much better regulated industry emerge, together with vast improvements in matters such as infiltration of organised crime into the security industry, which has been a huge step forward. However, a great deal has changed over those 20 years, and the private security industry is no exception. Over time the industry has grown and diversified. This, along with social and technological developments, has required increasingly complex skills. Over that time issues have also emerged with the way some members of the industry are prioritising profit over fair pay and work conditions, leaving a highly casual, mobile and vulnerable workforce in its wake.

Key industry advocates have identified serious concerns about the rights of workers, the barriers to healthy business competition and the behaviour of some trainers and workers that brings down the reputation of the entire industry. That is not to say that there are not many highly skilled security guards operating in our jurisdiction who make a significant contribution to keeping our community safe. This bill is not aimed at those types of individuals that I have just been referring to. It is actually aimed at the employers who do not pay fair wages and do not afford workers genuine flexibility and access to legal entitlements such as superannuation, leave and insurance; it is aimed at those training organisations that do not deliver the required training and who sign off on untrained and wholly unprepared workers; and it is aimed at the workers who do not understand the importance of their role and do not have the skills needed to de-escalate and address emerging threats.

The reforms contained in this bill are informed by the recommendations of the Victorian government's *Review of the Private Security Industry*, which was released in December 2021 and conducted by the Department of Justice and Community Safety. By way of context, the review identified that the number of licence and registration holders in Victoria across the industry is significant. As of December 2020 there were a total of 32,700 private individual licences and 815 private security business licences across the state. There were also a further 3745 applications for private security, and the licensing and regulation division of Victoria Police, the LRD, cancelled 72 licences and suspended 67. The review received 52 submissions from a wide range of stakeholders – namely, workers and businesses, followed by peak bodies, unions and others involved in the industry. The review identified that one of the key purposes of the act is to regulate the private security industry for the purposes of

ensuring public safety and peace. This purpose carries weighty responsibility and envisages high standards of professionalism across the sector. I refer the chamber to page 8 of the review, which found:

... there are many private security employers and employees who are well-trained, experienced and contribute to positive public safety outcomes by conducting themselves with professionalism, integrity and skill. However, there are also those who do not fully understand their role, the importance of their role, or the risks that the role entails.

It is this sector at whom the recommendations are aimed. Some of the key examples highlighted during the review that these recommendations go to include, for example, that in 2011 a man died after having a heart attack while he was being held and restrained by security guards in a prone position on the floor at Crown Casino – he suffered from positional asphyxia. Some industry workers have suffered detrimental impacts to their health and wellbeing as a result of workplace incidents, such as physical and verbal abuse. Workers have reportedly been afraid to speak up in many instances about unsafe working environments – for example, where alcohol is served without regard to responsible service of alcohol laws and where crowd controllers are left to deal with the consequences of the aggressive behaviour of patrons. There was an account of a control centre operator at a Victorian university, for example, who used security cameras for improper purposes, such as seeking out views of female students in university residences. Crowd controllers have been observed taking no action to try to verbally de-escalate potentially violent situations, stepping in only when physical violence erupts, despite clearly being aware of the building risk. Numerous examples were conveyed in the report of unsafe working environments and very bad outcomes around enterprise bargaining agreements not being adequately supported and enforced. Of course the report was subsequently superseded by the COVID-19 hotel inquiry final report, which did note the impact of the casualised nature of the industry and opportunities for ongoing reform, which are reflected to a large degree in the reforms contained in this bill. Ultimately the report put forward 21 recommendations, and this bill addresses 11 of those recommendations, which require legislative amendment.

In this respect the bill makes the following three amendments: (1) it replaces the current two-tier system, which requires most sectors of the industry to obtain a licence and others to obtain registration with a single-tier licensing system; (2) it introduces enforceable requirements for transparency and accountability when subcontracting security services; and (3) it requires workers in high-risk roles, such as crowd controllers, to undertake refresher training prior to licence renewals.

Of course the state government is one of the largest procurers of security services in the state, so this bill will help provide for better standards across the industry and subsequently the services through which security services have a presence on Victorian precincts and faculties. Some of those include at our major events precincts. The sector is so important. It contributes around \$3.3 billion to the state's economy, providing over 15,500 full-time jobs. In many ways it is the standard of our security services at those precincts that plays such an important role to maintain the vibrancy of those events. Again, having that vibrancy protected and secured is critical for economic and employment outcomes. The grand prix, for example, last year delivered a \$268 million economic charge to our economy and supported over 1100 jobs.

Paul Edbrooke: How much?

Anthony CIANFLONE: \$268 million. The Australian Open in 2023 generated \$387 million, member for Frankston, and supported over 1700 jobs.

I would now like to turn briefly, with the time I have, towards the amendments on the County Court Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court, the DATC. In relation to drug court amendments, drug courts are specialised courts that provide a therapeutic approach to addressing the complex needs of offenders with drug and alcohol dependency. Traditional sentencing options can fail to adequately address the needs of drug offenders, and by contrast a drug court model seeks to address the underlying causes of offending by providing intensive drug treatment services to offenders. Addressing these underlying causes will ultimately enhance the wellbeing and community connectedness of participants by

improving their relationship to housing stability and life skills and reducing reoffending. The County Court drug diversion program was established here for a three-year pilot in 2021, and this bill seeks to extend the operation of the Drug Court division for a further two years.

I would just like to highlight some of the outcomes thus far that are contained in the annual report of the County Court. These include having been funded to deliver and support 70 participants. The DATC in 2022–23 received 57 referrals and imposed 42 drug and alcohol treatment orders; in June 2023 there were 65 total active clients and the DATC is actually building a waiting list, such is the growing demand on capacity. Of the referrals, 93 per cent are for males and 7 per cent are for women; 87 per cent of referrals are for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and 4 per cent are for First Nations people; and many partnerships have been developed, including with St Vincent's Hospital, with Centrelink, with Narcotics Anonymous and with employment and vocational pathways.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (11:40): I rise to speak on the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024. I could do 10 minutes about private security guards and rehash the issues of COVID-19, but I will leave that for others. As Shadow Attorney-General, I will instead focus on those aspects of the bill relating to the County Court Act 1958 and the Sentencing Act 1991, which effectively provide for an extension of the trial of the County Court Drug Court. This has been operating for three years. Practitioner feedback that I have received would indicate that it has been somewhat successful – not without concerns but somewhat successful. I refer to the minister's second-reading speech, where he said in relation to this bill:

It will also ensure that the lessons learned from recent evaluations of Victoria's Drug Courts can be implemented to enhance the operation of the Drug Court.

Well, that obviously put me on notice as to what those recent evaluations of Victoria's Drug Courts were, so the request was made through the bill briefing to obtain a copy of those recent evaluations so that this side of the house might be better informed, given that the purpose of the bill is to extend the trial of the Drug Courts to let the recommendations coming out of those evaluations take effect. All I was provided with was an evaluation from 2014. Now, even in the Orwellian world of the Allan Labor government I think it would be a little bit of a stretch for any member opposite to say that a 2014 evaluation, one from a decade ago, counts as a recent evaluation of Victoria's Drug Courts.

We have flagged we are not going to be opposing the bill, but we do say the government has an obligation to be up-front with the opposition and up-front with the people of Victoria. What is the point of referring to recent evaluations in the second-reading speech if the government is not prepared to come clean and actually share those evaluations? We all want to know. We have all got an investment in this. We have all got a stake in trying to make it work better. So if the government wants to extend the trial for two years, that is something we do not have an in-principle opposition to. That is why we are not going to oppose the bill on that point. But why the secrecy? What has the government got to hide? Why won't the government share these recent evaluations? They are public enough that the minister can refer to them in the second-reading speech, but apparently they are too secretive for anybody else to see. It makes no sense, and we do not cop it.

This seems to be an example of just needless secrecy on the part of this government. I do not think there is anything earth shattering here. I suspect there are no national security issues involved in these recent evaluations, and if there are, then redact those parts. But for goodness sake, why can't this government just be up-front for once with people and say, 'Yep, these are the recent evaluations we referred to in the second-reading speech. Here they are. Here are the bits that are working. Here are the bits that aren't working so well. Here are the changes we want to make over the next two years to see if we can make it work better.' That is not unreasonable. It is good policy and it is good governance, but it seems to be beyond members opposite. So it is very disappointing. We went through the right process; we sought the recent evaluation, and I was sent something from 2014. What was the point? Why bother sending me rubbish like that?

One of the other questions I asked in the bill briefing was, ‘Well, why is this going to be a two-year extension of the trial? If it’s been positive, why not move to put it on a permanent footing?’ And I did not get an answer, at least not a substantive one. I suspect this comes down to money. I think it comes down to money and that the government just is not prepared to make the investment to allow all Victorians to access the Drug Courts.

Why is it important? Well, it is important for a practical reason, and that is that drug and alcohol treatment orders are things which can be very useful in certain circumstances to help tackle the root causes of people’s offending. There is a whole list of qualifying criteria and disqualifying criteria that apply for somebody to be able to access a drug and alcohol treatment order, but the feedback I have had from practitioners is that it can be a very effective way to deal with root causes of offending. So if part of the idea of the justice system is to provide for rehabilitation, then DATOs are quite useful in that regard. But at the moment not everybody in Victoria can access them because the trial only applies in certain postcodes. From a practical point of view, why should somebody in one postcode get access to this form of justice and the person in the postcode next door cannot? That does not seem to make much sense from a public policy point of view. But there is also a more principled issue, and that is equality before the law. If we are all Victorians and we are all entitled to the principle of equality before the law, why should a person in one postcode be eligible for a different form of punishment to a person in a different postcode? It is very hard to justify when you put it like that.

I am prepared to put before the house a really practical example of how that plays out, because I have in my hands the *Victoria Government Gazette* of 19 May 2021. It is a proclamation under the County Court Act 1958, and it is a notice of Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court postcode areas. It says:

I, Jaclyn Symes MP, Attorney General and Minister responsible for the **County Court Act 1958**, pursuant to section 4AAB(1)(b) of that Act, specify the following postcode areas as postcode areas in relation to the Melbourne venue of the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court of the County Court of Victoria ...

So if you reside within these postcodes, you are eligible to participate in the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court of the County Court. If you do not, then you cannot.

I looked this up because I just wanted to check how this applied to my own electorate of Malvern. My electorate of Malvern spans the postcodes of 3142 through to 3146 inclusive. Here are the postcodes in my electorate which are eligible for participation in the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court: 3142, Hawksburn, Heyington, Toorak. Then it jumps to 3144, Malvern North; 3145, Malvern East; 3146, Gardiner, Glen Iris and Tooronga. There is a gap there: 3143. Why is it that the people who live in 3142, 3144, 3145 and 3146 can access the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court but people in Armadale, who live in postcode 3143, cannot? I would be genuinely interested as to what brilliant piece of public policy the government was thinking of when it decided to exclude one particular postcode in my electorate of Malvern from access to the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court. Was this just some sort of oversight? Did somebody have a bad meal in High Street one day and decide they were going to pay them back by excluding Armadale? For goodness sake.

Kathleen Matthews-Ward interjected.

Michael O’BRIEN: Well, the member for Broadmeadows says it is a trial. If it is a trial, then wouldn’t you apply it to whole areas? Why would you say Toorak gets access but Armadale does not, Malvern gets access but Armadale does not, Glen Iris gets access but Armadale does not? It makes no sense, and it makes a mockery of the principle of equality before the law. It makes an absolute mockery of the principle that every Victorian should be equal before the law because of that absolute exclusion of 3143. I am sure if members opposite had the wit or the will to look up their own electorates, they would find that people in their electorates are missing out as well. Do members opposite really want to defend people in their own patches missing out on access to drug and alcohol treatment orders purely because of a postcode? But that is where we are at the moment.

As I say, it makes a mockery of the principle of equality before the law. If this government is serious about extending the Drug Court for another two years, why isn't it also looking at expanding the operation of it across Victoria? I suspect it is simply a case of 'They can't afford to'. They do not want to spend the money. They can waste money on cancelling the Commonwealth Games, but they cannot spend money on the justice system and they will not spend money on ensuring that more Victorians get access to therapeutic forms of justice.

We do not oppose the bill, but this government has fallen short when it comes to dealing with Victorians who have got drug and alcohol issues, and everyone should have access to drug and alcohol treatment orders.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (11:50): It gives me great pleasure to rise this morning in this place to contribute on the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024. Private security is crucial in our state of Victoria, and as was spoken about just previously by the member for Pascoe Vale, it is an incredibly important part of Victoria's major events program. Victoria's visitor economy contributes \$31.5 billion to Victoria's economy as a whole, driven significantly by our major events program, whether that be the Australian Open, the Melbourne grand prix or the AFL Grand Final, and private security plays such an important role in that; in fact without private security those events would not be possible. But more than contributing to what is a significant economic driver for this state, private security also helps to keep our communities safe.

I know for my constituents in Tarneit, Hoppers Crossing and Mount Cottrell community safety is something that is incredibly important. Whether that be private security keeping you safe at a local venue out there in the electorate of Tarneit or indeed private security keeping you safe when you travel into the city to attend one of our major events, it is incredibly important.

That is why it is so important that we, through this legislation, raise the industry's professional standards. That is why it is so important we continue to regulate the private security industry, building on the Private Security Act passed by the then Bracks government in 2004. We will do this in many ways, which I will go through during my contribution. We will do it by using a simpler licensing system. We will also have a set of behaviour guidelines and have ongoing staff training to make sure that we have, as much as possible, a well-regulated industry full of staff that have gainful employment and that have the right training, because we know how important that is.

The legislation also ensures that employees get fair pay and benefits, that we do not have a system where everybody is employed under subcontractor arrangements and not getting paid properly and also that they are not employed under subcontractor arrangements where they do not get fair access to things like being covered by the Fair Work Act et cetera. It also protects the right to vacation time, which is incredibly important, and to superannuation to make sure that these workers in this incredibly important industry are employed under a set of arrangements which are fair. We are reforming licensing and adding key updates. These changes will give security professionals the resources they need to excel. They will also help the professionals to contribute to public safety, as I said.

Additionally, as the member for Malvern spoke about at length, this bill extends the Drug Court division in the County Court of Victoria, a trial that is currently being undertaken and one that has been incredibly successful to this point. It will run for another two years, helping to rehabilitate individuals with substance abuse problems. Through the Drug Court we tackle the root causes of crime, and we do this by offering extensive drug rehabilitation programs. These programs improve the lives of those offenders, and they also help the offenders connect to their community, build better relationships, find stable housing and improve their life skills. In the end the program reduces reoffending, which is exactly what we should be doing through our criminal justice system.

I spoke about the fact that this bill further builds on the Private Security Act 2004, which was passed by the then Bracks government. It was done so on the back of the tragic death of cricketer, coach and broadcaster David Hookes during an altercation with a crowd controller outside a nightclub in

St Kilda. I was 14 at the time, but I vividly remember that incident. I vividly remember that tragedy, and the Bracks government at the time decided that this industry was too important to Victoria not to be regulated. Those reforms and that regulation at the time were incredibly important. The tragedy brought to the fore the importance of seeking to ensure that those people charged with the job to protect us, private security, are properly trained and vetted by police to engage in these important high-risk roles. While the crowd controller in that matter was ultimately cleared of any wrongdoing, the events of the night highlighted the serious risks and potential consequences inherent in private security work and the need for better training and regulation. It was an incredibly important reform at the time.

As you know, from time to time we have to update these reforms as we go, and that is exactly what this bill seeks to do. Together at the time with a decision of the Council of Australian Governments to require people applying for private security licences to undergo probity checks, the Private Security Act 2004 was a robust and progressive piece of legislation. Over the past 20 years we have seen a much better and more highly regulated industry emerge together with a vast improvement in matters such as the infiltration of organised crime into the security industry, which has been a significant step forward. However, a great deal has changed over those 20 years, as I said, and the private security industry is no exception. Over time the industry has significantly grown, and it has diversified as well. This, along with social and technological developments, has required increasingly complex skills.

Over that time, issues have emerged with the way some members of the industry are prioritising profit over fair pay and work conditions, leaving a highly casual, mobile and vulnerable workforce in its wake. As we all know, whether it is in the private security industry or any other industry, insecure work causes significant issues. Insecure work and a race to the bottom are not the way that we like to do anything in this state, but it can cause significant issues as well. It can lead to a workforce that is not adequately trained, and within private security that can lead to all sorts of issues and even disasters.

Key industry advocates have identified serious concerns about the rights of workers, the barriers to healthy business competition and the behaviour of some trainers and workers that brings down the reputation of the entire industry. As I said, the progressive reforms brought in by the Bracks government at the time on the back of what was an absolute tragedy in the death of David Hookes, with the Private Security Act 2004, were absolutely fantastic. It was an industry that needed to be regulated at the time, and that is exactly what we did. Unfortunately, what we have seen in recent times is employers and contractors creating a really insecure workforce, which is never good for anyone. These reforms will go to fixing that, and I commend them to the house.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (12:00): Acting Speaker Farnham, it is lovely to see you in the chair. I rise to make a contribution on the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024, and this bill has two key components. One is about the Private Security Act 2004, and the other is amendments to the County Court Act 1958 and the Sentencing Act 1991. I am going to start my comments with regard to the private security industry. It was about 20 years ago that it was decided through different incidents that had happened that we needed to have greater regulation and scrutiny of the private security industry. It needed some tightening around the training and the regulations, so the new act was introduced at that time. Things continued to change. As years progressed we had different incidents, changes in technology, growth in population and a number of things that meant the act needed to be looked at again and improved on.

In 2018 the Premier announced a review of the private security industry, and it was in October of that year. There were a couple of issues that the Premier talked about wanting to tackle: the raising of the industry standards, improving the safety of employees and community – and I think everybody would think it is very reasonable that you do improve the safety of employees and community through this; making sure that workers are paid fairly and properly; and having a look at the current licensing and regulatory framework of that act and the regulations. The regulations are something that we do not really get to have a good look at through this place. Hopefully, these reforms really will make a difference. It is important to look at whether or not there are prerequisites to participation in the

industry and then how this is all monitored and enforced, and also tied in here are the employment practices.

In late 2021, several years later, the report got handed down. There were 21 recommendations, and 11 required legislative change, which is what we are doing here at the moment. One of the things that does bother me and continues to bother me about this government and the way that they manage things is that a lot of the detail is in the regulation. Do we get to see the regulation? No, we do not. I just in my heart of hearts cannot trust a government that says, 'Trust us. We're the government. We know what we're doing.' That is really difficult to do. They have had so many stuff-ups and failures over the time that it is very hard to trust them with this, so I am disappointed that we do not get to see that level of detail around the regulations and we actually must vote on that before we get to see these things. That is something that does concern me.

The main provisions that we have before us now for the amendments are to provide a new licensing system for the private security industry in relation to applications for and renewal of licences. There are provisions in relation to complaints about the conduct of a holder of a private security licence. We can imagine how that might happen. There are complaints that happen in a particular area, and it comes back to the security licence holder. There is a provision for offences in relation to subcontracting and a provision for a code of conduct for holders of security licences – and I think it is particularly important that we know what the code of conduct is and we know the expectations. The requirement for a risk management plan to be prepared before a security activity is carried out I think is pretty important. I have certainly been involved in a number of different briefings on security and understand the different types of risks that are before us, particularly terrorism related but also other elements, where we have had people driving their cars, for example, up footpaths and things like that or in areas that they should not, which is really dangerous for participants. If you have got a large event where there are a lot of participants and you need to be able to protect them, that plan needs to be in place. And there is reference to the appointment of a special counsel under part 7 of the act.

We see private security guards in many places. We have PSOs here, but we go around the traps. You are sometimes going to a private party. Sometimes it might be a nightclub or a hospital even. It really saddens me that we need to have private security in hospitals, but we have had a number of dreadful incidents that we know of – and I know there are a lot of incidents that we do not know of – where the security guards, because of the training that has taken place, know what to do and how to defuse a situation. We have instances in emergency departments where people are there and they are drug-affected or alcohol-affected. People are carrying weapons much more: knives, machetes or even guns. These are things that the private security guards need to be mindful of in how to defuse situations, because we have had some situations that have been pretty horrendous and scary.

Like in most things, most people do the right thing, most employers do the right thing and most workers do the right thing. But we get those that do not, and I think if this can provide some greater rigour around that, that is not necessarily a bad thing. As I said, there are things that we are concerned about. One of the things, as I mentioned, was not seeing the regulations. This also relies on a new database, and the government's track record on IT system upgrades and databases is appalling – they are never on time, they are never on budget. Have a look at Myki and how that has been a debacle. There are a lot of issues. We are not opposing this bill, but there are certainly issues.

I want to touch on the other amendments with regard to the County Court and the extension of the trial that is underway of the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court from three years to five years. I have been at a bit of a loss to understand why it is being extended from three years to five years, because you would think in three years you would have a fairly good understanding whether a trial is working or not, and to extend it for two more years – there were no answers at the bill briefing. I note in the second-reading speech right at the very end the minister says:

It will also ensure that the lessons learned from recent evaluations of Victoria's Drug Courts can be implemented to enhance the operation of the Drug Court.

Again, we do not know what is in those evaluations. The Shadow Attorney-General has been very keen to try and find out and understand why those evaluations are not public. If there are good things in them, great. Let us make sure that it does get rolled up into the final product, not just having a trial. This trial is postcode-based, so only some people have access to the drug and alcohol treatment orders, not all of them, and these are part of the qualifiers there.

Practitioners in the field think that the drug and alcohol treatment orders have value to the individual and to their rehabilitation prospects. It was not so long ago that I was speaking to a psychiatrist who is at the Alfred Hospital working in this area. I talked to him about the types of issues that they see, and it was said that with all of the typical psychiatric illnesses that you know – paranoia, schizophrenia, psychosis et cetera – the people that end up in the hospital units are those with substance abuse, with drug and alcohol use, overlaying their mental illness. That is a pretty awful combination, and I think for anyone who has a mental illness and then becomes drug-affected, if they have access to a drug and alcohol treatment order as part of the court outcome, that is a good thing, because we really do need to treat this. But at the moment it is limited to certain postcodes, not all postcodes. I have not actually checked to see how many postcodes in my electorate are subject to that, but I am actually keen to go away and do that.

I am still at a loss to understand why the government would extend a three-year trial, which is a pretty lengthy trial period, for another two years. If it is going well, make it happen. The reason I think it is probably not happening is that story we all know – that this government is broke, absolutely dead broke. The debt is escalating. Spending is escalating. They have not got a plan to get in control – they do not know how to get in control of this spending. When you have got good programs that could possibly work, they need to be embedded properly rather than just floating along as a trial. I would like to see these things, if they are working, become permanent – not a trial.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (12:10): Today I rise to contribute to the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024. I am pleased that the opposition is not opposing this bill. I would pick up on something that was raised by the member for Malvern. He raised the issue that the government is not up-front with Victorians. I have to remind the member for Malvern that we went to three elections – 2014, 2018 and 2022 – and, guess what, we got elected and re-elected for three terms. So I think the proof of being up-front with Victorians is in the pudding with three outcomes. The other thing is we had a greater majority in all three of them, so thanks for that. I just remind the member for Malvern of that.

There is a lot in this bill. I do not want to go over some of the things that have already been raised by previous speakers, so I will just touch on the focus largely around subcontracting and the improvements that this bill is making in that area. Subcontracting plays obviously a crucial role in the private security industry, allowing it to effectively manage surge demands. We have seen that at many different events and issues private contractors and security contractors have been utilised. As I say, during major events we need that surge capacity. Again, with major events, the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events and his team have provided fantastic events for us in this state, even though some people thought the sky was going to fall in after the pandemic. Of course that was not proven to be right either – we have seen people flock to this state. Again, the private security firms were involved only this week with the ASEAN conference being here in Melbourne. I send my thanks out to the private security workers, who do a hard job and a very good job under sometimes trying circumstances and very much under pressure at times.

This bill allows for proper oversight. People hiring security services have no insight into who is performing the work or whether subcontracting has occurred at all. This lack of transparency can lead to providers prioritising profit over quality. That results in the hiring of underqualified workers, sometimes at very low wages and without adequate vetting of their qualifications or experience, which unfortunately we have seen around the country. It is clear that sometimes there is exploitation of some of these workers and the lowering of some of the standards. That is something that we want to improve. Many, many of these private security workers are very professional in their job, but there are some

that are put under enormous pressure by some very ordinary companies. I am not suggesting that about all of them, but there are some poor operators in this particular part of the industry. Of course any absence of proper vetting and oversight in subcontracting arrangements can lead to accountability gaps when the inevitable issues arise.

Many of these workers are casually employed. In a lot of cases they are too scared to raise issues about working conditions and health and safety in fear of losing some hours of work, hence that is how some of these operators get away with what they get away with. So this bill provides more stringent and stronger measures to avoid these sorts of circumstances. Certainly it mandates written agreements between clients and head contractors before any subcontracting arrangements are finalised. Additionally, it requires the provision of licence details for all workers involved, ensuring transparency and accountability across the whole process. The provisions aim to safeguard against exploitation, as I raised earlier, ensuring that industry standards are upheld and of course that we enhance accountability in the private security sector.

As we heard earlier, the Private Security Act 2004 stemmed from the tragic death of cricketer, coach and broadcaster David Hookes during an altercation with a crowd controller outside a pub down at St Kilda; I think it was the Beaconsfield Hotel. I know it well. I do remember that circumstance where Hooksie unfortunately was punched and fell to the ground, striking his head and rendering him unconscious. Subsequently, he was resuscitated by paramedics and taken to the Alfred hospital. I am not sure how old he was at the time – not 21; he was older than that. But unfortunately a few days later the life support was turned off and he passed away. I will say about David Hookes that he was a rare talent. At 21 he made an impressive debut in cricket. In particular for South Australian cricket, he made many, many centuries in state cricket, Shield cricket. He probably put Tony Greig on the map by smashing him all over the MCG. It is a shame to see someone with so much talent have his life end in the way that it did. To think that it was 20 years ago. As I say, his head hit the ground, he was revived and taken to the Alfred hospital and unfortunately the family had to decide to turn the life support off.

One other positive thing that came out of that – it is not only this bill – is that he was an organ donor and he donated 10 of his organs to recipients. All 10 of those people are probably still alive today because of what he did. I am an organ donor, and I am sure there are many, many others in this chamber that are organ donors. I would encourage people to get on the organ donation site and sign up, because it just goes to show how out of one tragedy in David Hookes being killed, 10 people survived. Without his death, even though it was unfortunate, probably those 10 people would have died. So I do encourage people to become organ donors.

While I am talking about cricket, I have just got to give a shout-out to the mighty St Anthony's Saints cricket club, who play their grand final this Saturday. Of course they are one of our little junior clubs out at Melton, and they are playing against Aintree. I do not think the member for Kororoit is here at the moment. Then of course the Jensen Firsts are against Woodend at Macedon in the club south competition. So in the next sitting week, depending on who –

Members interjecting.

Steve McGhie: That is all right, I'm coming back, don't worry. Depending on who wins that, I might have to avoid the member for Kororoit and the member for Macedon when I come back, depending on who wins the grand final this weekend.

Again, this bill stems out of that tragic incident 20 years ago, the Hooksie incident, and this bill is about making sure we are tightening up the parameters and making sure that our security industry is accountable and is of an appropriate professional standard. These security workers should be trained to an appropriate level to defuse situations, avoid some situations and in some cases not provoke some situations. That is probably one of the key issues with some of the security officers that are involved in the private industry. I will come back to the fact that there are some very highly skilled security

personnel operating within our jurisdiction who do the best that they possibly can under trying circumstances. It has already been referred to here that in situations like in hospitals or in private places – again I refer to ASEAN – they may have to deal with issues of drugs, alcohol and substance abuse, as in people being quite erratic under the effects of multiple substances, and it can be quite difficult for them at times.

I do appreciate the work that they do. In the technical side of the industry there is a lot of work that employers have to do in regard to bringing the standards up in the industry. Again, this bill and the outcome of this bill will assist with that. I have known many private security guards because the union that I was involved in covered them, and I know the difficulty that they have had over many years in regard to lifting the standards of their working conditions. That is important, because we want to attract the right people to the industry. They need to be paid well also. This is an important bill, and I commend it to the house.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (12:20): Acting Speaker Farnham, how lovely it is to see you in the chair this afternoon as I deliver my contribution to this debate on the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024. I have been listening, since the member for Berwick opened this debate, to those speaking about security guards. It is actually something I have got some intimate knowledge of, possibly like you, Acting Speaker – private security guards, who have perhaps not only escorted me from a venue every now and then but maybe asked me politely to vacate a venue.

Actually, while I speak on that, it reminds me that I should pay my respects to one of those bouncers, who later became a friend, Gary ‘Barrel’ Lowe, who was actually a part-owner of a nightclub where I grew up but also a bouncer and may or may not have asked me to leave the venue a couple of times. He passed away really suddenly in January, which was quite a shock. He was also a school friend of my mum. So vale, Gary Lowe.

I have worked with security guards at different organisations many, many years ago – many decades ago perhaps. I would help out the private security guards at the grand prix, actually, here in Albert Park with catering and all sorts of things. I have always got a story to tell about every topic, I know.

There are some very highly skilled, very good people working in the industry. However, this bill for an act to amend the Private Security Act 2004 to provide for a new licensing system for the private security industry is well overdue, I would suggest. There are a few issues that we can talk about, like those security guards. I have to stop myself from saying ‘bouncers’, because back in my day they were bouncers. In fact I have been a – I will not use that term – I will say, security guard, on the odd occasion back in the day at private venues, not an official one. Again, I have intimate knowledge of the subject. But there are some issues. As I said, there are some very highly skilled people that work in this sector – like, for example, at sporting venues, the grand prix, licensed venues and the cricket. Obviously they need to be highly skilled at times to be able to chase after those who may enter the pitch. But there have been, as we well know – and it has been spoken about in this place as well – some issues surrounding the industry.

I suppose the workforce is characterised by the highly casualised, relatively low paid and transient nature of the industry. Back in my day – and I know this ages me a lot – you had to actually go and attend a course. The course then I think was for two days and for about 4 hours each, and at the end of that you got your licence – probably not ideal for some of the situations for private security guards. But now on-the-job training seldom occurs. Sometimes you could walk in and become a security guard first and then the venue or the pub would train you, but now with most employers, because of the highly casualised nature of it, the low pay and the subcontractors, all of that, it is usually: ‘Go and do the training yourself’ – and most employers are not willing to invest in their staff. It is a real shame, because it is a massive industry with – I saw some notes here before – 11,000 security businesses in Australia; that is a lot of security businesses. And there are 147,000 individual licence-holders. It is a big, big industry. An overhaul to the industry is well overdue. Obviously – and this has been spoken about as well, the COVID quarantine debacle that was – the COVID-19 hotel quarantine inquiry final

report noted, as I said, that casualised nature of the industry and the associated lack of job security, appropriate training and knowledge in safety and workplace rights and responsibilities too.

I was listening very carefully to the member for Berwick talk about how sometimes there is a lack of knowledge as to what the responsibilities are for a security guard. We all would have seen footage of the Michael Hill burglary that happened in a shopping centre a few weeks ago. You can see the security guard standing back. It is interesting to learn that it is not their job to jump in front of armed bandits, I suppose. But having that knowledge of what the responsibilities are, what your rights are, is really, really important.

On the industry and the associated lack of knowledge sometimes and appropriate training, the inquiry concluded that the overwhelming majority of security guards who worked in the hotel quarantine program did so honestly and with goodwill. But the inquiry heard a number of complaints about the behaviour of guards. I think one of the quotes that was made was some of them were ‘overly friendly’ – I mean, that could be subjective perhaps – and there was bullying and consuming of alcohol while working.

Again, this leads me to another story. Back in my day, when I was working at a pub, on the odd occasion we would get called in to help security, particularly if it was females causing issues. I know you are very surprised by this, Acting Speaker Farnham, but sometimes females can cause some issues in nightclubs. I have just completely lost my train of thought.

Members interjecting.

Jade BENHAM: I know. Clearly everyone is really involved. That is where I was going. Back in my day when I used to actually DJ and help out the security guards –

Members interjecting.

Jade BENHAM: Not really DJ’ing; it was more like spinning the wheels of steel rather than using actual records – and nowhere near as good as DJ Southey, I can assure you. And I have not got moves like that either, so do not even ask.

Members interjecting.

Jade BENHAM: No, different venue. I would have actually really needed security if I had played Taylor Swift in those days. Back in those days it was one of those venues. It started a similar colour to this but was quite sticky, because it was the 1990s. It was sticky and it had a pungent odour – I digress. There were a number of occasions when, getting back to the highly skilled, very capable people working in the security industry, I did have to call on the actual security guards in the venue to actually come and help me out a little bit while I was behind the decks spinning the wheels of steel – that is twice now I have got that in. Again, it is an industry I have knowledge of and I have the utmost respect for because we do need them, both the private security and the technical security.

It has been an absolute pleasure to contribute to this debate whilst you have been sitting in the chair, Acting Speaker Farnham. It really has. As has been said by every member on this side, we are not opposing this bill. Yes, there are a few issues, a few concerns around it, but it is well and truly overdue. I am going to keep it brief, because let us face it, we are all hungry.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (12:30): I rise to speak on the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024, and I would like to give this bill the dignity it deserves, because it is fundamentally about Labor supporting workers who are underpaid, who are taken advantage of and who do not get all that they are entitled to. While some may be hungry or wanting to go down memory lane, I would like to talk about workers, whose rights should be protected.

What this bill is doing is looking at the way that some companies are taking advantage of workers through different ways of subcontracting and sham contracting. I want to give an example of why this bill is so important. I want to give the example of Waleed, a security guard and a proud member of the

United Workers Union. Upon investigation from his union, it was found that Waleed had been underpaid nearly \$8000 of the wages that he was entitled to. He was not being paid overtime rates, he was not being paid night shift rates and he was not being paid public holiday rates. How was this done? Through the sham use of subcontracting. In this case and in many cases like it, workers like Waleed are not afforded the same rights as others working with standard employment conditions. That is why this bill is so important and why I would be happy to speak to it with the dignity and the respect that it deserves – because it is about workers.

When people are taking part in sham contracting, they are finding a way to not pay people the award wages, people are not receiving the superannuation that they deserve and there is a lack of WorkCover insurance and a lack of leave. Now, it was this government who brought in a fabulous initiative which has benefited security workers, which is the portable long service leave. People in industries like cleaning and security who worked, through the nature of those industries, across different employers missed out on long service leave, but through this government's actions we fixed that so that these valuable, important workers in our community could have access to that. This bill is further work that this government is undertaking to make sure that people who are in industries where there may be more vulnerable workers, where there is less oversight and less protection, can receive the same protections as other workers. It is fundamentally a Labor bill, and I am really proud to speak to it.

As well as the sham contracting that I have been speaking about, subcontracting produces its own difficulties around a lack of transparency and oversight, and it means that workers can be exploited to have profits maximised. I believe there is a large Victorian company which is currently in discussion with its security relating to the way that subcontracting is used there. I watch that case with interest, and I thank the union for their work on that. Making sure that there is a written agreement before subcontracting takes place is really good to increase transparency, because there might be people that do not even know that that is what is going on.

I think of a security guard I met recently. Often as politicians we stand outside shopping centres and always have a chat to the trolley workers and the security to make sure they know about the sick leave pay guarantee and other things that we can do to support them, and this particular worker, a security guard, was there because there had been threats around Australia Day, with people upset that Woolworths was not selling Australian flags or whatnot. For somebody to be in a suburb that they were not familiar with, with a community and population that they were not familiar with, dealing with such a topical issue means that they are especially vulnerable, and I really felt for that worker being put in that situation. I am sure that large companies would want to ensure that the workers that are working their jobs have all the appropriate supports and training that they need to manage those sorts of situations. Increased transparency around subcontracting will support that.

A new code of conduct is being established through this bill, and I think that is really great for both the community and for the workers because it will set clear standards for workers – everyone likes to have clear benchmarks of where they should be aiming and how they should be performing – and it is also good for the community that they know there is recourse if the code of contact is not met. It is also good just for improving the reputation of workers in the industry, because most of the companies and the vast majority of the workers are fabulous people just trying to earn a living for their family, just like the rest of us, and they deserve the support and respect that all workers do.

It is good that there will be refresher training required when three-year licences are renewed, because we know that there are changes in techniques and technologies. We have heard a lot in the news internationally and in Australia around inappropriate restraints leading to people's permanent injury and death, so it is really good that people will have the ability to have updated training, and it improves the confidence of community members as well.

In summary, in relation to this part of the bill, this is a Labor bill. This is what Labor does. It works to protect workers rights while improving outcomes for the community, and so I am very proud to speak in support of this bill.

The second part of the bill includes the extension of the Drug Court trial, and this form of therapeutic justice is just so important. We know that the current trial is based on three decades of international research and operations and that it is really looking at the root causes of crime, promoting recovery, promoting rehabilitation and really wrapping around each of the people to make sure that they have the supports they need to overcome the barriers they are facing in life.

There are a lot of supports that are provided. There is housing support. There is vocational education support through Skills First Reconnect. There is access to specialist mental health, family violence, disability and neuropsychological services and access to health services. There are partnerships with key agencies, like Victoria Legal Aid. And there is a specialised in-house team of case managers to help the people get through those four years of their drug and alcohol treatment orders. We have heard recently from the department that only three or four participants have not been able to complete the orders up to that two-year period because of that integrated wraparound support that they are receiving.

At the end of the day, I am really pleased about the improved outcomes for these people, who deserve to live a happy life, and hopefully through this support they can. But I am also pleased for the court system more broadly because the decreased recidivism means that there is less of a backlog in the court system, there are less costs involved for the courts in managing cases and returns to court and there are less people in prisons, which also reduces costs.

I will point out that to be eligible for this program the crimes that are committed in association with your drug or alcohol addiction need to be non-sexual in nature and need to not have incurred actual bodily harm. They are crimes that you could imagine relating to fraud or people who steal for their addictions. We certainly have heard a lot about that through the recent gambling inquiry, people who steal, and we always read stories about the bookkeeper who stole a million dollars in the paper. So I am glad that people who commit crimes of addiction will get the support that they need to turn their life around and make our community safer. It is actually a really effective program, and so I am very happy to commend this bill to the house.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (12:40): Acting Speaker Farnham, it is lovely to see you in the chair this afternoon, mate. I also rise to talk about the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024, and I do thank the member for Berwick for his lead today. I note that we do not oppose the bill. The amendment bill will provide a single licensing system for all private security workers and businesses by removing the requirements that some activities require registration and others a licence. So it cleans that bit up.

I have been listening to other people in the chamber talk about the value of our security people, and we see it every day. Even down in the Latrobe Valley we see our security workers, as people have been saying, in pubs and clubs and nightclubs and on the streets. We even have them at the gates of our power stations, and they also stand at the gates of our Maryvale paper mill. I am thinking today that maybe the private security firms that are standing at the gates of the Maryvale paper mill may be torn a little bit, as we learned yesterday through the announcement that 200 jobs will actually be removed from Opal across New Zealand and Australia, and there are 40 to 45 of these workers at the Maryvale mill at the moment who are in a quandary, waiting to see if their jobs are actually going to be lost. It has a devastating effect for my community down in the Latrobe Valley. My heart and thoughts go out to the families that turn up every single day and go through the gates where the security officers are and go to do a good day's work to be able to provide food on the table for their families and also a roof over their heads. To learn that their jobs are on the line and up to 45 of them may lose their jobs because of the timber industry shutting down and the high cost of energy to run the mill is very, very devastating. I do want to let them know that we will be standing beside them and helping them through this very, very tough time. I thank them and I thank the security officers that are on these gates and around the place that will also be doing it tough today.

In my time – and I am sure in yours, Acting Speaker – back in the day when we were frequenting pubs and clubs and nightclubs, the level of education for the people that were supposed to be security was

not as good as what it is now. These rules actually bring in a requirement that the people who are standing on the front doors and protecting me – not that I go to many nightclubs anymore, but my family; I know my children and their friends go to nightclubs – are educated in the way that they are now to defuse situations if anything happens on the street. This gives our children and people that go to these particular venues the security of knowing that if something goes wrong they can walk up to our wonderful security people and seek protection. This amendment actually makes sure that they are getting paid the correct amount and they are being educated properly. So it is a wonderful path and avenue for these people in private security to have the opportunity to be working properly and to be looking after anyone that is on the street or who is going into these venues. You only have to look at when we walk into Parliament here – our security officers here make us feel safe. We are sort of in a little bit of an insular bubble here. When we do walk through those gates we know 100 per cent we are protected, and that is a really good feeling as we walk through.

Down on the streets in Traralgon, Morwell and the Latrobe Valley in general, there is a little bit of unrest with some activities by people that are being unsociable in the streets but, more to the point, are actually breaking into houses and making our residents feel unsafe. I am sure if every single member here stood up in the chamber today to speak on this, they would all be in the same boat where this is going on. Whether they are running in and grabbing your computer out – or now the hot topic down in the valley is that they are actually stealing the car keys. They walk in about a metre or 2 metres, see the car keys and are off and out. To combat this the police are doing as much as they can, but we are finding that a lot of private security firms are being engaged by residents to actually do drive-bys and set up security systems in the houses. So we need to make sure that it is the case now that the people that are leading these security officers as such, who come into houses and put up the cameras and install the alarms, are there with the right intentions – which I really think they all are. But we need to make sure, in passing these amendments, that they are ticking every box and making sure that everything is done to the letter of the law.

The training and the rules that our security officers are put under to come through, as I said before, are leaps and bounds in front of where we were 20 or 25 years ago. It is a good career for anyone to get into. You have the structure set up so that they are educated, and their number one weapon these days is their voice and being able to talk down people that are being unsocial and unruly, whether it be on the streets or whether it be at venues. As I have heard many members in here talk about today, being at the Australian Open or being at the football or being at the cricket, these people are our number one point of call when we first walk in. They are the ones that meet and greet us, and they are the ones that protect us and make sure that everything is fine if something goes wrong. That is also great.

We need to streamline and simplify the application process for the private security licences, impose new requirements for refresher training prior to renewal of licences for some private security activities and allow any person aware of concerns about a holder of a private security licence to be able to make a complaint, because as we have heard from several members on both sides of the chamber, unfortunately there are complaints that are raised against all people, and they may be our security officers. We need to have a process in place so that if there is an incident, it can be directed to someone and it can be fully investigated by the police. That is why we need to be able to do that.

It sets out requirements for obtaining consent and providing written notice in relation to subcontracting arrangements, with attached offences for failure to comply. One thing I was listening to before was about subcontractors that are employed by a major security firm not being paid and not being educated properly. It is great that we have got those checks and balances coming through, that there is no grey area and that if they are being employed by – it does not have to be a major security firm – any security firm, everything is aboveboard and being done properly. It also provides for the development of a code of conduct for private security workers enforceable by a disciplinary action. It requires a risk management plan, which is great to see, to be prepared by a person or business prior to private security works starting up, which is great also.

I know down in my patch of the woods that the families that are now having 18th birthdays and 21st birthdays, if it is in their house, are also engaging with private security firms to make sure, with under-age drinking, that all checks and balances are being done. That is one of the things that you actually do not think of if you are a security officer at a party, but you are also checking the age of participants that are there. In our day they were called crowd controllers, but now they are doing great work, whether it be in private business, whether it be in our community, whether it be on the gates of Loy Yang or whether it be at the Maryvale Private build. As I said, we will not be opposing this bill, and I do thank you, Acting Speaker, for your time today.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (12:50): I too rise to speak on the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024. This bill contains a lot of changes, some really important changes in fact, and I think the member for Yan Yean – who is now not here in the chamber, but hopefully she will hear me when I say this – made a really great contribution about the importance of talking to this bill with the dignity that it deserves.

Our private security guards are a cohort of workers here in Victoria and indeed Australia who provide an incredible service to our community, including as private security at some of the largest events here in Melbourne. Throughout the week we have heard the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events talk about, I think, the top 10 incredible events that Victoria holds. Those workers are there at those events while people like you and me, Acting Speaker Farnham, are having a great time with our families. They are there to keep us safe. This bill is all about protecting those workers and ensuring that they are paid what they are entitled to. From listening to stories about sham contracts and workers not being paid their entitlements, it is an absolutely abhorrent blight that happens all too often here in our community, and I am very proud to stand here with the government and with the Victorian Labor Party, which will hold those employers to account – and in part this bill is also about that.

The bill is looking to modernise the way that private security operates in modern Victoria and also tackle some of the key issues facing the industry today. We know that industries change over time, and legislation and legislative reform need to keep up with those changes. Indeed over the past five years I have seen many bills come before this house which do just that – they are trying to keep pace, whether it is with technology or with the expectations of the community, or indeed make sure that industries like the one that we are talking about today do afford and are afforded better protections.

I do want to acknowledge those in the private security industry – those incredible men and women, mums and dads, sometimes grandparents – who do the right thing. Indeed every single day when they go to work they perform their job to the highest standard. Thank you. The minister referred to several positive examples of private security guards who have done just that – gone to work and done an incredible job, including I think a pair of guards at a medical organisation who successfully de-escalated a situation with a person intoxicated with methamphetamines. The day-to-day job of a private security guard, depending on what they are doing, has many different facets to it. Sometimes they see the best of society, and sometimes they see the worst of it.

I think we have talked here about whether we say ‘security guards’ or ‘bouncers’ – it probably depends on your age – but we have talked about the type of work and where they are placed, whether they are outside a nightclub doing their work or indeed whether they were the private security guards at the Taylor Swift concerts. I know that many people in the house are extroverted Taylor Swift fans or Swifties, or perhaps introverted, in-the-closet Swifties; we have found out about many of them here in this place as well over the past couple of weeks. I am sure those security guards could probably say which venue they would have preferred to be standing on guard at those nights as Taylor Swift indeed performed outstanding concerts here in Melbourne, in Victoria, and made us very proud. The private security industry plays such an important role in keeping all Victorians safe in very specific and diverse circumstances.

This legislation was introduced many moons ago to this Parliament – 20 years ago in fact – and at the time it was introduced there were major issues about how those working in the industry were being

trained and really importantly being vetted by police so that they could do their job effectively in what would often be high-risk situations. This led to the death of the Australian cricketer David Hookes. The member for Melton talked really eloquently about David Hookes, what an incredible man he was and the deep and profound sadness the community felt when he was king hit by a bouncer outside a pub.

All the way back in 2018 our government made a really important commitment to review private security and overhaul it based on the recommendations of the review. In 2021 the review was released, and it was endorsed by cabinet. It included a number of recommendations that seek to address better conditions for those working in the industry along with better industry standards. Of the 21 recommendations that came out of that review about half of them did not require legislative change, which is always a good thing because it has got to come through this place to do that, and they have been implemented. They are things like requiring Victoria Police to send out a fact sheet with each licence about workers rights and obligations – what a great thing to do, something that is now set in place.

The focus of this bill today that we are talking about is to act on the remaining recommendations, those that require legislative change, and to tackle some of the biggest issues facing the industry right now. It goes without saying that security workers, just like any other worker for that matter, deserve a safe industry where their pay and their conditions are protected and their rights, most importantly, are respected. Indeed the Victorian Labor government is committed to creating a better regulated and more professional and, importantly, well-regarded private security industry. To do this the bill makes a number of changes in three main areas. They are subcontracting, sham contracts and, really importantly, stronger enforcement mechanisms.

We know that in this industry it is sometimes necessary to subcontract and hire more security, and that is not always a bad thing. A good example of that could be in fact the Taylor Swift concerts I was just talking about. Major events like that one have a degree of surge demand for security services, purely because it turns out there are so many Swiftie fans here in Victoria and across the country, because remember many of them flew down to Melbourne to go to those concerts. The issue is that when you have this practice happen and it is unregulated it can always be easily exploited. We have unfortunately heard of instances where providers subcontract solely for maximising their profits and exploiting subcontracted workers with low pay and poor workplace standards. I know that there are many, many people in my community in Melbourne's outer west that are private security guards, and I have no doubt that they have indeed been exploited through becoming subcontracted workers with low pay and poor workplace standards. The bill is going to address this by requiring that head contractors now need the written agreement of a client to hire subcontractors. In addition they will need to supply the names and licence numbers of each worker they have subcontracted. What this is going to do is provide greater oversight, and it lets the client know who exactly is performing the security service they have paid for and, most importantly, whether or not they are qualified. Because what we do know is when things go wrong with private security and there is a need to respond to something, if that private security guard is not properly trained or not aware of what is going on or does not know what to do, it can lead to tragic circumstances and outcomes.

There is a lot I could go on to say about this bill in the last 40 seconds before we go to lunch today. It is a really important bill. I think there have been some great contributions here in the house that go to the importance of protecting workers rights and ensuring that they have a safe industry to go ahead and work in, because what we know is that every worker deserves to go work and they deserve to go home to the family that loves them each and every single day. They also deserve to be paid the right wage and what they are entitled to. Time and time again we get so sick of hearing about the employers who are not quite sure – *(Time expired)*

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

Business interrupted under standing orders.

*Members***Minister for Government Services***Absence*

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:02): I rise to inform the house that for the purposes of question time today the Assistant Treasurer will answer questions for the portfolios of government services, consumer affairs, and public and active transport.

*Rulings from the Chair***Content of questions**

The SPEAKER (14:02): Before I call for questions, yesterday the member for Frankston raised a point of order about the application of standing order 57(1)(b). When members provide details of individuals beyond those strictly necessary to render a question intelligible, it could be argued that their question is intended to convey, rather than seek, information. We are all elected by our communities to represent their views and interests in this house. It is not my role to stand in the way of members raising issues in this place that are important to their constituents. However, it is my role to apply the standing orders of this house. Accordingly, I ask members to be mindful when asking questions without notice, written questions on notice and constituency questions that they only include information about individuals that is strictly necessary to explain the question. Members may also wish to review the comprehensive rules for questions that are set out on page 142 of *Rulings from the Chair*. In particular I remind members that asking ministers for opinions and for solutions to hypothetical propositions is out of order.

*Questions without notice and ministers statements***Suburban Rail Loop**

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:03): My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, which government projects or programs are being cut to pay for Labor's SRL project?

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Economic Growth) (14:04): I thank the member for Sandringham for his question. It does give me the opportunity to demonstrate that the Allan Labor government is very much committed to continuing a very substantial investment in infrastructure. We do that because the community not only deserves it but expects it. The average spend on infrastructure for the state of Victoria out of the budget sector before we came to government – each and every year of the 10 years before we came to government – was \$4.9 billion a year. Last year the government spent \$23.5 billion on infrastructure out of the budget sector. It removed level crossings. What are we at? Seventy-four level crossings were removed right across this state.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will come to order. There is too much interjecting across the chamber. Members will be removed without warning.

Brad Rowswell: On a point of order, Speaker, I get that it is question time and not answer time. However, under the standing orders the Treasurer is required to be directly relevant to the question which I have asked, which he is not being at the moment.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Speaker, there is no point of order. The Treasurer was being relevant to the question, which asked about infrastructure expenditure, specifically the SRL, and I am looking forward to the Treasurer using the next 2 minutes to further –

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the House will resume her seat.

James Newbury: Further to the point of order, Speaker, may I refer you to page 153 of *Rulings from the Chair* and a number of previous rulings in relation to relevancy, most recently Speaker Brooks in April 2022, and the ruling that a minister's answer must directly relate to the question asked. For a number of days this week the ministers have used a word in the question to not answer the question that was asked, and I put to you that is exactly what is happening here.

The SPEAKER: As I have indicated previously, I cannot tell the minister how to respond to a question. The Treasurer was being relevant to the question that was asked in relation to government projects and programs and Labor's SRL project.

Tim PALLAS: The people of Victoria have been asked whether or not they agree with two competing views about infrastructure in this state – one from this government, which continues to invest and grow our infrastructure, and the Suburban Rail Loop of course is a critical part of that. This government went to two elections, sought a mandate and received a mandate from the Victorian people to build the Suburban Rail Loop, and that is exactly what we will do. This is a case of being able to chew gum and walk at the same time. We can deliver infrastructure, and we can facilitate economic growth and opportunity. That is why 530,000 jobs have been created in this state over the last three years, 130,000 more than New South Wales. Why is that? Because this government puts the interests of the Victorian people first. We invest in their futures and we have a long-term and consistent view about how we deliver infrastructure to grow the vitality and the economic opportunity of this state, and we will continue to do that.

I know that the member for Sandringham is soon to be briefed by the Assistant Treasurer, as infrastructure minister, and his team about the Suburban Rail Loop, because he has such interest in it. I understand this afternoon it is going to happen indeed, so you should have left the question until you were properly informed. But let me make the point that because you are so interested in this project –

The SPEAKER: Order! Through the Chair, Treasurer.

Tim PALLAS: I beg your pardon, Speaker. Because the member for Sandringham is so interested in this vital project, it is a clear demonstration that everybody is getting on board with a project that will secure the vitality of the state and deliver the public transport that this community deserves.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:09): Will the Treasurer admit that the outrageous cost of the SRL is forcing the government to cut other vital projects and programs?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Bentleigh can leave the chamber for half an hour, without commentary.

Member for Bentleigh withdrew from chamber.

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Economic Growth) (14:09): No. In fact can I make it very clear to the member for Sandringham that if you look at capital works commencing and continuing right throughout the state of Victoria in the last budget, whether it be in the government sector or the public sector more generally, \$200 billion worth of projects are commencing or continuing in this state. The Suburban Rail Loop is assessed as costing, for the stage that is currently underway, somewhere between \$30 billion and \$34.5 billion. That is over the 10-year construction period that is being proposed. It does demonstrate that effectively 15 per cent of one year's total capital expenditure is more than doable and more than capable of being managed by the state of Victoria. Yes, we understand that this is a very big project, but it is vital that we deliver it for Victorians.

Ministers statements: International Women's Day

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Jobs and Industry, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, Minister for Women) (14:10): I rise to update the house on the incredible work Victorian

women are doing in celebrating International Women's Day tomorrow. The Allan Labor government is investing in the women's grassroots grants program, which has supported 44 local organisations to enact activities that empower women and improve gender equality. I recently visited one of these programs at the Collingwood justice centre. It is called the women behind the wheel program, which is an absolutely incredible program that supports women from culturally diverse backgrounds to have driving lessons in language, opening up opportunities for employment, study and independence. Other projects include the Pasifika women's health equality project, in the member for Oakleigh's electorate, which focuses on culturally sensitive health literacy programs, and the Somali Women Shine program in the member for Laverton's area, where we are challenging the self-limiting beliefs of these women and improving women's health and economic participation. The grassroots program recognises that local organisations and individuals are best placed to respond to the barriers women are experiencing in their own communities.

'Count her in' is this year's theme for International Women's Day, and it rightly identifies women's economic participation as an essential part of breaking down gender barriers. This reinforces the Victorian gender equality strategy *Our Equal State*, which was launched last year. From the Best Start, Best Life programs to supporting women entering traditionally male-dominated industries and addressing the gender pay gaps that exist, this side of the house will not stop supporting women in their growth. That is what happens when you have a majority of women in your party, and of course we have more women on our front bench than the Liberal Party have in their party room.

The SPEAKER: Before I call the Leader of the Opposition for the next question, can I acknowledge in the gallery the former member for Essendon and former Speaker the Honourable Judy Maddigan.

Western suburbs rail lines

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:13): My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. At the last two state elections Labor promised to duplicate and electrify the rail lines to Melton and to Wyndham Vale as part of the *Western Rail Plan*. Six years on, when will construction start?

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Frankston withdrew from chamber.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:13): On this side of the house we are incredibly proud of the investments we are making in rail, unlike those opposite, who cut and closed rail lines when they were in office. As a government we have indicated that we are going to be removing four dangerous and deadly level crossings along the Melton line. That is a \$650 million investment. This is about making sure we make those necessary investments along the Melton line. In addition to that, we have made a commitment that we will be making sure the Werribee line is level crossing free. We are making investments –

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, the question was very short and targeted: six years on, when will construction start?

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

Danny PEARSON: It is a bit galling to get a question from those opposite, who never built anything, never delivered anything –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, standing order 58 does require a minister to be direct. Ministers are repeatedly and flagrantly, because they do not understand their briefs, not

responding in any way to the questions that are asked. It is high farce if ministers can pick one word in every question and respond to that issue rather than the questions that are asked.

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business knows that I cannot direct a minister how to answer a question. The minister was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Danny PEARSON: As I said, we are making these investments along the Melton line to remove four dangerous and deadly level crossings, and we are making investments across the Werribee line as well to make sure that is level crossing free. These are investments that we are making. Those opposite did not deliver a single major project when they were in government.

Members interjecting.

Danny PEARSON: The Leader of the Opposition intervenes across the table: 'Neither do you.' I would remind the Leader of the Opposition that –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, standing order 58 also requires the minister to be succinct, and I would put to you that the minister, by not answering the question, is not being succinct either.

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

Danny PEARSON: You cannot electrify a track unless you remove level crossings. You cannot electrify a track unless you duplicate it. We are making these investments to ensure that happens. Those opposite have never delivered a thing.

Members interjecting.

Danny PEARSON: You have had a really bad week; 5 o'clock cannot come fast enough for you.

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair!

Danny PEARSON: Speaker, the only person opposite who has been happy this week is the member for Mornington's son, who was waving at the Premier when she smiled at him. You have had a dreadful week, mate.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Minister! The Premier will come to order. I can pre-empt what the point of order is going to be.

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

The SPEAKER: Minister, come back to answering the question.

Danny PEARSON: As I have said, you have got to remove level crossings before you can electrify. You have got to duplicate before you can electrify. I am very happy to arrange a briefing for those opposite. Perhaps, member for Sandringham, we can roll the SRL briefing into one about the regional rail plan. I am very happy to do that, making sure those opposite understand the investments we are making in rail.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:17): Is it the case that Labor cannot afford to deliver the promised upgrades to the Melton and Wyndham Vale lines?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:17): Clearly the Leader of the Opposition has no plan B and did not listen to the answer I gave him to the substantive question. Five o'clock cannot come round fast enough for you, mate.

The SPEAKER: Minister, you will direct your answers through the Chair.

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question is not the same as the substantive. It asks: is it the case that Labor cannot afford to deliver the upgrades?

The SPEAKER: A point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question. I ask the minister to address the question that was asked.

Danny PEARSON: We are investing in road and rail right across the western suburbs. We are making sure the Werribee line will be level crossing free. The Melton line will be level crossing free. We are continuing to invest in the infrastructure that Victorians have overwhelmingly voted for, and we will continue to do so.

Ministers statements: women in small business

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (14:18): I rise today to update the house on the success of Victorian women in small business. On the eve of International Women’s Day we celebrate the achievements of women in small businesses in our communities. Since 2006 the number of women starting their own small business has grown three times faster than men, and here in Victoria there are so many stories of successful women working hard to reach their goals.

Recently I visited Ketbaker with the member for Bellarine, who I know is a loyal customer and a great supporter of business, and it was wonderful to see the delicious baked goods now available across the Bellarine and in Melbourne. I visited Wattle Gully Flower Farm with the member for Yan Yean. Small business owner Thanisa is a member of Young Farmers Connect, passing on her knowledge to the next generation. Women like Miek, Thanisa and many more, like my friends in the gallery today Luz, Lidia and Suji, are contributing to the local economy. They are local champions. They are creating jobs and boosting our employment, and most importantly the Allan Labor government knows that when you support small business they achieve big things.

That is why we are delivering \$17 million to support small businesses across Melbourne, and through Business Victoria small businesses are receiving expert advice and of course mentoring. On International Women’s Day let us continue to celebrate and support our fierce, diverse women, who continue to inspire us all. From small businesses to corporate boardrooms or to the second female Premier of this state, we are making our mark. Let us keep smashing the ceilings, and do not take no for an answer.

The SPEAKER: I remind members that it is not appropriate to acknowledge the gallery in future presentations.

Home building industry

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:21): My question is to the Assistant Treasurer. Apex Homes collapsed on 28 February 2024, leaving families shattered. Yesterday the government chose to cut off eligibility for the liquidated builders customer support payment scheme at 20 February 2024. Is the government deliberately excluding families affected by the Apex Homes collapse?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:21): I am delighted to again receive another question from the member for Kew on these issues. What is always surprising, every time I have been asked to answer a question here, is that those opposite never, ever attack the businesses that have potentially engaged in illegal activity. You never go after them. You never turn around and say it is the fault of these businesses.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the minister is not dealing with the matter, which is actually a very, very serious matter, and I would ask you to bring the minister back to the question that was asked.

The SPEAKER: Minister, I ask you to come back to the question that was asked.

Danny PEARSON: Let us just work our way through this briefly. Businesses in many cases have behaved in the most appalling way possible. They have behaved in some of the most egregious ways, and that has resulted in people going through unimaginable sorrow. I want to thank the member for South Barwon in particular, who is not here, as well as a member for Yan Yean, who is here, for their advocacy. These hardworking local members have been strong advocates on behalf of their communities, raising this as an issue. The issue has been the appalling behaviour of the individual businesses involved, who have got neither care nor responsibility for these individuals. The issue here is in relation to Montego Homes. Montego Homes, as I understand it, was originally in administration and then they went into liquidation. It is not the government's role –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, under standing order 58, the question actually related to Apex Homes.

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

Danny PEARSON: It is not the government's position to be funnelling taxpayer funds to businesses which have not yet entered into liquidation. The issue here is that when Montego Homes went into liquidation that is when the government stepped in. The member for Kew asked a question, 'Why did you put 20 February as the date?' Let us just think about that for a moment. Let us suppose, for example, we turned around and said, 'Don't worry about it, if you go into liquidation between now and 30 June, we'll step up and cover the bill.' What incentive do you think that would create for those businesses to take out insurance? There would be none. It would be effectively a moral hazard where businesses could act any which way they like and the state would be on the hook. That would be entirely irresponsible, and that demonstrates why those opposite are manifestly incapable of understanding government.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:25): Jonathan from the Narre Warren South electorate said:

The stress of losing our deposit and House dream is real!!! We are living a nightmare ...

... we need the government to step in and assist us and include Apex homes as part of the liquidated Builder scheme extension.

Given Apex Homes collapsed on 28 February, before the government's announcement yesterday, will the Assistant Treasurer now extend support to Jonathan and other families affected?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:25): What I would say is this was not a fund just designed for Montego. We have indicated that it is for businesses that collapsed between 1 July 2023 and February 2024.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Berwick withdrew from chamber.

Danny PEARSON: I am very happy if the member for Kew would like to provide me with additional information. I do say the member for Kew usually does tend to follow through on these things, unlike some opposite. I am very happy to receive that information and take that on notice.

Ministers statements: women's health

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:26): Women's health is not a niche issue, but for too long it has been treated like one, but not under the Allan Labor government. We are investing \$153 million to change the way in which health care for women is delivered in this state, and it is why we conducted our nation-leading survey of women to understand their experiences of health care. Around half of respondents reported that period-related conditions affected their health and wellbeing.

A further 30 per cent said conditions such as endo, menopause and chronic pain led to poor mental health. Four in 10 Victorian women are living with chronic pain, and one in three have health conditions that affect their ability to work and/or keep a job.

While these are shocking outcomes, they are no surprise to the women in this chamber. Victorian women have told us they want clinicians to listen, they want to be believed and they want to be diagnosed and treated. They want to get off the merry-go-round of antidepressants and iron infusions. And of course not only have we listened, we are taking action, and it is why we have established the women's pain inquiry here in Victoria, led by Safer Care Victoria and co-chaired by Professor Sue Matthews from the Women's and lived experience advocate Fi Macrae. The committee will hand down its report at the end of the year.

To the women and girls of Victoria on the eve of International Women's Day, I say to you that the Allan Labor government will always stand with you. We are on your side. We want to hear your voices, your experiences. My commitment to the women and girls of Victoria is that we will deliver real outcomes to change the way in which our healthcare needs are treated in this state.

Labour policy

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:28): My question is to the Premier. Premier, on Tuesday the government did a deal with the Liberals to pass harsh anti-worker changes to WorkCover that will kick injured workers off the scheme and deny many access. This comes on top of the government's wages policy, which deliberately keeps wages low. It comes on top of axing 4000 public service jobs at the last budget. It comes on top of the government lobbying to water down federal industrial relations laws. My question is: how can Victorian workers, who are already doing it tough in a cost-of-living crisis, have any trust in your government to stand up for them?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:29): I thank the member for Pahran for his question. The member for Pahran's question referenced legislation that went through the Legislative Council earlier this week and how parties in the upper house come together on different points or questions before the upper house. The member for Pahran perhaps may want to explain to the same workers he is so concerned about why he has sided with the Liberal Party in the upper house to oppose housing developments and why the member for Pahran and the Greens political party sided with the Liberal Party to try and block the Metro Tunnel. They are just a couple of examples; there are many, many more.

Ellen Sandell: On a point of order, Speaker, answers to questions need to be relevant. The Premier is knowingly trying to distract from the fact she did a deal with the Liberals to kick people off WorkCover.

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

Jacinta ALLAN: I can appreciate the member for Melbourne was perhaps wanting to head me off at the pass from referencing the deal that the Greens did with the Liberal Party to see the member for Richmond take her seat in this place. I can well understand why the member for Melbourne may not want to see that matter raised in this place.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Eureka withdrew from chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN: We are absolutely focused on supporting workers in this state. That is why, when it comes to building more homes, we want to build more homes so more workers can have the dignity of a roof over their head. An example of that is the way we are building more homes at the former Fitzroy gasworks site, another housing development that has been opposed by the Greens political party. Similarly, that is why we have a pipeline of infrastructure projects to not only support workers

in the construction industry and in the supply chain but also make sure that workers have good access to public transport so they can get to schools and hospitals, because not everyone lives within the tram tracks and not everyone lives on the red maps in the Melway. There are those of us who live further away who want to make sure that our kids can have good access to a university or TAFE course and that if members of our family are sick they can have access to get to those important institutions to get the health care they need. That is why we have stared down ongoing opposition from the Greens political party, often in partnership with their Liberal colleagues, to block some of these important projects that are about supporting workers in this state.

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:32): The Premier mentioned supporting workers. If the government is supporting workers, is it prepared –

Members interjecting.

Sam HIBBINS: I will ask the questions; you answer the questions. My question is: is the Premier prepared to rule out any further cuts to public service jobs, any further reductions to the public sector wages cap, any further restrictions to accessing WorkCover or any further watering down of workers rights here in Victoria?

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, the member for Pahran has asked a question that is entirely different to his first question. The rules of the house make it very clear that the supplementary question must relate to the substantive question, which was about both WorkCover and negotiations in the Legislative Council. The question that has just been asked is about an entirely different matter altogether, and I ask that you rule it out of order.

Ellen Sandell: On the point of order, Speaker, the supplementary question was directly about WorkCover and public service job cuts, both of which were directly referenced in the initial question, and WorkCover was mentioned in the Premier's answer.

The SPEAKER: I am inclined to rule the question out of order as there were multiple questions asked. In terms of relevance, there was some relevance, but there were multiple questions in that question.

Sam Hibbins: On a point of order, Speaker, the question related to whether the government would rule out further watering down of workers rights here in Victoria, with a number of examples. It is a single question. If this ruling passes, if this question is not allowed to be asked, it will rule out a whole wide range of questions from non-government members.

The SPEAKER: Member for Pahran, I have ruled on the question. If you have questions, you are welcome to come and speak to me in my office after question time.

Ministers statements: women's employment

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Employment) (14:35): In Victoria under the Allan Labor government, on International Women's Day – on every day – we always 'Count her in'. Since 2014 under our government women's employment has increased by 31.7 per cent. Our social enterprise sector contributes \$5.2 billion annually to the Victorian economy. This sector is built on the hard work of so many incredible women – women like the founders of Streat, Bec Scott and Kate Barrelle; Loretta Bolotin, CEO of Free to Feed; and SisterWorks CEO Ifrin Fittock. SisterWorks has supported 800 women from 56 different countries with training, employment and mental health support and assisted over 30 women to start their own business.

The Allan Labor government continues to partner with employers to deliver earn-and-learn jobs for those looking for work, particularly people who need additional support, like women – maybe even those women who are looking for preselection in the Liberal Party. Our free TAFE program has helped more than 90,000 women gain the skills they need for the jobs and careers they want. Over

49,000 CALD women have been supported into employment through Jobs Victoria mentors, advocates and careers counsellor services. I am pleased to see the success of our mentor program. It is clearly not lost on the Leader of the Opposition, who has brought back the former member for Ripon to help count the women in the Liberal party room. I will give them a hint: you can do it on one hand. Sixty-five per cent of workers benefiting from our cost-of-living measure the sick pay guarantee pilot are women. Unlike those opposite, we will always count Victorian women in, not only when we need the numbers.

West Gippsland Hospital

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (14:37): My question is to the Minister for Health. The minister made an election promise in 2022 to build a new West Gippsland Hospital. Is construction going to start this year, as promised?

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:37): I thank the member for Narracan for his question. Of course back in 2022 we made commitments to the people of Victoria, commitments that we intend to fully deliver on. I was really excited to be able to join with the former Premier to announce that we would build a new hospital for West Gippsland, that we would deliver a new Queen Elizabeth hospital at Maroondah and that the Dandenong Hospital would be upgraded. There is Wonthaggi Hospital, which I know the member for Bass is very, very excited about, the Monash Medical Centre and expanded EDs at the Northern and the Austin Hospital.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question asked was whether West Gippsland Hospital construction is going to start this year.

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

Mary-Anne THOMAS: In last year's budget I was delighted when money was allocated for our hospital infrastructure development fund to commence the planning for these important upgrades and projects. I make this point to the member for Narracan: it is really important that we get the planning right, because what we do not want to see is a debacle like the eye and ear hospital that the previous Liberal government attempted to deliver. And you know what –

Wayne Farnham: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the government promised to start construction in 2024, and that is what I want answered.

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

Mary-Anne THOMAS: Again I will make the point about the importance of planning. Building new hospitals is a complex business and on average can take between six and nine years, sometimes even longer, because we need to understand the condition of the ground and so on. This is what they failed to do with the eye and ear hospital. What we found when we went to continue to deliver the eye and ear project was that the health service was riddled with asbestos, something that those on the other side of the chamber fail to understand.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question in a manner to avoid answering the question.

The SPEAKER: The minister was referring to planning. The minister was being relevant to the question.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: The Allan Labor government will continue to invest in our health infrastructure portfolio. We have a \$15 billion portfolio. No other government has invested as much in health infrastructure as this government. Unlike those on the other side, we will not sell off our health services, we will not privatise them, we will not cut health services and we will not attack healthcare workers. We deliver on our –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, may I refer you to Speaker Maddigan's ruling of August 2003 –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for Narracan, do you want to ask your supplementary question? Then you will come to order.

James Newbury: The very strong ruling is that an answer must directly relate rather than being general. I put to you that multiple times today the ministers have gone nowhere near responding to the question and have generally debated the question.

The SPEAKER: In reference to your point of order with the minister who is on her feet, the minister had strayed from the question. I ask you to make your points of order succinctly in relation to questions and to the ministers on their feet. The minister has concluded her answer.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (14:42): Recently Minister Shing publicly stated construction would begin in 2026. Why has the minister broken her promise to begin building the new West Gippsland Hospital in 2024?

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:42): I welcome the supplementary question. Let us be very clear: you cannot start building a hospital until you have a plan to build the hospital. We have given a commitment to the people of West Gippsland, and we will deliver on that commitment.

Ministers statements: gender equality

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:43): I am pleased to update the house on our nation-leading work in gender equality as we mark tomorrow International Women's Day. We also do need to reflect on how far gender equality has come but more importantly reflect on how much more work we have to do. As we know, overwhelmingly it is women and girls who continue to experience gendered violence. One in five have experienced sexual violence; one in three have experienced physical violence. We also know that the gender pay gap has not closed, with a pay gap equivalent to women working for an average of 56 days for free every single year. Also, as the Minister for Health has outlined to the house, women's health and wellbeing just is not taken as seriously as men's. Also, the sexism and discrimination that affect all women is even worse for women from diverse communities.

Gender equality is not just a women's issue. It affects all Victorians, and that means the responsibility to drive gender equality and end inequality also belongs to all of us. That is why through *Our Equal State: Victoria's Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan* we have that road map of action – a road map of action that is being delivered right across government. It also sets out that strong agenda for change, backed by funding, that is addressing women's needs. Just a couple of examples: the work we are doing to provide free pads and tampons in public spaces, building on top of the work in schools, and \$153 million for new women's health services, ensuring women's health gets the focus and funding it needs alongside men's health. We have led the nation on gender equality, but there is so much more to do, and we will continue to do that hard work.

And, Speaker, if I can, thank you: thank you for acknowledging our former presiding officers, two women who led the way in this place.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, in relation to question 428 to the Minister for Environment, it is still overdue. I have raised this point of order countless times. I understand that the Minister for Environment has some nearly 150 questions outstanding, but this is just one of them, and my community would like to hear the response to question 428.

Constituency questions

Evelyn electorate

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:46): (550) For the Seville Primary School community – the students, families and teachers – my question is to the Minister for Education. When will you provide sufficient funding for major upgrades at Seville Primary School to fully replace the block A and block B buildings to deliver a modern and safe place to learn with new classrooms, a library, a wellness room, a kitchen and canteen, disability access, new toilets and a safe bushfire refuge? Seville Primary School's infrastructure is no longer fit for purpose. The buildings are full of asbestos – a broken promise from the Labor government's election pledge in 2014 to remove asbestos from all schools. This curtails the school's ability to offer modern learning, as they cannot install TV monitors and other digital tools on the walls. The wellness room in block A has a big hole in the floor, and the ceiling in block B consistently leaks and Make-safe has failed to fix this. I pay tribute to principal Christopher Dossor, school council president Courtney O'Keefe and the staff, parents and students for their advocacy to ensure that Seville Primary School gets the new, modern buildings that they deserve.

Sunbury electorate

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (14:47): (551) My question is to the outstanding Minister for Public and Active Transport. Minister, what is the status of designs for this government's upgrade of the Sunbury bus terminal? As the minister is well aware, this government has invested in record terms in transport within my electorate. We have removed the Gap Road level crossing and are removing two level crossings in Diggers Rest. We have upgraded Sunbury Road, 12 months ahead of schedule, and are of course delivering a massive multideck car park at the Sunbury station. When it comes to buses, we have invested in electric buses for the local community, we are adding the new service to 475 and we continue to of course work right across the community to deliver in transport and transport infrastructure within my community. I again ask the outstanding minister for the status of this important upgrade.

Euroa electorate

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (14:48): (552) My question is to the Treasurer, and I ask: why has the government changed the criteria, which has forced thousands of my constituents to pay land tax for the first time? Individuals, families and businesses are rightly concerned that this tax will lead to increased pressure on households, increased costs for running a business and increased rents. After 44 years of operating his Benalla automotive centre, which his dad started, Mark Brient said the latest land tax increase was the final straw, and he is closing his business and moving interstate. Meanwhile, 80-year-old Alan McGillivray from Knowsley has said his land tax bill jumped from \$16,000 to \$82,000 in 12 months. On top of situations like this, I have got constituents reaching out, concerned with errors on their land tax bills, with people charged for their primary place of residence. I look forward to seeing how the Treasurer will justify this latest blatant tax grab that punishes Victorians because of his financial incompetence.

Kororoit electorate

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (14:49): (553) My question is for the Minister for Education. Can the minister please provide an update on when building works will commence at Tarneit Plains Primary School? As I have said many times in this chamber, my community of Kororoit sits within the fastest growing LGA in Australia, with 58 babies being born each week. We need more schools to make sure that children in Kororoit can get a great education close to home – like Dorian French, a student who is from Kororoit and who joins me today. Dorian is a fantastic example of future leadership in our community. I was pleased to award him with a leadership award last year, and I wish him the best for his VCE. The community of Kororoit is growing, and we need to provide these families with innovative schools and modern learning environments to prepare students for the 21st century.

Mornington electorate

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (14:50): (554) My question is to the Minister for Education. Will the state government deliver STEM upgrades and fund the much-needed full redevelopment of Mount Eliza Secondary College as soon as possible? First, it is great to have both Chelsea Rix and James Richards here in the chamber – last year’s school captains, who have joined me as my guests today for the International Women’s Day event. Chelsea and James initiated last year’s parliamentary petition for Mount Eliza Secondary, gathering 853 signatures and outlining the need for urgent funding for a STEM centre, redevelopment of the senior learning and drama centres and the creation of a dedicated welfare facility. Following their school, community and political advocacy, a commitment was made during the Dunkley federal by-election for STEM facilities, which I understand to be \$7 million. The state Labor government must deliver this as soon as possible, and, as I have repeatedly called for, they must fund the much-needed full redevelopment of the school, given its buildings are 50 years old.

Ashwood electorate

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (14:51): (555) My question is for the Minister for Water in the other place, and I ask the minister: how is the Allan Labor government acting to improve our local environment and habitats for native wildlife in the Ashwood district? We take pride in our local environment, parks, conservation reserves, native bushlands and natural waterways. These natural assets hold so much value to our local residents. I would like to take this opportunity to thank some of the many groups who work tirelessly, some of whom have done so for decades, to improve our district: the Friends of Damper Creek, the Friends of Scotchmans Creek and Valley Reserve, the Friends of Gardiners Creek Valley and more recently the KooyongKoot Alliance under the leadership of Graham Ross, whose work for our local environment is so important. Importantly we should also thank the many volunteers who turn up time after time to improve our suburbs – people like Dianne Carra, the president of Damper Creek, Helen Clements, the former president, and also Sally Walker at Scotchmans Creek.

With the last little bit I have got, as we head to International Women’s Day, a very special happy birthday to my wife Bec and my daughter Sophie for tomorrow.

Melbourne electorate

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:52): (556) My question is to the Premier: will the state government rename Kings Domain in central Melbourne? Just opposite the NGV in the middle of Melbourne is a site you may not even have heard of. Among the gum trees in the middle of a tranquil patch of grass the remains of First Nations people from 32 clans are buried, remains brought back from museums and institutions around the world. Yet this significant Aboriginal site is unfathomably named Kings Domain. In 2006 a group of First Nations people set up camp on this spot to draw attention to the injustices perpetrated against First Nations people throughout our history. They called it Camp Sovereignty. Since 26 January this year Camp Sovereignty has started up again. The asks are clear: return the land to traditional custodians for ceremony and healing, rename it and build a cultural centre on the site. This site does not belong to the King. It belongs to the First Nations people of this land, and it should be renamed accordingly.

Yan Yean electorate

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (14:53): (557) My question is to the Minister for Skills and TAFE in the other place, and I ask: how many constituents in my electorate of Yan Yean have accessed free TAFE since it started five years ago? We know that since 2014 the government’s investment in VET and TAFE has increased by 48 per cent, which is well above the national average of 27 per cent, and some 157,500 students have had the chance to get the skills they need for the jobs that they want, all the while saving in total \$436 million in fees. This is important to me for the people of my electorate because on average a free TAFE student saves over \$10,000 in tuition fees on a full education, with

some students saving more than \$30,000. I ask the minister: how many people in my electorate have managed to save through this initiative?

Shepparton electorate

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (14:54): (558) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Minister, what is being done to improve safety at the Kialla West Primary School pedestrian crossing? Five years ago a horrific accident occurred at the crossing, causing serious injuries to a family and a student of the school. This crossing is on a major highway and a thoroughfare with a high volume of trucks navigating local traffic daily. Twenty-five per cent of the state's trucks are registered in the Shepparton region, and that number continues to grow. Kialla is a growing precinct with new housing developments, which has increased traffic volume. I have serious safety concerns about this school crossing.

Laverton electorate

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (14:55): (559) My question is for the Minister for Health. Two weeks ago our government made a fantastic announcement that we would be extending the community pharmacy pilot program. As part of this extension 729 pharmacies across Victoria, including in my electorate of Laverton, will be able to treat patients for psoriasis and shingles. We know that 3700 Victorians, the majority of whom are women, have already accessed the care that they need through this very important program – and by all reports it is a massive success. For women it has meant that they can just pop down to their local chemist that is part of this program and get the appropriate treatment for issues like urinary tract infections. It has also meant that women can get a refill of their oral contraceptive pills without having to go to their local GP each and every single time. My question for the minister is this: how will these changes benefit folks and women in my electorate of Laverton who access this program?

Bills

Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (14:56): I rise to debate the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024, legislation that addresses 11 recommendations from a review into the private security industry under the former Andrews government. At the time, there were a number of issues with the private security industry which the original private security bill in 2004 failed to address. Indeed the industry was plagued by reports of questionable practices and misconduct, a lack of adequate training measures, unsafe working environments and more. Despite the strides the original legislation made in being the first formal recognition of the importance of a robustly regulated private security industry, the act was failing to keep up with the changing industry.

The review of Victoria's troubled security firms, released initially in 2020, came as Victoria grappled with COVID-19 outbreaks at the quarantine hotels and it detailed an industry plagued with poor hiring practices and controversial subcontracting policies. The report also found security guards being underpaid, lacking English-language skills and often being so poorly trained that they could not perform the basic functions of their job. These industry-wide issues became most evident during the outbreak at hotel quarantine during the pandemic. The casualised nature of the industry, the associated lack of job security and the lack of appropriate training and knowledge in safety and workplace rights all contributed to a bungled hotel quarantine program.

Indeed the former Andrews Labor government and current Allan Labor government want to relegate this program to the backrooms of history – for it to be forever cast out of the memories of the Victorian people – and to shirk their responsibilities. But let me state for the record that the hotel quarantine disaster was one of the worst public administration failures in all of Victoria's and indeed Australia's

history. The failures of the program were largely directly responsible for the COVID-19 second wave, a 111-day lockdown, 768 deaths and a smashed economy at the time. And we will never forget the collective amnesia amongst senior public servants and members of the Labor Party on whose decision it was to use private security guards, a decision that had catastrophic implications for our state and caused reverberations which are still being experienced today. I reiterate for the record that the failures of the former government and the lack of responsibility for one of the worst public administration disasters in Victoria's history are a downright disgrace. In this debate it would be remiss of me not to note this. The Victorian people will never forget, no matter how much the government thinks it has been relegated to the history books.

Going back to the specifics of this bill, among many other measures this legislation amends the Private Security Act 2004 to provide for a new licensing system for the private security industry and amends the County Court Act 1958 and the Sentencing Act 1991 to extend the operation of the Drug Court. In relation to private security, the changes are relatively uncontroversial and will bring about those 11 changes based on the review's findings. Clauses 4 to 41 and 44 to 61 are mostly procedural and deal with changes in language from 'registration' through to 'licensing'. Clauses 42 and 43 – the insertion of new sections 136A and 136B – strengthen the requirements on private security companies when employing staff to ensure that they are appropriately licensed. Companies will now be obligated to provide full details of all staff assigned to a job to the customer, and there are severe penalties for noncompliance.

The bill will also amend the Private Security Act to provide for a new licensing system. I think that it is of utmost importance that we ensure that private security individuals and companies are maintaining the highest standards when exercising their work and that they are fit for the job. With the current Victoria Police staffing shortages and lack of adequate resources, I think we could have situations where private security is acting as a supplementary law enforcement. Just last year we all remember that 43 police stations were closed to the public late at night to ease staffing and funding pressures. This included Mornington police station, which needs more manpower and more resources, not less. We all know that violent crime, burglaries, youth violence and crime generally are increasing every day. While the police of course do a fantastic job and make the best use of the resources that they are given, it is simply not enough to tackle these burgeoning crime rates.

We have also seen private security acting as their own law enforcement on a particularly large and increasing scale. I am thinking in particular of Jubilee estate in Wyndham Vale, where at night, private security drives slowly over the roads, acting as a supplementary law enforcement, protecting residents, checking licence plates on strange cars and responding to reports of suspicious activity. All of this is largely due to Jubilee's remoteness, being 11 kilometres from the nearest police station. Growth areas like Jubilee are incredible opportunities for home owners and families, but increasing crime rates or fear of crime combined with a lack of policing resources mean that private security has to fill in the gaps.

As such, until the Labor government actively steps up and ensures that Victoria Police are resourced more and equipped properly to tackle increasing crime rates, we are going to have private security sometimes acting as a supplementary law enforcement. That is also very worrying particularly when we have seen attacks recently and much fear within, say, the Jewish community, where we have seen a number of people targeted and the Jewish community targeted often generally as a group, even those who are not Israeli or do not have an Israeli connection, who have grown up here, who have little or nothing to do with the conflict and even those who have diverging views on the conflict.

Going back to the details of the bill, further this bill extends by two years the current three-year trial of the operation of the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court, DATC, of the County Court, making it a five-year pilot. The second-reading speech refers to the extension of the trial and:

... that the lessons learned from recent evaluations of Victoria's Drug Courts can be implemented to enhance the operation of the Drug Court.

Indeed ever since the establishment of Victoria's first-ever Drug Court at the Dandenong Magistrates' Court in 2002, the Drug Court in Victoria model has had a number of achievements under its belt, producing positive outcomes for the community and participants.

Despite the achievements, there are a number of measures that can be taken to improve the current system. For example, I would love to see an established agency and organisation – indeed this could be done nationwide – to foster communication and collaboration between professionals in the Drug Court, such as what they had in the US, the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. This is a training, membership and advocacy organisation devoted to enhancing the Drug Court model, where professionals can exchange information and ideas. This is of course just one example, yet I would be interested to hear what evaluations the minister is referring to when they are released from the Attorney-General's office.

In relation to the changes to the private security industry, it is also a concern of mine that these changes could take years to materialise. Victoria Police, who are responsible for overseeing private security, firearms licences and controlled weapons, is grappling with an outdated law enforcement assistance program, otherwise known as LEAP, database that will, as I understand, lose the support from its parent company in 2029. The support currently provided by the company is also limited. As such, implementing the requisite systemic changes to accommodate these private security amendments, particularly in the introduction of the new licensing system and transitional arrangements, will be costly and time consuming. During the bill briefing the department acknowledged that Victoria Police has yet to ascertain the full scope and costs required to update the database to meet the standards necessary. However, the department has said that the objectives can be achieved by the stated deadline of 19 June 2025. I am of course very reluctant to have any confidence in this date given that the government has had a history of shortcomings in delivering timely and budgeted database or IT upgrades for Victoria Police.

Furthermore, the new fee structure for private security companies and individuals is still unknown. The fee structure for licences and registrations is set out in detail in the private security regulations, and these structures will need to be substantially redrafted or remade, requiring detailed analysis through a regulatory impact statement to ascertain what fees are required on a cost recovery model. This task will be complicated because each staff member in the registry deals not only with private security matters but also firearms and controlled weapons matters. There is much uncertainty surrounding this, and it will take time to accurately assess what proportion of their time on average is spent on each private security licensing task before fees can be managed.

Overall, the coalition will not be opposing this bill, although like much of the legislation those opposite have brought forward in recent times, there are still concerns and much uncertainty as to how the amendments will work in practice.

Darren CHEESEMAM (South Barwon) (15:06): It is with some pleasure that I rise this afternoon to make my contribution on the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024. I must say, in reflecting on this bill my mind really turned back to the 1990s when as a young person I was going growing up in the Buninyong area and I would often take up the opportunity to head into Ballarat to the nightclubs. I guess that is where I first became aware of the need in these nightclubs in the Ballarat area to employ bouncers and security people to make sure that those venues operated safely and that those that chose to head out for a good night were safe in those premises and to make sure that those businesses could maintain a good reputation in that community. Indeed what became a reality really in that period, not only of course in the Ballarat area but indeed in many parts of the night-time economy, was that we unfortunately saw criminality entering into these types of arrangements, where often bikies and indeed others with a criminal history were not only operating as bouncers and security guards but also perhaps doing other things on the side in those premises to help support, I guess, their way of life.

We have also seen over the last few decades the number of people employed in this industry, not only in that night-time economy sense but also indeed across the public sector in all of our public sector buildings working to help maintain and protect all of those public servants. What we have also seen is that in the nature of the employment arrangements that exist we often see a lot of casualisation, a lot of contracting out et cetera, where we see in so many ways often a bit of a race to the bottom line. Often we see workers not being provided with the necessary training or indeed even the necessary rates of pay to make sure that they have a secure job, that they are properly trained and properly qualified to do the work that they are there to do and which ultimately is about helping to keep us all safe.

What we have seen with Labor in government – and my mind certainly goes back to what many of my colleagues have also reflected on – is the reforms that were put in place by the Bracks government to help in dealing with and removing criminality from the sector, making sure that those that were employed as security guards were appropriately trained and properly licensed. We need to make sure not only that they have those things but that where necessary they are regularly retrained to make sure that they have got appropriate and contemporary skills to be able to do the work that is important to all of us in all of the settings in which they reside.

I can remember up until those tragic circumstances that we saw with the World Trade Centre – I can recall prior to that as a union official in the public sector – being able to enter public sector buildings to go and visit workers without actually having to go anywhere near any security at all. It was just simply a matter of being able to walk up and go and visit workplaces and go and talk to workers about the issues that they had. Of course with those tragic circumstances that happened back then, we see a much greater, much bigger industry today, and I think there is a lot more work that needs to be done to make sure that these workers have job security. I do wish to take the opportunity to shout out to the United Workers Union, which has been active in this space in making sure that these workers working in these spaces are recognised and well paid for the work that they do. They continue to advocate hard, I think, and I commend them for that work.

No matter what setting we are in, we all have a right to feel safe and to be safe and, where appropriate, to make sure that there are those that are employed to keep us safe. Whether that be as security officers, whether that be as bouncers when we are in the night-time economy, we want to make sure those workers are fit and proper people. We want to make sure that they are well trained and that they know how to conduct themselves appropriately to help keep us safe. I think seeing bills like this pass through this chamber is important. It is important that we see the United Workers Union continue to do the good work that they are doing in protecting and negotiating and enhancing the pay and conditions and the safety of those workers as well.

As I say, when the World Trade Centre came down it changed the nature of many public sector buildings. Those public sector buildings now do have security at each and every one of them. They are there to help keep those public servants safe and to make sure that those that are entering the building are doing so safely and with good intent. It certainly is a massively bigger part of the economy now than what it was back then. I am sure that will be a feature of these public sector buildings for many years to come. It certainly will be a feature of many pubs and clubs and the like going forward.

Indeed I very much want to commend these arrangements to this chamber. I would like to see further work done to make sure that we keep criminality out and that we continue to see workers well trained to do this important work to help keep us all safe and indeed to make sure that these workers, given the nature of job security in this sector, are given stronger arrangements to make sure that they do have strong hours of employment and the like. As I say, I commend the union and I commend the work that the government has done in this space and will continue to do. These arrangements are important. They are important for all of our health and safety when we are out and about in the public sector and when we are out and about in clubs and nightclubs and the like, and I very much commend them to this place.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (15:15): I rise to speak on the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024. This bill is an important bill, in that it helps enhance arrangements that ensure we have a stronger and safer community, and that is something that we all, I am sure, want. I do want to just make a few brief comments, because community safety is something that we talk a lot about in this chamber. We have all been talking about it in various ways over recent times. In my community it is an issue that is spoken about often. I know only today an arrest was made in relation to a case that I am sure many Victorians have been following, and I will not go into the details of that matter. So many Victorians, I am sure, have been following that case. It is a timely opportunity to say that Victoria Police do such an incredible job in caring for our community, in ensuring that our community is safe. So this bill is an opportunity to talk about community safety and to talk about the way that the private security industry complements security more generally in the way that the community is protected from crime, from bad behaviour, from all sorts of things.

In terms of community safety in my area of Brighton, Brighton East, Elwood, Hampton and Hampton East, there have been many, many publicly raised instances of crime. Ensuring that we have a system of safety to keep the community safe is important. So when bills like this one come before the Parliament, it is an opportunity to speak to the importance of those measures. This, the private security changes, will do that. Again, it is an opportunity to talk about the work of not just private security but also Victoria Police. I am sure that every member of this place would so strongly want to say to everybody who works in community safety, whether it be in the private security industry or the police, how much we appreciate –

Juliana Addison: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the name of this bill is about private security. This is not an opportunity for the member for Brighton to grandstand.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): The bill is indeed about private security. I understand that they contribute to public safety more broadly, but I ask the member to be specific to the bill.

James NEWBURY: I think it is an opportunity in relation to safety more generally to acknowledge how our community is kept safe. I think that every member in this place, as I was saying before the interjection – almost every member; obviously every member bar one – strongly supports the work of both the private sector and the police in terms of the public enforcement of community safety.

Juliana Addison: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I believe that was an unparliamentary reference to me – the ‘bar one’ – and I seek a withdrawal, please, from the member for Brighton.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): You took personal offence to that?

Juliana Addison: I did take personal offence.

James NEWBURY: I did not refer to anybody.

Juliana Addison: Further to the point of order, Acting Speaker, the member for Brighton said in this place ‘bar one’ after referring to the point of order that I made, and I took personal offence to that.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): Does the member wish to withdraw his statement?

James NEWBURY: I was not referring to any particular member, Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): The comment was ‘bar one’. Is that correct?

James NEWBURY: Yes.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): So who was that referring to?

James NEWBURY: I am not sure this is a matter for debate, Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): I ask the member to continue but to be mindful of his language so that it does not cause offence.

James NEWBURY: Thank you, Acting Speaker. I will continue with my thanks to both the private and public enforcers of community safety in Victoria Police and the private security industry. It is a timely opportunity to say thank you for the hard work that they do, because when community safety issues come to the fore, frustration does boil over in terms of the community with how their safety is at risk. It should never be seen –

Nick Staikos: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, we are now 6 minutes into the member for Brighton's contribution. The member for Brighton is the Manager of Opposition Business, so we would expect that the member for Brighton would know that he has to be relevant to the bill. Given the many points of order those of us on this side of the house have to put up with sitting week after sitting week, I would ask that in his last 4 minutes on this bill he actually addresses the bill under debate.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Lauren Kathage): I do ask the member to come back to the bill. Come back to the bill, please, rather than community safety more broadly.

James NEWBURY: The core of this bill is about enhancing community safety, and those were the comments that I was trying to briefly make. I was hoping that it would not be a full 7 minutes, but here we are. All I was attempting to do was to say thank you to those in both the private and public sector who do keep us safe, and with that I will conclude my remarks.

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (15:22): I am very pleased today to speak and contribute on and support the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024. I am very pleased that the opposition are supporting this bill, as they have explained. This is important, and there is agreement from the opposition, which I welcome very much. I would also, Acting Speaker Kathage, really like to thank you for your contribution and for really bringing the important essence at an individual level for one of your constituents, and I think it is a reflection on what a very hardworking local member you are, listening to people, knowing what it is like for workers in the security sector – in the private security sector – in your electorate of Yan Yean. I really want to note that on the record, to say that.

What is important to me as well is, as the member for Brighton did refer to and only referred to, community safety. For the record, I am very passionate about community safety. That is why I am particularly happy that the Drug Court trial that is referred to in this bill is in my community, because we know that the Drug Court is helping to improve community safety. I would really like to make sure that it is clear to everyone in this place that I am incredibly committed to community safety, and that is why I am making a contribution today. I would like to thank the Minister for Police, the Attorney-General, their advisers, their ministerial officers and their departments for doing the work to bring the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill to the house today.

Before bringing it to this place there was a significant amount of engagement, particularly with the Victorian security industry advisory committee, and the stakeholders or the key players that are on that committee are Victoria Police and our friends at the United Workers Union. It has already been announced today, but the United Workers Union is a union that proudly represents private security workers, and it does such an excellent job. I would like to thank the organisers and the officials at the UWU for the work that they do supporting workers in the private security sector. It was the Victorian security industry advisory committee that also provided input into the previous 2021 report on the review of the private security industry. The review also included public consultations in 2020, and its recommendations have directly informed the bill before us today. I want to recognise those consulted regarding the extension of the Drug Court trial, which includes Court Services Victoria as well as the County Court.

In the lead-up to the 2018 election – a great election, when I was elected to this place like so many people who are currently here – the Andrews Labor government promised to review the private

security industry with a view to improving working conditions and reinforcing community confidence. The review process included a period of public consultation, which resulted in 21 recommendations to government, all of which have been accepted, because that is what we do as a government – we listen to experts and then we embrace their recommendations. A number of these have already been implemented without the need for legislation, while others are still underway.

The bill before us today addresses those which do require legislative support in order to streamline and modernise private security licensing. It proposes amendments to the Private Security Act 2004, which makes sense – 20 years on, the nature of the security sector would have changed – here considered the principal act, which will address subcontracting, conduct standards, refresher training, risk management and redundant licensing requirements. I will speak to these as well as talking about the importance of the Drug Court for my community in Ballarat. What this bill does is proposes consequential amendments to other bills before concluding with minor amendments to the County Court Act 1958 and the Sentencing Act 1991, which extend the operation of the County Court drug pilot program, which is in, as I said, Ballarat as well as Shepparton as the regional Drug Courts.

While subcontracting can be necessary to manage surge demands for security services, this bill addresses the shameful yet persistent issue of sham contracting. We on this side, with all our friends in the union movement, know about sham contracting. Sham contracting occurs when private security workers are falsely classified as independent contractors, all the while missing out on the benefit of protections of employment. With this bill, private security subcontracting will be reformed to require independent contractors to hold not only an ABN and an individual operators licence but also a private security business licence, allowing for those who are genuine business operators –

Richard Riordan interjected.

Juliana ADDISON: like my friend who was a genuine business operator who is interjecting – while at the same time making sham contracting prohibitively difficult. I am sure we are all in agreement with that, which is why the opposition is supporting this bill.

Additionally, private security businesses will need to seek their clients' consent when hiring subcontractors and provide the proposed subcontractors' names and licence numbers in the process. In most cases this must be done in advance or within three days in limited, short-notice situations. There are a number of other requirements of the act, including to ensure that private security professionals receive the training, guidelines and information necessary to best support them in their work, and for one, refresher training will be required prior to the regular three-yearly renewal of private security licences. This includes first-aid training as well as activity-specific training such as de-escalation techniques and safe restraint practices – once again all ensuring community safety, which I am very passionate about; I think I have said that about three times now.

Tying licence renewal to training refreshment will reinforce the professional skills of private security workers, improving their safety as well as the broader public's. Looking at the client side, there will also be a requirement that any person or business employing private security must provide in advance a risk management plan. We know that critical information is so often contextual – take evacuation plans, which are venue-specific but always essential for security staff to understand. With this amendment we are ensuring private security workers will be provided with the information they need to do their job. This bill will also provide broader clarity concerning the roles and responsibilities of private security workers through a code of conduct for licence-holders, to be developed by the Chief Commissioner of Police with industry stakeholders. Together these reforms seek to provide workers in the private security industry with the tools they need to be safe and supported.

To this end, I note that this bill will further improve several aspects of individual contractor licensing. Currently personal references must be provided with applications, and applicants must also advertise their applications in print – requirements that can be time-consuming and costly for aspiring security workers. While well intentioned, the burden outweighs the benefits. Police have other methods of

assessing applicants' suitability that are more valuable often than personal references, while printed application notices have not promoted one single objection in 20 years so are definitely out of date and obsolete. As such, under the proposed licensing reforms, both requirements will be removed.

Importantly – and I will just quickly skip to the Drug Court – while much of this bill does pertain to private security contractors it also makes amendments to the County Court Act 1958 and the Sentencing Act 1991 to facilitate a two-year extension of the County Court drug pilot program. This pilot was established in 2022 with what was initially a three-year time frame and has since seen Drug Courts established regionally both in Shepparton and in Ballarat.

I was pleased to be able to join the Attorney-General to attend the official launch of the Ballarat Drug Court in March 2022. Ballarat is the second Drug Court to open in regional Victoria. The expansion of the Drug Court is part of a \$35 million expansion of this very successful program. Significantly, the expansion of the Drug Court means that people in Ballarat can participate close to home, and it means that we have specialised court services in the heart of my community. I have observed the Drug Court in action in Ballarat and strongly believe that it is helping members of my community address and overcome drug use and turn their lives around. This is because Drug Court judges have sentencing options – I note, only for appropriate offenders – aimed at addressing the underlying causes of offending. The Drug Court is working to break the cycle of addiction and offending by providing alternative rehabilitation pathways that require participants to undertake alcohol and drug counselling, comply with drug testing and regularly attend court review hearings, case management and clinical adviser appointments to ensure that they stay on track.

In closing, I believe that supporting people to address alcohol and drug use instead of punishing them will make their lives better and make my community safer. I wholeheartedly recommend and commend this bill to the house.

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (15:32): I rise to make my contribution to the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024. As I begin, may I say, Acting Speaker Kathage, I thought your contribution earlier in this place was dignified and succinct, and I thank you for that.

When I look at a bill that we are going to debate, I always like to read the information and the second reading, like we all do in this place, and what I try to do to really understand is bring it down to a very simple idea of what the bill is about. It has been spoken about in this place that this bill is really about keeping us safe – not just us in this room but also our friends, our families, our communities, people out in the public and our loved ones. I think that is really, really important. Not only is it about keeping all of us and our families safe, but this bill is also about keeping those people that keep us safe safe. That is a really important thing about this bill. If we do not keep those people who are protecting us safe, then we can be in a lot of trouble ourselves. I think that is a great thing, and I am very glad that those on the opposite side of the chamber are supporting this bill for that reason.

I think back, way back, to the 1980s when I went to Sydney, taking on my very first job. I moved into a flat with a friend who lived in Elizabeth Bay, which is a hop, a skip and a jump from Kings Cross. After work performing at the opera house I would jump on the motorbike and go up to Kings Cross to have some dinner. I have got to say it was a pretty colourful place in the 1980s, the Cross – quite exciting at times and very dangerous. If you went off the beaten track, it certainly was not safe. When you walked down the main street, you did take your life into your own hands to some extent because I guess the security guards or the bouncers were very excitable – they were very tough; they were very dangerous – and if you looked at them in the wrong way, you could get into a lot of trouble. But they did look after you. Even though I had to be cautious I often felt safe with them. I was really amazed at the amount of people that would go into the Cross, have a few beers and take the bouncers on. It was great viewing, often very bloody, but I never understood why they did that, because pretty much they always lost. This bill replaces the Private Security Act 2004, and I am very glad the Private Security Act came in, because I guess that cleaned up the issues at Kings Cross to some extent.

This bill aims to pass through the recommendations made in the report on the review of the private security industry, which was endorsed by cabinet and published in late 2021. The report came about from an election commitment before my time in this place, which was to review the industry and see what could be done to improve workers' access to fair pay and work conditions and improve the professionalism within the security industry and therefore get a better public relationship and reputation. It will accomplish all that by a number of different measures, a lot of which have been spoken of in this place already.

I will highlight a couple – first off, cutting some red tape, which is always a fantastic thing. We love cutting red tape. We will do that by replacing the current two-tier system, which required certain security companies to obtain registration and others a licence. With this bill it is now on a single-tier licensing system. It will also require workers in high-risk roles to undergo refresher training prior to licence renewal. Surprisingly, this was not a previous requirement. You could get your licence, work in the industry for years and not have to go through any sort of refresher training. Obviously for an important job like this surely you would need to stay up to date with your training. People who serve alcohol and have an RSA have to undergo training and refresher courses. Construction workers, supermarket workers and accountants – the list goes on and on – all have to undergo some form of refresher training. 'Why?', you might ask. It is because laws change, societies change and skills change. First aid, safe physical restraint practices and verbal de-escalation tactics et cetera are all continually updated and critical for workers in high-risk roles, and we need people to be prepared for that.

This bill will seek to deter dodgy sham contracting by making sure that a person wanting to operate under an ABN as an individual security supplier will also have to obtain a business private security licence. This means that it is much more difficult for employers to ask individual workers to get an ABN. They do this so that they can avoid paying employment-related costs. This just makes it fairer for workers, and I am all about that.

In essence this bill is about community safety, as I said. We want the community to feel safe and that they are protected, and when they are out at a nightclub, pub or event they feel safe knowing that the security hired will do the job, be professional and also know that they are being paid properly for their time. That is why we have brought this bill to this place, because our private security workforce are incredibly important to us. We could not have sheer amount of concerts, sporting events and festivals without them, and we know that in Victoria we always have the best and biggest events, like the upcoming Melbourne F1 grand prix, which is a fantastic event. If I might just say, I did win the 2000 celebrity race at the grand prix, so I am an F1 grand prix winner.

Richard Riordan: So you can dance and drive.

Paul MERCURIO: I can. Later on I came third in the champion-of-champions race. I did have bodyguards to take me to get my trophy, mainly because I beat Richard Wilkins and he was very upset about it. Anyway, the economy thrives on these events, and we all want to ensure that private security workers are compensated fairly for working long days and have appropriate training as well to deal with the millions of patrons that come through each year. We want them to get home after work or in the morning safe.

This bill will ensure to uphold the integrity and raise professional standards for our private security industry, but it should not diminish the character of companies or individuals that are always doing the right thing, act professionally at all times and do not do dodgy things – dodgy things like bringing in unqualified, untrained people to do security-related work that they should not be doing. Unfortunately, hotel quarantine was a pretty good prime example of that. It is good to know that Victoria Police and the Police Association Victoria have been consulted and are in support of these changes.

The recommendations from the report did not entirely require legislative changes, as some could be achieved without it. For example, Victoria Police now sends a fact sheet out with every licence about worker rights and obligations, including where to find out what they should be being paid and what their entitlements to leave, superannuation and other matters are. The fact sheet includes a list of organisations that can help workers ensure they are paid fairly, including the relevant union the mighty United Workers Union, the Labour Hire Authority and the Fair Work Ombudsman.

As others have said, certainly one of the most important changes this will bring is to eliminate sham contracting from occurring. Dodgy employers have essentially identified a loophole that allows them to avoid responsibilities to their workers. These responsibilities that they do not want their workers to have are rights most employees should have, such as getting paid a fair wage according to the award, providing superannuation so that they can retire with dignity, providing WorkCover insurance and also providing leave. These are hardworking and everyday Victorians that miss out. It is wrong, and we are not going to stand by and allow it to happen anymore. A fair day's work for a fair day's pay – this bill will provide this.

I might just quickly talk about another change in this bill, which enables the pilot Drug Court division within the County Court of Victoria to continue operating for two more years. This is a fantastic thing. I know there was some pushback from the other side about why we need to and why we have different postcodes et cetera. As members on this side of the chamber tried to explain, it is a trial, and the best way to get a proper understanding of a situation or a trial is to spread it wide and try to get a really good reference of the community. This model addresses the underlying causes of offending by providing intensive drug treatment services to offenders and also enhances the community connectedness of participants, which will aim to reduce reoffending, as it gives them the skills to improve their personal relationships, offers housing stability and educates them on life skills so they can thrive. What we want is to rehabilitate people so that they do not reoffend. Whilst this program is not for everyone, and nor should it be, for those that have a chance to rehabilitate, we should absolutely be supporting that. That is why I support the extension of the trial for two years. I commend this bill to the house.

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (15:42): I rise to support the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024. The final report of the review of the private security industry in Victoria provided 21 recommendations, all of which have been accepted by the government. This review delivered on a Labor election commitment to better regulate the private security industry with a view to improving conditions for workers and to provide a more professional, well-regarded industry. Work has been underway since the final report was released to fulfil these recommendations, and around half are addressed by this bill, as the remainder do not require legislation.

Our private security workforce makes an important contribution to keeping our community safe. This bill will make the industry safer for workers by increasing training requirements to ensure they have the ability to complete their job safely but also by introducing ways to ensure workers are fairly paid and not exploited. For example, the introduction of the new requirement of refresher training for private security workers in high-risk roles, such as crowd control, bodyguards or static guards, will benefit the community and those attending events as well as the security workers themselves. From parties to public festivals to large public events we will have an assurance that all private security workers are equally skilled in first aid, verbal de-escalation and safe physical restraint.

I am proud that my electorate celebrates a diverse range of faiths and cultures, with many public events and festivals. The comfort of knowing that those employed to keep events safe and secure are all trained to manage potential risks or threats is invaluable. Some of our local events are enormous. Luckily the security guards are rarely needed to prevent or de-escalate situations and instead often help more with directions and parking, but knowing they are trained in first aid will bring great relief to the community. First-aid training is a life skill that can be used outside the workplace as well. Knowing how to help somebody who has fainted, hurt themselves or is having a medical episode is something that everyone can benefit from. My daughter recently completed her first-aid and resuscitation

certificate at Broadmeadows town hall as part of her pool lifeguard training. There were people from many different industries in her class; teachers, lifeguards, childcare workers and white-collar office workers were all enrolled. The skills that security guards gain will benefit themselves, their families and their communities.

Staff and community safety is further enhanced by the amendment requiring security services to do their own risk assessment and site induction for an event. They need to provide this to hired security workers so that they are familiar with the venue, the security risks and where possible threats may come from – an action plan on how to deal with any issues that may arise. Currently for many security staff, walking into an event is often the first time they have set foot in the venue. They are expected to begin work immediately without ever having had the chance to check out the exits and safe places. It seems unthinkable that someone employed to manage the public safety of up to thousands of people has no idea of the potential risks or even the site layout. This legislation will provide for security staff to be fully equipped to be able to do their job safely, protecting both them and the community.

Labor has long fought to improve the rights and conditions of workers, and this bill furthers that tradition. While subcontracting is an important feature of the private security sector due to surge demand to cover large events, unclear and unauthorised subcontracting is still rife in the industry, allowing unscrupulous employers to exploit workers, many of whom live in my electorate. The Broadmeadows electorate is very diverse and is often the first place many new arrivals begin their lives in Australia. We also speak many languages, and for over 60 per cent of the population English is a second language. New arrivals and people with English as a second language are more vulnerable to exploitation at work, and this bill will help ensure that they know their rights and are protected from the cowboys in the industry. Unregulated subcontracting purely benefits the employer, and providers use this to maximise profit by hiring subcontractors for low pay, taking advantage of workers and creating poor workplace standards. These reforms will give transparency to the organisations hiring the security services, as they will have full visibility of the details of each worker and require the employer to complete written agreements to hire subcontractors.

The protection of private security workers is at the forefront of this bill, and it has a number of reforms to make sure our workers are getting fair pay and the rights and benefits they are entitled to. We saw the dangers of insecure work during the COVID-19 pandemic, not only in the security industry but also in the healthcare industry. I saw firsthand how dangerous it was in aged care especially, where workers had to move between worksites and employers because it was the only way to regularly get enough hours to make ends meet to put food on the table for their families. I am so proud of federal Labor's reforms in aged care to improve job security, pay and workers rights as well as vastly improve the quality of life of older people.

I am so very proud of the Victorian government's sick pay guarantee, introduced by Labor to ensure that casuals and contract workers get up to five days of sick and carers leave a year so that they are no longer forced to choose between a day's pay and looking after their health or the health of a loved one. We know that many casuals and contract workers have had to go to work sick because they simply could not afford not to, but under this scheme workers in laundries, aged and disability care, hospitality and the food industry, supermarkets, retail and sales, accommodation, tourism, beauty, transport, farming and manufacturing and of course security guards can claim up to 38 hours a year whenever they are sick or injured or need to look after a loved one. This initiative was an Australian first but also a game changer for many workers, especially those who are the carers of family members with chronic illness or disability.

Back to security workers: a tactic sometimes used by private security employers is sham contracting, where potential employees ask individual licence-holders to obtain an ABN so that they can be classified as an independent contractor rather than taking them on as an employee. This means that they do not have to pay an award rate, provide for super or WorkCover insurance or pay for leave. This bill will now require any person listed as an independent contractor to hold a private security business licence. Only workers who legitimately want to run a business will undergo this procedure,

thus reducing the opportunity for sham contracting, and the bill will effectively force employers to provide fairer arrangements for workers as well as ensure they are insured, paid super and have leave available. This bill will keep the people who keep us safe safe themselves.

A new code of conduct will also be introduced, and it will be enforceable. This will benefit the workers to make sure they are given clear and consistent standards for their employment. It will improve the public perception of security workers and increase the sense of respect and pride in their jobs. The kinds of things that will be considered during the development of the new code of conduct include treating people with dignity, respecting diversity and a commitment to using appropriate escalation of intervention during incidents. I thank the private security workers for the outstanding job they do, keeping our community safe at all hours of the day and night and putting themselves on the line.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of the industry groups that have implemented or are working towards the implementation of the other recommendations from the final report – the recommendations that did not require legislation. For example, Victoria Police now sends out a fact sheet with every private security licence about workers rights and obligations, including how to find out what they should be being paid, their entitlements to leave, superannuation and other matters. It also includes a list of organisations that can help workers check they are being paid fairly, including the relevant union, the Labour Hire Authority and the workplace ombudsman. This fact sheet complements the legislation in this bill and goes further to ensure that people can access their rights and obligations.

This is especially important in the security industry because, as mentioned earlier, many workers are newly arrived and may not be aware of the employment protections they are entitled to in Australia – protections that only exist thanks to the work of the labour movement over the decades. I thank the minister, the minister's office, the department, the industry reps and the unions, who have all worked together to bring this bill before us.

The bill also contains an extension of the pilot of the County Court Drug Court for a further two years. This will allow the trials of the existing four courts to continue and provide more time to fully evaluate the long-term results and put learnings into place. The objectives of the Drug Court are to improve the health and wellbeing of participants through reduced alcohol and other drug use, to reduce criminal behaviour and to increase connection to the community. The KPMG report into the Melbourne Magistrates' Court Drug Court showed a 34 per cent reduction in reoffending after 24 months, and similarly a 29 per cent reduction in reoffending was seen in the Dandenong Drug Court evaluation.

My Broadmeadows electorate already houses a local Magistrates' Court, so it provides an immediate opportunity to be included in any further expansions of Drug Court locations. The Drug Court delivers specialised treatment and support. The program addresses the underlying factors that contribute to offending, such as unemployment and isolation, and helps people to stay drug and crime free. Given that we are seeing such great results from the current trial, an extension to the pilot will see further positive results for participants and the community, so extending the pilot to provide more data for assessment is a no-brainer.

After a visit to the Ballarat Drug Court the Attorney-General met with a recent graduate and commented on the life-changing effects of the program. She said:

The young man not only turned his life around but now works with youth who have dependency issues. It is humbling to hear about the real personal difference that the program can make.

The member for Wendouree invited me out to see the Ballarat Drug Court, and I am very much looking forward to seeing that. The Labor government's investment into Drug Courts has proven it is a success and continues to be a positive initiative, and I wholeheartedly endorse this bill.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (15:52): I too rise to make a contribution on the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024. At the outset I want to just reflect on a couple of contributions that have been made today, particularly that of the member for Hastings. I am very pleased that he was

able to make a reference in his contribution to his performance at the opera house and his participation in the celebrity race down at the grand prix –

Paul Mercurio interjected.

Paul HAMER: twice – two episodes that I think very few members of this place will ever have the luxury of being able to say they had, so congratulations to the member for Hastings for getting that in.

This is an important bill. It does deal with some important matters in relation to the private security industry in creating a single licensing system for all private security workers and businesses, streamlining the application process for private security licences and imposing new requirements for refresher training prior to the renewal of licences.

I just want to reflect a bit on the very important work that private security firms do, particularly in the electorate of Box Hill. I spoke earlier in the week in my members statement about our Lunar New Year festival, which attracts every year about 100,000 people. There are many other major festivals in and around Box Hill, particularly celebrating the Chinese community contribution but also the broader community – the Whitehorse Spring Festival and other major festivals. All of these events do pose risks just by the nature of having large crowds gathered in relatively small confines, and it does take really well trained staff and personnel to be able to make sure that they are across any incident that could potentially come their way. We see that at many other events across all of our communities with the private security firms. This is why it is important to have well-trained licensed professionals whose role and job and career it is to protect the public – and they do their job very well.

I also want to note the private security arrangements and involvements in some of our schools. Particularly I am thinking of Mount Scopus, which is a Jewish school in my electorate, and I know this would be the case for many other Jewish schools in other electorates around the state. The importance of security at these schools cannot be overstated. It is really an unfortunate state of events that this is the reality for Jewish schools and Jewish children, not just in Victoria but almost anywhere in the world – that there are external threats and external dangers. You can have a form of physical protection, which many of them invest heavily in having, but they also need those human eyes and ears to keep an eye on what is happening, look out for any suspicious behaviour and provide that layer of security and surety for the community who are sending their children to these schools.

In saying this, I think that some of the rhetoric that we have heard come out of people in this place has created an environment where others may feel enabled and emboldened to take action against Jews, particularly the youngest members of the community, being children who really have no involvement in any of the things that are going on overseas. It is always sad for me as a parent to see that we have schools that need such high-level private security. But I do want to thank all of those private security workers who are doing this really important work.

In relation to the bill, it is a very diverse landscape that the security industry has to cater for. It is really important that the workers in that industry are properly trained and also that we have proper conditions and appropriate conditions, including remuneration, to be able to attract and retain those workers in the private security industry. Since the reforms last happened in 2004, since the act was introduced, we have seen the emergence of more profit-driven actors across the security industry. Some members of the industry have prioritised profit over fair pay and work conditions, leaving a highly casual, mobile and vulnerable workforce in their wake. Key industry advocates have identified deep concerns about the rights of workers, the barriers to healthy business competition and the behaviour of some trainers and workers, which brings down the reputation of the entire industry. That is what this bill is seeking to address, those employers at security companies who do not pay fair wages and do not afford workers genuine flexibility and access to legal entitlements, such as superannuation, leave and insurance, and it is aimed at the training organisations who do not deliver the required training. It is aimed at those training organisations who simply sign off on an untrained and unprepared worker as being qualified to obtain a private security licence.

Referring back to the examples I spoke of at the beginning of the contribution, if you are trying to protect against a real and present threat, particularly if it is against a school or if it is a real and present threat to a large community gathering with a large number of people, you want people who are properly trained. You want people who have gone through the process. You do not want the private security firms to have cut corners, saying, 'Here's a group of workers that you can use. Thanks, I'll take your money.' Then you have got the workers there being put in some very, very difficult situations.

The bill also, as has been mentioned by a number of other speakers, addresses significant concerns around subcontracting. Until recently subcontracting of security work in Victoria was unregulated. The bill makes it clear that if a person or organisation signs a contract with a security provider, they must approve any subcontracting by that provider in writing. In addition, providers must supply the name and licence number of each worker hired under a subcontracting arrangement, and penalties will apply for failure to comply with that requirement.

The bill also addresses refresher training at licence renewal, and as referred to before, while most security workers will have had further experience and particularly on-the-job experience between their refresher requirements, for others there could be significant consequences if they do not keep up to date with skills such as a first aid and verbal de-escalation and safe physical restraint.

We have also heard a number of times about the problem of sham contracting in the industry, where an employer might ask an individual security licence holder to obtain an ABN and then act as a contractor, as a sole trader, rather than as an employee. By doing this the employer does not have to pay the costs associated with the person hired under a genuine agreement, and they do not have to pay an award wage or provide for super, WorkCover insurance or leave entitlements. This is something that we as a Labor government are really committed to removing, particularly in an industry as important as the private security industry. For all of these reasons I commend the bill to the house.

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (16:02): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

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

Council's agreement

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino) (16:02): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Early Childhood Employment Powers) Bill 2024 without amendment.

State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Lily D'Ambrosio:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I seek your guidance, if I may. I would perhaps like to get this on the record. I understand I have already spoken on this in the cognate debate, but I would point out to the house that the member for Footscray was on her feet speaking on the cognate debate prior to the 5 o'clock guillotining of the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023, and at the conclusion of the vote on that the member for Footscray was able to continue to speak on

the current bill, the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023. I am seeking guidance as to why others of us are not afforded the same opportunity by the house to speak fully on both bills.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): The member for Footscray's contribution was interrupted by the guillotine, and she was afforded the remainder of the time.

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (16:04): I rise to speak on the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023, and I think we could have called this bill the 'SEC is back bill'. We are very excited. I heard the contributions yesterday. I heard fantastic contributions from this side of the house talking about the importance of this bill.

The transition we have to renewable energy is a really big part of that urgent need for collective action on climate change and against climate change. We are as a world at a critical juncture where decisions made today will profoundly impact the future generations that will come after us, and the evidence is obviously irrefutable. We are witnessing rising sea temperatures, extreme weather events, disappearing ecosystems and the consequences of inaction threatening not only our environment but also our economies, health and security.

One of the most effective ways to combat climate change is transitioning away from fossil fuels to renewable energy, and one of the most effective ways to combat energy security and the cost of power is to invest in the cheapest form of energy generation, which we know is renewables. The transition to renewables presents an unprecedented opportunity for innovation and job creation. We know that it is going to create thousands of jobs and economic growth, and by investing in renewable energy infrastructure we can create thousands of those new jobs and technology advancements and stimulate the economy at the same time.

However, this is all very easy to say. Words are great. But we also need action, and we need governments who are bold and ambitious. That is exactly what we are on this side of the house, and that is what we will be doing to see this transition. We are already leading the nation on many parts in this space. We are leading in that transition to renewables. We have more than tripled the share of renewables in power generation in just eight years. Renewables are very much backed by our own communities. Millions of Australians have put solar on their roofs. They are installing batteries and heat pumps, and they are looking for that energy efficiency in their home. That is a smart move. We all know that, and it is clear that that is a cheaper and cleaner future for our families and our households.

If families know to do that in their own households, it is pretty easy to see that bringing renewable infrastructure into the energy market will do the same and address those cost-of-living issues. We understand that households are facing pressures with the cost of living, and we continue to have initiatives to drive down those pressures. This is just one way that we can do that. By having government-owned energy back in government-owned hands we will see that investment going back into Victorians' hands. On 14 November 2023 the SEC was declared a state-owned company under the State Owned Enterprises Act 1992. The Premier and Treasurer hold one share each in the SEC, and it will be a government-owned and government-controlled entity. Its first project is under construction, which is really good news for those bills and cost-of-living pressures which I have talked about, and it is going to be able to push that renewable energy into the system, putting downward pressure on wholesale prices and delivering benefits to Victorians. There is also construction of a huge battery, our first project, out in Melton powering over 200,000 homes, storing that excess energy from renewables in battery storage. We know that we need to continue to invest in our energy storage to put downward pressure, and we will continue to work on that.

As part of that transition though, excitingly, at the last election the government did commit to 100 neighbourhood batteries, which is also part of the system reform and the system becoming more modern. I was really excited to be able to commit to a neighbourhood battery at the last election in Bellarine, in one of my local government areas, the Queenscliffe borough area, and that community had been advocating for a community battery or neighbourhood battery for a while. They have worked

considerably hard over the last few years to develop a climate emergency response plan for the area, and the battery was part of that plan. They set ambitious targets at a local level by providing initiatives and actions that they want to undertake. They have gone through bulk solar buying programs, reducing single-use plastics, diverting food and garden waste from landfill and so much more. I would like to congratulate them on their work and their advocacy. They have done an incredible amount of work in this space, particularly led by a group called Queenscliffe Climate Action Now, a group that are really achieving some wonderful things that aim to not only protect our environment but leave our area cleaner and greener for our future generations. I am looking forward to seeing that project come to life very soon, that neighbourhood battery.

I have talked a little bit about the workforce that this opportunity allows us to grab hold of. I can see careers counsellors in schools saying to kids in the next few years, 'Have you thought about working in the SEC?' I am a mum of very early teenage kids, and I talk to a lot of other parents in the electorate who talk about what their career path for their children is – what is it that they will be looking for? We know that the jobs now might not be there in the future, but what are our future jobs for our kids? And I think this is an absolutely wonderful opportunity. To transition to do that work we will need a workforce, and we expect to create thousands of jobs. Part of that will be apprenticeships as well. To do that work does need some investment in our training and our commitment, and we are committed to establishing an SEC centre of training excellence and also encouraging schools and parents to look at engaging in the SEC as a career. Having careers nights in schools would be one example. As part of the budget, though, we also committed \$12 million over three years to develop a business case for that SEC centre of training excellence, new renewable energy VET certificates and also the Victorian energy jobs plan. As I said, I can see the careers counsellors helping encourage students and school leavers to go into this field.

We understand that our households are feeling the pressures of cost of living, and I have talked a little bit about that. But there is a cost-of-living pain in various forms. We will see, as we have more recently, fires, heatwaves, droughts, floods and cyclones – extreme weather events which are coming our way unless we do something now, and we know that transitioning to renewables is part of that solution. As someone who has come from a farming background and someone who has experienced, I suppose, extreme weather events in terms of farming, farmers are absolutely on the front line of climate change, which then has a flow-on effect on growing our food and fibre for not only the state but indeed the nation and what we export as well to the world. We need to be ambitious and get on with this job. We have not got really any time to waste – and speaking of waste, we had a federal government that wasted 10 years in this space. They were closet climate change deniers. They pretended to do something when they did absolutely nothing. I feel it is a little bit the same here, where the opposition say some really nice things in this place but have no policies to address energy security.

A member: What about nuclear power?

Alison MARCHANT: Well, they have some solutions maybe – absolutely ridiculous, really – but they also had a policy of gas at the last election. They said that they would turbocharge gas. Coming from a background with a fracking campaign, it is clear that there is no proven and probable amount of gas that would be able to be extracted in Victoria onshore without fracking. At the unconventional gas inquiry the lead scientist said there was no proven and probable gas. I sat on the advisory panel and know that there is no proven probable gas. We know renewables are our future. We know that that is where the investment needs to go, and I am really proud to be part of a government that listens to the science and directs us to the right avenues to really be looking towards the future for a cleaner and greener energy-secure future.

Darren CHEESEMEN (South Barwon) (16:14): It is with some pleasure that I rise to make my contribution on the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023. I must say in doing so I reflect on the history of the State Electricity Commission. I can very much remember the 1990s, when I was at school, and we had the election of a Kennett government. That Kennett government went about privatisation of the energy generation assets that our state had. I must say, when I reflect on that

moment in history and the task that we have as a state to decarbonise our economy, to build the renewable energy capacity that our state needs and indeed to build a modern distribution system that is fit for purpose, the absolute reality dawns on me that if we had not had that period of a conservative government that went about privatisation to multinationals of our energy assets in this state and indeed the distribution system of this state, the task that our government has right now to build a fit-for-purpose energy system for our state would be so much easier.

Indeed given that history of the Liberal Party in the 1990s, we of course have a much more difficult task now. Every single time we have a debate in this place on the energy needs of our state, time and time again we see the Liberal Party and the National Party getting in the way of the important reform that we need to undertake to build the energy generation capacity that our state needs and indeed the distribution network that our state very much needs. That is the history of the Liberal Party and that is the history of the National Party. Every single time we have a debate in this place they come up with new ways as to why we cannot do it and new ways as to why we should not do it. Every single time they look to support the dirty, coal-fired generators, the gas generators, of this state, and at every single opportunity they throw up other things such as nuclear power. I must say, I was absolutely outraged to see that Peter Dutton, if he is elected as Prime Minister of our country, will insist on two nuclear energy generators in our state, one of which will be in Anglesea and one of which will be out in Gippsland. I find that absolutely unbelievable – that the alternate Prime Minister to Anthony Albanese wishes to –

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I am not sure what the federal opposition's policy position on nuclear has to do with the State Electricity Commission. I would ask you to bring the member back to the bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): This has been a very wideranging debate. I have listened to many contributions, and nuclear has been discussed.

Darren CHEESEMAM: What we have seen over here is again another example of a protection racket for nuclear energy in this state coming from the member for East Gippsland. No-one, not one single Victorian –

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member for Barwon South should know that members need to be referred to by their correct titles.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Member for Barwon South, please refer to members using their correct titles.

Darren CHEESEMAM: Indeed. As I was saying, the only policy that we can see from the Liberals and the Nationals right across the Australian spectrum with respect to the need to move away from coal-fired power is nuclear energy. That is the only policy proposition in the energy space that they have on the table right now. Now, they will get in the way at every single opportunity of the things that we are trying to do to build a modern, fit-for-purpose energy system in this state – to build renewable energy in this state.

The very important thing, a key policy in this state, is to restore and bring back our public ownership of the State Electricity Commission, and that is what we are doing. We want to create a circumstance where we generate renewable energy that is owned by Victorians for Victorians, and that is what we are doing. The only policy proposition from the conservatives in this state is nuclear energy. I mean, that is outrageous. Certainly the people of the Surf Coast, of Anglesea and of Gippsland do not want nuclear energy in this state.

A member interjected.

Darren CHEESEMAM: That is right. I must say I was curious when all of this debate happened what the member for Polwarth might think about having in his backyard, effectively, nuclear energy.

We have heard absolutely no contribution from him. Where is he? There is absolutely no contribution from him – silence, absolute silence in the electorate, absolute silence from him on nuclear energy.

For my purpose, we are going to continue to make those important investments that our state needs. We are going to continue to put solar panels on people's roofs. We are going to continue to facilitate the development of onshore wind. We are going to continue to work at every opportunity to build offshore renewable energy in this state. And the only policy proposition that the coalition have in this state and indeed in this country is nuclear energy. It is the only thing you stand for. The only thing that the coalition stand for in this state is the development of nuclear energy. That is the only thing.

In my electorate people continue to take up opportunity after opportunity to have solar panels on their roof. Every time I drive past the electorate of Point Cook, I see solar panel after solar panel helping support those families with the cost of living, putting energy back into their hands at every single opportunity. We will continue to make those investments. We will continue to see this developed. The reason why it is so important is not only is it important to decarbonise our economy, we are in an energy race globally. That is the absolute reality. And countries that make the investments early, countries that invest in these new technologies, countries that build a fit-for-purpose energy network to help supply energy are important for households, but importantly putting in place that infrastructure is important to drive down energy costs for families and for businesses. That is what we are going to continue to do.

Restoring the State Electricity Commission is going to create investment opportunities. It is going to create jobs for Victorians where we can generate energy offshore and onshore and where we provide a secure pipeline of energy for our state. The coalition may continue to want to see nuclear energy in this state, but no Victorian does.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (16:24): I assure you this afternoon there will be no shouting from me on this side of the house. I am simply going to be talking about the wonderful, wonderful, wonderful thing that this Labor government is doing. We are bringing back the SEC, as our wonderful Premier talks about. We are not just talking about climate action and other things on this side of the house, we are taking real action. We are making legislative reform in this place. We are enshrining the SEC into our constitution, and it is a great deal of pleasure to rise to speak –

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I note your earlier ruling that I was not able to speak on this bill because I had already spoken on the cognate debate about the constitution, and I note the member is now speaking about the constitution bill and should come back to the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill.

Vicki Ward: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, and I do recognise the frustration of the member regarding the speaking list for this debate; however, as you have already indicated, it is a wideranging debate that covers a number of issues on which our members on this side of the house are quite passionate, and I am sure they will relish the ability to continue to speak on it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): It has been a very wideranging debate, and I will allow the member's contribution.

Sarah CONNOLLY: I do forgive the member for Gippsland South for clipping me in my first 60 seconds of just trying to say how great it is to be standing here this afternoon at the end of a long parliamentary sitting week to talk about something that is truly great that the Allan Labor government is doing for the whole of Victoria to create a fairer and more equitable Victoria whilst also taking real action on climate change. And it is legislation like this, this afternoon, that reminds me of why we are in the business of governing. We are in the business of governing in this state for all Victorians. We are in the business of governing. We have big plans. We have been in government now for almost a decade and we still have big plans. There is still so much more we have to do, and we are getting on and doing it. And this bill before the house this afternoon is very much part of that. Because what I say to my community time and time again is, 'We are bringing back the SEC,' and this is part of it.

We are going to deliver a public energy supplier back into the hands of all Victorians, and that is something that any government that has that kind of vision should be proud to call their legacy. This is a legacy policy. We are making it happen, and that is what this bill is all about.

We know that the biggest enduring legacies of those opposite when they were in government were, yes, cuts and, yes, sell-offs that took place during the Kennett years. And what the member for Gippsland South may not know about little old me is that I was not here during the Kennett years, but when I am out there on the front line talking to my community, they remind me of the Kennett years time and time again. They remember. Folks in Melbourne's west remember, and they talk about cuts and they talk about sell-offs. During the election in 2022 out on the hustings a lot of them talked to me about the importance of bringing back the SEC and what that meant to them.

Danny O'Brien interjected.

Sarah CONNOLLY: People have a real, emotional – emotional, member for Gippsland South – connection to this policy. It means the world to them because they never wanted to see it sold off in the first place, and we are bringing it back. That is a legacy policy of the Allan Labor government. We are doing it.

What we know is that privatisation has been an utter fail for Victorians. Victorians do not like privatisation, and at the time it was sold off the SEC was far, far from being a financial drag on the Victorian budget. Actually it was quite the opposite, and I think it is important to point out that in 1994 it actually paid \$990 million in interest.

Danny O'Brien interjected.

Sarah CONNOLLY: It provided a \$191 million dividend to the state government, and, member for Gippsland South, you will be very pleased to know it had a \$207 million profit for the state. This is really important stuff. If you ask me, common sense would say that is not the kind of asset that you sell off if you are a government whose focus is on fixing debt.

It has been 30 years since this sale took place in 1994, and since then the energy providers that replaced the SEC have raked in, get this – I mean, I am smiling, but this is not funny, this is just quite shocking – more than \$23 billion in profits, and all the while Victorian mums and dads are left dealing with soaring energy bills. Something has got to change, and you need a government to have vision and to have the tenacity to go ahead and make that vision a reality, and this is it. Victorians deserve to have affordable renewable energy powering their state and powering their homes. We know it is cheaper and we know it is cleaner, and that is what our government has been supporting for the past nine years. That is indeed what Victorians have been voting for and continued to vote for over the past three elections. We know because we are out there talking to people, and when we raise these things, this is the stuff that matters. This is what the Victorian people want.

Last sitting week I was here in this place again talking about the incredible work that our government has done investing in renewable energy. It feels like we are talking about renewable energy every single sitting week here in this place, which I am not going to say is a problem – it is a wonderful thing to have, a great problem to have. We are talking about it all the time because we are doing so much work. We passed legislation that boosted our government's new and ambitious emissions reduction targets and renewable energy targets. These targets would not have been possible without our government's massive investment worth more than \$3 billion since 2018. At the end of last year when these pieces of legislation were introduced into Parliament we were sitting at 5280 megawatts of large-scale wind and solar capacity; 4030 megawatts of small-scale rooftop solar capacity, probably thanks to my crew out in Truganina – and the member for Point Cook has just left, but I know that he will indeed try and claim some of that rooftop solar capacity – and 537 megawatts of energy storage capacity. That is huge. We are not stopping there. Good governments should not stop there. We need to keep going, because an additional 1407 megawatts worth of energy projects are currently to this day still under construction, with a further 6129 megawatts worth of projects currently in our pipeline.

This transformation is absolutely huge, and Victorians will reap the benefits of these projects through the rejuvenated SEC, which will actively invest, importantly, in the renewable energy market by funding and operating renewable energy infrastructure. The investment is not only great for meeting these renewable energy targets; it will also translate – and this is what those opposites hate most – into cheaper power bills for all Victorians, and the SEC will only build upon these investments. And we have already begun. That is what this bill here before the house today is. Our government has already invested \$1 billion to get it started with delivering 4.5 gigawatts worth of renewable energy and storage projects. On 25 October last year our government registered the SEC, most importantly, with ASIC. In November the SEC was declared as a state-owned company, and as we speak, the SEC's first project is already under construction.

To my very pleasant surprise – and I always claim this, because I love being able to talk about the western suburbs – it is being built in the west. A 1.6-gigawatt battery is being built in my lovely neighbour the member for Melton's electorate, which when complete will be able to power over 200,000 homes. That is just absolutely extraordinary. This is just the beginning, and this is what good governments, long-term Labor governments, are able to deliver for Victorians. It is about delivering fairness and equality, lowering those power prices and taking real action for climate change. This is the stuff that matters. This is the sort of stuff that our children and our grandchildren will benefit from. There are so many more things, but I will commend the bill to the house.

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (16:34): I am delighted to rise to contribute to the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023. I want to take this opportunity to thank the minister for all of her work. I know that in my community of Geelong my constituents love the fact that we are bringing back the SEC. Once the announcement was made, throughout the election campaign and afterwards people were talking to me about how delighted they were to see that come back. The fact is that the Kennett government sold off Victoria's energy supply to private multinationals, and as we heard from the previous speaker, \$23 billion in profits are going overseas because of that sale that was made in 1994.

I was listening to the member for Laverton talk about the impact on her community – from what she heard because she was not around. Well, I was actually around. I was a young activist at the time marching with the unions, rallying to try and stop Kennett from selling off the SEC. In my community – and I am assuming it was right across Victoria – we had the office of the SEC, which had a shopfront. When your electrical goods broke down, you could go in there and pay it off on your SEC bill. For many of us, including my family, it was a real game changer, because we could not afford to go out and buy new whitegoods if they broke down or a new heater, but you could go in there and know that you could pay that off on your power bill and continue to look after your family. They were really important initiatives that were going on at the time that helped people who were finding it really difficult to manage, people living in poverty who could not do without their hot water or their heating or any other whitegoods. They were able to get it from their local SEC shop. I do remember those days and how important it was to our community and the rallies and protests that went on at the time.

I also remember St Laurence in particular did a report that actually outlined the damage that would be done if this were sold off and was basically asking the Kennett government at the time not to sell it off. The evidence was there that it was not losing money. It was not debt ridden, as the government was saying at the time; it was actually making record profits. Those opposites can whinge all they like and harp on all they like, but it is history that the Kennett government sold the SEC in 1994. You can say whatever you like; it is not going to make any difference.

Jackson Taylor: The Victorian people know that Kennett sold it off.

Chris COUZENS: Exactly. I note the comments made by the Brotherhood of St Laurence in their report *The Restructuring and Sale of Victoria's Electricity Industry: Is It Worth It?*, which was published. Their report outlined that:

The data readily available on the SEC's performance and used by advocates of industry reform do not support the Government's assessment that the SEC had too much debt, had prices that were too high or was very inefficient:

- the SEC debt burden was under control and does not appear to have been an issue of substance or requiring government intervention;
- Victorian electricity prices had been falling in real terms over the 1980s and remained low in global terms and amongst the lowest in Australia;
- measured against the benchmarks of capital and labour productivity seen by the advocates of microeconomic reform as indicating 'best practice', the SEC's improvement was rapid and ahead of most other states so that by 1992–93, it had captured most of these potential benefits ...

It then went on to say:

Given uncertain benefits, existing problems and some serious risks, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, along with other church and welfare organisations, has proposed that the Government suspend its planned sales of electricity assets pending a public inquiry. Given widespread dissatisfaction in the community over the sale, this remains the most appropriate way of reassuring the public and is likely to provide an important insurance that the restructuring will achieve the best long-term outcomes for Victorians, particularly those on low-incomes ...

Well, we know what happened – Kennett went ahead and sold it anyway. So we are committed to bringing back the SEC as a publicly owned 100 per cent renewable energy market participant, and we have delivered that.

The changes in this bill – the bill will abolish the pre-existing State Electricity Commission of Victoria, the SECV, which is constituted under the State Electricity Commission Act 1958 to avoid confusion with the new SEC entity. It also further amends the Electricity Industry (Residual Provisions) Act 1993 and other acts to remove or clarify all remaining references to the old SECV. Following the privatisation of Victoria's electricity supply industry in the 1990s, legislation was enacted that has effectively limited the old SECV's role to managing any residual property rights and liabilities from its previous operators. Currently the SEC act provides that the old SECV consists of an administrator. This office-holder, currently the Secretary of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, is responsible for the administration of residual assets and liabilities of the old SECV. The old SECV effectively has no employees and for practical purposes is no longer an operating entity under the State Electricity Commission Act 1958. Abolishing the old SECV will allow the new SEC to operate without causing confusion between the pre-existing entity and the new SEC.

The new SEC will invest with industry to accelerate our transition to more affordable and reliable renewable energy. We know that this also means more jobs in the renewable energy space. What we saw back in the 1990s was a devastating impact on those workers in the energy area who were working for the SEC, whose jobs were just wiped out. We are now bringing back the SEC, but we are also making sure that there are jobs and that the skills and training required for those jobs will be there to support our communities. I know many in my community of Geelong are looking forward to seeing that happen, to seeing those jobs created and to seeing that training and skills pathway provided to ensure that people in my community and right across Victoria have access to those job opportunities.

We are getting on and building up the SEC, putting power back in the hands of Victorians and accelerating our transition to cheaper, more reliable renewable energy. Yes, it is about bringing back the SEC, but it is also about climate change. It is also about renewable energy, which we know we need to be working towards. This government's commitment to that is leading the way in this country, we know that. Construction has already begun on the SEC's first project, a 1.6-gigawatt battery in Melton with Equis Australia. It will power over 200,000 homes. By storing excess cheap renewable energy in batteries, homes and businesses will utilise more cheap renewable energy. By powering the

state through more renewables more often, we avoid the reliance on expensive coal and gas which causes the high bills that we pay now.

Again, my community is really excited about the fact that we are bringing back the SEC, that we are using renewable energy but also reducing the cost of energy for them and their families. We know the cost of living is impacting on all of our communities, there is no doubt about that. But we can see the plan that the Victorian government has in terms of renewable energy and what it means to bring back the SEC – what it means for jobs, what it means for climate change and what it means to all of our communities. The fact is that we will have the skills and training facilities to ensure that people are being skilled up and trained in these jobs. So this is a great bill. It is a great opportunity for all of our communities right across Victoria. I commend the bill to the house.

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (16:44): It is a pleasure to rise and speak in favour of the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023, which is part of our legislative package to bring back the mighty SEC. There is so much work underway across government in this space as we work towards our accelerated net zero and renewable energy targets. In fact just last sitting week in this place we voted to enshrine the boldest renewables targets in our state's history – and I want to thank the Minister for Energy and Resources and Minister for Climate Action for all the work that she is doing in this space. We were lucky enough to sit down with her yesterday and go through what our plan is right up until 2035 and how we will accelerate that net zero and put more renewable energy into Victoria. It is something that I have had concerns about. I studied atmospheric physics at uni and was able to get a –

A member interjected.

John MULLAHY: Yes, there you go. And this was 20 years ago, when the science on climate change was fully understood and fully developed 30 years before that, so for 50 years we have understood the dangers of climate change and how we need to take action on this issue. We are on this bold journey not because it feels nice or it is morally the right thing to do, which it absolutely is; we are on this journey because it presents huge opportunities for our great state, our economy, our environment and our people.

As a government we have a strong track record of delivery in this state. Since 2020 we have invested more than \$3 billion into climate action and the renewables transition, and the results are already clear, with 38 per cent of electricity generated from renewables last year. We are well on track to meet and exceed our emissions reduction target of 40 per cent by 2025. This does not happen by accident, it happens when Labor governments take bold action, and the contrast could not be clearer with the Victorian Liberal Party, which all but banned wind farms when they were in government, and the Greens political party, which is talking a big game but has not delivered a single wind turbine or solar panel. Only Labor is serious about real climate action, and we are not holding back when it comes to decarbonising our economy.

Bringing back the SEC is an important piece of this puzzle. What started as a state entity to free Victoria from imported fuels back in 1918 transformed our economy and delivered quality stable jobs for thousands of Victorians – and I would like to give a shout-out to the member for Tarneit for his wonderful historical analysis of Sir John Monash and the SEC yesterday – that was until the Victorian Liberals came along and ripped it out of Victorians' hands, creating a vacuum that was only exploited by multinational power companies. It is these energy companies that have made billions of dollars – \$23 billion I believe – in profits on the back of Victorian families, and it is these companies that are now getting up and leaving as their ageing coal generators shut down. The Allan Labor government has drawn the line, because enough is enough.

In 1918 the SEC was created to support Victorians to shift from imported fuels, and in 2024 the SEC is back to support the next major shift – to renewables and a decarbonised economy. It is an enormous opportunity to drive significant renewables investment into Victoria, to protect our planet by driving

down emissions and, most importantly, to create thousands of great, quality jobs for Victorians. That is something I want to focus on in my contribution today, because the bill before us is more than just the proposed legal changes to bring back the SEC, it is a milestone for electrical workers in our great state, creating a bright future for thousands of Victorians, because the creation of the SEC is set to bring about the biggest boom in electrical trades work in a generation, building on the work underway in our existing pipeline of the Big Build projects.

I would like to thank the electricians that are working on the Metro Tunnel and the West Gate Tunnel and all those set to work on the North East Link and the Suburban Rail Loop East. I would also like to give a shout-out to all the members of the mighty Electrical Trades Union in my district of Glen Waverley and indeed across Victoria, who fought hard for this win for workers, because over the coming years as we continue to invest and build up the new SEC the Allan Labor government is set to create more than 59,000 jobs, including 6000 traineeships and apprenticeships.

At the start of my career I was a formworker in my dad's small business. I knew how much it meant to have a stable pipeline of work, and I am beyond excited for all the sparkies and linespeople and renewables workers that are set to benefit from a stable career in the energy sector as the SEC grows in the years to come. There is a power of work already underway, with SEC Victoria Pty Ltd formally established and the strategic plan complete. The SEC is making its first investments of \$245 million into the Melbourne renewable energy hub big battery, creating more than 155 jobs and 14 apprentice jobs and trainee roles. That is great news, and it is only the start, with more than a hundred registrations of interest received for our initial pioneer investment.

With such a massive pipeline of work it is important we invest in a pipeline of workers, and that is why the Allan government has just last weekend released a consultation paper for the Victorian energy jobs plan. It is a guide to conversations with unions, TAFEs, industries and employers, including the SEC, about how we can deliver the workforce, the educational pathways and the local benefits and market confidence we need moving forward. I encourage all stakeholders to engage with this consultation paper and help shape the Victorian energy jobs plan we need for a brighter future. We are also working hard to set up the SEC centre for training excellence, with a power of work now underway, including engagement with industry and traditional owners on centre design and work on a detailed business case. With all this work happening we are set to begin implementation for the next year.

When put together, the SEC is not just going to be an investor, creator and retailer of renewable energy; it is going to deliver the largest scale change to the energy sector in modern Victorian history. That is absolutely a win for my community, keeping the lights on with cheap, sustainable Victorian renewable energy, all the while creating thousands of great union jobs. It is for all these great reasons that I am proud to be the member for Glen Waverley and a member of the mighty Electrical Trades Union, and I commend the bill to the house.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (16:51): Acting Speaker De Martino, can I say you are doing a great job and you look wonderful in purple today in International Women's Week, so well done to you.

I could not be happier to speak on this legislation today, because if you did not know, Labor is bringing back the SEC, and how good is that? Those of us on this side of the chamber know why we are here. We are here because in 1994 Jeff Kennett's Liberals, the same Liberals in front of us today, sold off the SEC after they put it in front of the privatisation firing squad in 1992. That is right; the privatisation firing squad was up ready to go, and they were going for the SEC. It was an act of utter economic vandalism and an absolute kick in the teeth to not only the workers but generations of working Victorians which continues to hurt them to this very day. The SEC, as we know, was privatised by Kennett to be sold to private multinationals. Thousands of workers were sacked. Power prices – well, what happened to them?

John Mullahy interjected.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH: They went up; that is correct. They went up, and it is Victorian families who have been paying the price. Now, how much do you think that price was? It was \$23 billion in profits going not here in Australia but overseas, and we are still counting. It is criminal, and quite frankly, it should never have happened. But no more – guess why? The SEC is back. Labor committed to bringing back the SEC as a publicly owned, 100 per cent renewable, active energy market participant, and Labor has delivered. We are going to continue delivering. I am so proud that my party has done that. I am also delighted to give a shout-out to the mighty Electrical Trades Union and of course their members, the thousands of sparkies and electrical workers of our great state. Without the ETU's advocacy and campaigning the SEC would not be happening today.

Following the privatisation of Victoria's electricity supply industry in the 1990s, legislation was enacted that effectively limited the old SECV's role to managing any residual properties, rights and liabilities from its previous operations. Abolishing the old SECV will allow the new SEC to operate without causing confusion between the pre-existing entity and the new SEC. As many of us here would know, on 25 October last year SEC Victoria was registered with ASIC as a proprietary limited company under the Corporations Act 2001. On 14 November last year the SEC was declared a state-owned company under the State Owned Enterprises Act 1992. The Premier and the Treasurer each hold one share in the SEC. Can I say the SEC will always be a government owned or controlled entity, and this is reflected in the bill's requirement for the state to always fully own and control the SEC, which of course is good news for bills and cost-of-living pressures. The new SEC will invest with industry to accelerate our transition to more affordable, reliable and renewable energy.

Those opposite have given a running commentary on this project, saying that it would have happened anyway. This project, quite frankly, would not have happened today without the reintroduction of the SEC, and that is a fact. Let us be clear: because of the SEC this project is happening sooner, is bigger and enables more renewables to come into the system. The SEC's investment has brought forward delivery of this project and upscaled one of its storage components from 2 to 4 hours beyond what the market would have otherwise delivered. And do not just take the government's word for that; the managing director of Equis, the SEC's partner in delivering the project, said that the partnership had delivered results quicker than they had anticipated and that:

If the Premier and the Minister would allow me, I'd ... apply it right across the region.

With over 100 companies lining up to partner with the SEC, there is plenty more to come. The Allan Labor government has created over 5100 jobs in large-scale renewable energy since it was elected in 2014. We have staggeringly ambitious offshore wind targets of at least 2 gigawatts by 2032, 4 gigawatts by 2035 and 9 gigawatts by 2040. Our energy storage targets are at least 2.6 gigawatts by 2030 and at least 6.3 gigawatts by 2035. The new State Electricity Commission is the next step to a future when energy and electricity is cheap and publicly owned, as it always should be – unlike Jeff Kennett would have had you believe back in 1994 when he sold it off.

There is so much that I can talk about with the SEC. It really is fantastic. It is not always the easy thing to do, but it is the right thing to do, and it is what Labor has done. In fact sometimes the SEC, as we know, will play an important role as a one-stop shop to help Victorians get off fossil gas and electrify. The SEC will start with pilot solutions this year before rolling these out to all Victorians, and while those opposite want to lock Victorians into expensive fossil gas bills, Labor is helping them slash their bills with more affordable and more reliable renewable energy.

Let us talk about the huge new workforce that our new SEC will generate – no pun intended. I know that many of my colleagues around this chamber have spoken about the new workforce that will be created, and I am told it is 59,000 jobs as well as 6000 apprentices and trainees by 2035. This is something phenomenal that is coming to Victoria. We know that the SEC is the right thing to do. We know that it is going to be wonderful for us, and we know that privatisation has to be off the cards, because unlike Jeff Kennett in 1994, we want to make sure that we are not privatising things. Those

opposite would have us believe that privatisation is the way to go, but we on this side of the chamber know that that is just simply incorrect. We know that the SEC coming back is going to create 59,000 jobs, 6000 trainees and a number more union members. The mighty Electrical Trades Union has done a phenomenal job in ensuring that they get out there and unionise their worksites. We know that when worksites are unionised, they are a lot safer, and health and safety on the job is absolutely paramount. Again, I could not commend the bill more to the chamber.

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (16:58): I am delighted to make a contribution today on the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023, another very important bill that is, in conjunction with the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023, helping to give effect to the government's two election commitments to revive the State Electricity Commission and to enshrine the new SEC in the Victorian constitution. As we know, this is one of the important, significant commitments that we put to the Victorian people in 2022 – a commitment that brings back the SEC as a publicly owned, 100 per cent renewable, active energy market participant. It is a commitment that we have delivered, with the SEC registered with ASIC and declared a state-owned company and, most importantly, with the first project under construction. This is an important milestone for Victoria and for my community because it is good news for bills and for cost-of-living pressures.

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

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (56): 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, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Sam Hibbins, 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, Tim Read, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ellen Sandell, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams

Noes (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, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Jess Wilson

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (56): 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, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Sam Hibbins, 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, Tim Read, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ellen Sandell, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams

Noes (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, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Jess Wilson

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Statute Law Revision Bill 2024

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Gabrielle Williams:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Neighbourhood houses

David HODGETT (Croydon) (17:09): (571) My adjournment is for the Minister for Carers and Volunteers, and the action I seek is for the minister to commit to providing an additional \$2.5 million in shortfall funding on top of the recurrent funding to meet the additional community needs placed on neighbourhood houses as part of the neighbourhood house coordination program, the NHCP. The current funding deficit means that the NHCP has suffered from over a decade of indexation well below the actual cost increases incurred. Rapidly growing community demand for food and material relief has placed an unsustainable cost burden on neighbourhood houses.

There is no funding within the NHCP to support new neighbourhood houses despite a population increase of 5.75 per cent in Victoria. Neighbourhood houses are currently cutting programs they subsidise, including emergency food relief, which is not a funded activity. The rapidly growing demand for food and material relief has placed an unsustainable cost burden on neighbourhood houses, and without urgent financial support they will have no choice but to start turning away people in need. This goes against the fundamental principles of these centres, which strive to provide a strong and connected community, supporting and providing services to our most vulnerable members. On a shoestring budget and with limited resources neighbourhood houses provide hundreds of services to local communities across metro, regional and rural Victoria. This funding increase is vital to ensure our neighbourhood houses can continue to support people of diverse backgrounds, abilities and social settings, ensuring that they are supported and feel a sense of belonging within our community. I again urge the minister to secure funding to ensure the future of the over 400 neighbourhood houses within Victoria.

Container deposit scheme

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (17:11): (572) My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Environment and concerns Victoria's container deposit scheme. The action that I seek from the minister is that he ensures that further drop-off locations are added to my electorate. The CDS started in November, and it is fair to say that since that time the Victorian community has embraced it. As at the middle of February more than 220 million containers had already been recycled through the container deposit scheme. The CDS is helping to build a thriving circular economy, and I note that the minister recently officially opened Visy's upgraded glass-recycling facility in Laverton, which will process up to 200,000 tonnes of glass each year, including glass that is recycled through the CDS. So that just gives a window into what is possible because of this initiative of our government. It is all part of our government's aim of diverting 80 per cent of waste from landfill, and there are already a number of useful drop-off locations in my electorate. One is at Waves Leisure Centre. The other and newest one is over at Southland shopping centre. But I note that we are still in the middle of the rollout of the CDS, and I ask that the minister ensures that there are further drop-off locations in the Bentleigh electorate – perhaps even a depot, which we do not have a moment.

Ovens Valley electorate

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (17:12): (573) My adjournment is to the Premier, and the action that I seek is that the Premier join me in the Ovens Valley electorate prior to the Victorian May budget to tour some of the facilities that are in dire need of some financial support. We would start at Cobram and look at the football netball clubrooms there; for a growing community there is a lot of work to be done there. We would then take the Murray Valley Highway to Yarrawonga and see the poor state of that road and the work that needs to be done there. At Yarrawonga we would stop in at the P-12 high school. Stage 3 is desperate for some funding there. It has not had funding since we were in government some time ago. We would then go to Wangaratta –

Mary-Anne Thomas interjected.

Tim McCURDY: Yes, it is 10 years that you have not invested in Yarrawonga P-12 school, and that is really disappointing. Ten years we have been asking, and in 10 years you still have not delivered. But if the Premier comes to Yarrawonga, I am sure that she will –

The SPEAKER: Order! Not ‘you’.

Tim McCURDY: Sorry, my mistake, Speaker. Then if we got to Wangaratta, we would see the investment that is needed in the health system there. Northeast Health is a growing hospital, and certainly with the mergers and the lack of funding in some of the other regional hospitals, it is important that we keep the big ones in tiptop shape. Myrtleford CFA is desperate for an upgrade, and then we would go to Bright and have a look at the urgent care needs up there. If we had time, I would then wander over to Mount Beauty and Dederang to look at the battery energy storage that is being proposed there and talk to the community, because the proponent is certainly not talking to the community over there – Mint Renewables. Then we would slip down to Meadow Creek, and I would take her through another proposal for a solar factory that is wanting to be set up down there and talk to locals down there.

Should all that be done early in the day, we could slip over to the King Valley. There are some exceptional wines in the King Valley. We all know that the King Valley is an exceptional wine-growing region, but I do warn the Premier in advance that the road is pretty ordinary out there, Wangaratta-Whitfield Road. I warn her in advance that that is a very tough road out there. Then finally, when she leaves the Ovens Valley electorate and heads back to Melbourne, she could look at the hundreds of acres of solar panels out at Glenrowan and then ask herself if she would like to wake up seeing that many solar panels right next to her house and see whether she would be happy to do that. If she could make a time to do that visit before the May budget, I would appreciate it kindly.

Cranbourne electorate early childhood education

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (17:15): (574) My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Children in the other place, and the action I seek is an update on how children in my electorate of Cranbourne will benefit from the kinders on school sites program. Cranbourne Primary School is one of the lucky schools to be included in this kinder on school sites program, and I am so proud of the school on so many levels. Under the strong leadership of Lachlan Yeates and Krysten Andrews students at this school are given a terrific foundation for their educational journey. The Minister for Children and I visited Cranbourne Primary School just last week, and we were given an incredibly comprehensive tour of the school by very impressive members of the student body. School captains Fatima and Emily, accompanied by Rachel, Harris and Sophia, Amity, Varin and Xavier, clearly demonstrate that the school represents the best and brightest of Cranbourne. There are a large number of families in my electorate – I often say I wake up to the sound of children in the morning – and I can imagine the inevitable excitement and relief they must feel at the announcement of this exciting program. Young families are at the heart of my community in Cranbourne and at the heart of what this government’s program has in place. I look forward to the minister’s response in highlighting the impact this program will have on the children of my electorate.

Land tax

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (17:16): (575) My adjournment is to the Treasurer, and I ask for the Treasurer to meet with my local constituents the Fernando family and explain why the government will not reverse the cruel decision to place land tax on their primary place of residence. Mr and Mrs Fernando and their three children decided to move to the beautiful area of Clyde North, a rapidly growing community and a fantastic location to raise their children. Today I ask the Treasurer to support this decision and ensure they are not ripped off by this Labor government, who appear willing to take any dollar they can from hardworking Victorians, like the Fernandos, just to pay for the government waste and mismanagement.

The Fernandos do not and never have owned an investment property. Here is the time line of what occurred. On 10 December 2016 they signed a contract for land in Clyde North ready to build their dream. On 26 March 2018 the land settled. In 2018 they proceeded to view houses and moved to signing contracts with Ranshe Homes in Narre Warren. Just prior to signing those contracts to get the house constructed, Mr Randolph de Silva passed away. The family began the process to find a suitable home and builder for their property in Clyde North. They chose Smarthomes. Construction began on 14 February 2019. The certificate of occupancy was issued on 19 March 2019, and the family moved in within the next couple of weeks. All stamp duty, taxes, all rates et cetera have been paid up to date. The home has never been used to provide an income. It is simply a primary residence. The decision was given as there was no person living at the property – or on this land, which it was classified as – for a two-year period. The State Revenue Office issued a land tax bill, and the Treasurer will not reverse this. It is simply not fair.

Treasurer, please do the right thing and fix this mess. It is legalised theft, and only you have the power to amend this. If you cannot or will not make this change, I ask you to meet with the Fernandos. I will bring them into the Parliament for a meeting and you can explain to them during a cost-of-living crisis when they do not have spare money lying around why you want to keep ripping them off and not reverse this decision to put the money back in their pockets.

The SPEAKER: Member for Berwick, you will need to try to frame your adjournment matters so that you are not referring to ‘you’.

Hyzon Motors

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (17:19): (576) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Precincts. The action I seek from the minister is to visit the first localised manufacturing facility of zero-emission hydrogen fuel cell powered commercial vehicles in Australia, located in my electorate of Mulgrave, and to discuss the potential for its integration into precincts across Victoria. Hyzon Motors is a global leader in high-power fuel cell technology and has chosen to establish Australia’s first localised manufacturing plant in Melbourne’s south-east. This new facility has created over 50 skilled jobs, including engineers, fabricators, welders and designers, showcasing the talent in our local industry and south-east manufacturing prowess. It has allowed many workers from the car manufacturing sector to utilise their skills following the end of Australia’s car manufacturing industry.

However, the significance of Hyzon’s contribution extends beyond just job creation. It aligns with the Victorian government’s targets for carbon emission reduction. With the goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2045, including a 50 per cent reduction target by 2030, initiatives like Hyzon Motors are crucial. Given that transportation accounts for approximately 25 per cent of carbon emissions, transitioning to zero-emissions vehicles powered by hydrogen fuel cells is imperative. Hyzon Motors has been involved in developing the Victorian freight industry decarbonisation plan, demonstrating its commitment to sustainable transport solutions. Having recently visited Hyzon Motors myself, I saw firsthand the potential of hydrogen fuel cell technology. I believe that discussing these opportunities with the minister will shed light on how we can integrate these solutions into precincts statewide. I look forward to the minister’s visit to Hyzon Motors and the productive discussion that will follow as we explore avenues for advancing sustainable practices in Victoria’s precincts.

Middle East conflict

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (17:21): (577) My adjournment today is for Labor Premier Jacinta Allan. The action I want from the Victorian government is to rip up the MOU with the Israeli Ministry of Defense. The Labor federal government has just handed a whopping \$900 million to Elbit Systems, a company whose weapons and vehicles are being used to massacre Palestinian men, women and children trapped in Gaza. Here in Victoria the government has not only signed an MOU with the Israeli Ministry of Defense, they have also given Victorian taxpayer dollars to this company, Elbit Systems. Elbit produces 85 per cent of Israel’s attack and surveillance drones and up to 85 per cent of their land-

based military equipment. It is also responsible for surveillance systems that uphold Israeli apartheid by preventing Palestinians from moving between Jerusalem and the West Bank.

If you look up Elbit online, you will find a company proudly boasting of ‘battle-proven and battle-tested machines’. What this actually means is that they test their weapons on Palestinians in Gaza, killing men, women and children and then selling those weapons around the world for profit. The same Elbit drones that killed hundreds of Palestinians in 2014 were almost immediately bought up by dozens of other countries, including Australia. The company has since made headlines for all the wrong reasons, from developing white phosphorus to doing surveillance for Trump’s border wall. Just two years ago the Myanmar junta used Elbit weapons to massacre more than 1500 people, including 100 children, and none of this would be news to the Premier. Yet last week the federal defence department, under Labor minister Richard Marles, handed them a whopping \$900 million to develop military vehicles, and in Victoria we continue to uphold an agreement with the Israeli defence ministry.

On 17 October the Premier moved a motion in this house that said this Victorian Parliament stands with Israel, just as Israel was about to start its invasion of Gaza. The Greens were the only ones to vote against it. Since then, over 100,000 Palestinians have been killed or injured. We have watched massacres of tens of thousands of civilians occur before our eyes. Forty per cent of people in Gaza are children under the age of 15. Tens of thousands of innocent children have been murdered. This is abhorrent, it is unconscionable and I cannot in good conscience stand here and do nothing while the Victorian state Labor government continues to partner with the weapons companies and the Israeli Ministry of Defense who are causing such unimaginable death and suffering. Enough has got to be enough. Surely Labor needs to find its backbone and stop giving tacit and active support to the slaughter of Palestinians.

Bass electorate emergency services volunteers

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (17:24): (578) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Emergency Services in the other place, and the action I seek is that the minister join me to visit, meet with and thank our local volunteer emergency services responders, including those at our local lifesaving clubs of Inverloch, Cape Paterson, Wonthaggi and Cape Woolamai and those at our VICES units of Inverloch, San Remo and Phillip Island, who have been called to a number of water rescues over this summer. We have had an awful summer, with too many precious loved ones losing their lives to drowning, and we send love, strength and support to their families, friends and all who cherished them, and far too many more are being rescued.

The multi-agency response has been exemplary over this period. I have reached out personally to the first responders, including the lifesaving clubs, SES, Ambulance Victoria and local police. The support and care provided by those attending so many incidents on our waterways, and the local surfers and community members, who are often the first there to raise the alarm, should be commended. There is a collective want and urgency to do more. I have collated a lot of ideas and experiences and am working to formalise this and, where appropriate, hold localised discussions with various agencies, their members and the broader community.

Our Bass community is a very special one. They come together, they rally around and they support and hold each other in times of need and will continue to do so in the times ahead. Thank you, Minister. We look forward to seeing you in Bass. Your presence and acknowledgement of the dedication, efforts and professionalism of our volunteer first responders will be appreciated, and it will be an opportunity also to hear their efforts, experiences and stories.

Container deposit scheme

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (17:26): (579) Our community loves cash for cans and is working hard to keep our local environment clean. I have been calling for a container deposit scheme for years, because Victoria was lagging behind other states, and finally after many years of advocacy the government introduced the new container deposit scheme in late 2023. However, the rollout has been

abysmal. Just four months into the scheme residents in my electorate are concerned the few drop-off locations available in our community will be forced to shut down because the government has failed to provide adequate assistance to these locations in gaining all relevant planning permits with Yarra Ranges council, in particular the Wandin North, Mooroolbark and Yarra Junction sites. The action I seek is for the Minister for Environment to take all necessary steps to ensure CDS locations in Wandin North, Mooroolbark and the Yarra Valley obtain all relevant planning permits from Yarra Ranges council to continue operating without penalty or forced closure. Without this the government will have failed to deliver a functioning container deposit scheme in Mooroolbark and the Yarra Valley.

These small business operators are doing a wonderful service for our community, and residents want to do the right thing to support these businesses, clean up our environment and recycle cans and bottles using the scheme. The government must ensure that the container deposit locations in our community are not cancelled or fined by Yarra Ranges council because the Labor government has botched the rollout of the scheme. It is crazy to find out that just four months in, the container deposit scheme in my community is at risk of disappearing altogether because the Yarra Ranges council is pressuring these small businesses in relation to permits for bins, a requirement that they were never made aware of by the Labor government prior to the scheme rollout.

Sadly, the state Labor government has been floundering for years when it comes to the circular economy. It was only after the Liberals led the way by announcing a container deposit scheme in early 2020 that the Labor government was embarrassed into introducing one in November 2023. So I ask this action of the minister in the hope that these valued CDS locations that are at risk of closure in my community get the support that they need and can continue to operate and provide this service for our local community.

Neighbourhood houses

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (17:28): (580) My adjournment is to the Minister for Carers and Volunteers, and I ask that the minister joins me in Northcote to visit with our wonderful network of neighbourhood houses. The inner north is home to a hardworking and tight-knit community of neighbourhood houses run by a mix of staff and volunteers. Their commitment to supporting vulnerable residents, those wanting to upskill or people simply looking to connect with one another is second to none. Whether it is Jika Jika's free food program, Span, Alphington Community Centre's community lunches or Bridge Darebin's family playgroup, our neighbourhood houses are somewhere that everyone is welcome.

There is no doubt that the rising cost of living is putting pressure on households right now, and many residents in Northcote are turning to our neighbourhood houses or other wonderful services like Darebin Information, Volunteer & Resource Service in Preston as a shoulder to lean on. DIVRS are angels, providing community support to between 150 and 200 households each week, including access to their food pantry, providing advice about cost of living and running energy relief drop-in sessions. Over at Span Community House in Thornbury the weekly food relief program supports residents at the Agg Street housing estate, helping to put food on the table for community members who need it most, and their suite of sustainability programs, like their repair, re-use and recycle hub, is empowering our community to think more about avoiding waste, reducing our carbon footprint and contributing to the circular economy.

As the member for Northcote, I have been incredibly proud to support the work of our neighbourhood houses and see wonderful initiatives like the Alphington men's shed, Jika Jika bicycle repair and Span's edible and Indigenous garden, all funded by the Allan Labor government. We have also been proud to work closely with them on getting the word out about the ways in which our Labor government is supporting households with cost-of-living relief. Many of our neighbourhood houses have assisted residents with processing four rounds of the state government's \$250 power saving bonus. They have also helped to provide information on the Victorian energy upgrades program and

the sick pay guarantee. These are all key initiatives that put more dollars back into the pockets of Victorians.

The Allan Labor government will continue to support cost-of-living measures for Victorians, including through transformational reforms like free kinder, free TAFE, discounted and free dental, discounted drivers licence renewals, our priority primary care clinics and the more than 60 different savings to be found on the savings finder in the Service Victoria app, which traverse energy, utilities, health, transport, education, recreation and more. Our passionate and dedicated network of neighbourhood houses is a crucial part of the picture when it comes to supporting Victorians, and I look forward to introducing the minister to the wonderful souls that keep them humming in the inner north.

Responses

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (17:31): The member for Croydon raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Carers and Volunteers. The action that he seeks is that the minister provides additional funding for neighbourhood houses. The member for Bentleigh raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment, and the action that he seeks is that the minister ensures that there are further drop-off locations in his electorate. The member for Ovens Valley raised a matter for the attention of the Premier, and the action that he seeks is that the Premier join him to tour facilities in his electorate. I am sure she would very much welcome the opportunity to visit the Northeast Health service in Wangaratta, with the \$23 million investment from the Andrews–Allan Labor governments.

The member for Cranbourne sought an action from the Minister for Children in the other place, and the action that the member seeks is that the minister provides her with an update on how the delivery of kinders on school sites is delivering real benefits and outcomes for children in her electorate. The member for Berwick sought an action from the Treasurer. The action that he seeks is that the Treasurer meet with a family in his constituency regarding land tax. The member for Mulgrave raised an action for the Minister for Precincts, and the action that the member seeks is that the minister join with her in what sounds like an incredibly interesting visit: a tour of the first localised manufacturing facility of zero-emission hydrogen for fuel cell powered commercial vehicles in Australia, otherwise known as Hyzon Motors. I am sure that the minister would welcome the opportunity to visit the hardworking new member for Mulgrave in her electorate.

The member for Melbourne sought an action from the Premier, and that is that the Premier cease an MOU that is in place with the Israeli government. The member for Bass sought an action for the attention of the Minister for Emergency Services, and the action that the member seeks is that the minister join with her in meeting with and thanking emergency services volunteers, particularly those from Life Saving Victoria and the SES, over what has been a really difficult summer in the member's electorate. We value the work of those emergency services volunteers every day, attending to incidents, including drownings in the member's electorate.

The member for Evelyn sought an action from the Minister for Environment. She seeks that the minister take action to ensure that businesses that have been selected to be part of the container deposit scheme are supported to get all the necessary approvals in place to enable them to participate in the Allan Labor government's container deposit scheme. The member for Northcote raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Carers and Volunteers, and the action that the member seeks is that the minister joins her in visiting the very many fabulous neighbourhood houses in the seat of Northcote, and I am sure that the minister would look forward to joining with the member for Northcote on such a visit.

The SPEAKER: The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5:35 pm.