



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Tuesday 10 September 2024

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Jacinta Allan

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Ben Carroll

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

John Pesutto

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

David Southwick

Leader of the Nationals

Danny O’Brien (from 26 November 2024)

Peter Walsh (to 26 November 2024)

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Mary-Anne Thomas

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury

Members of the Legislative Assembly
60th Parliament

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel ¹	Mulgrave	ALP	McCurdy, Tim	Ovens Valley	Nat
Battin, Brad	Berwick	Lib	McGhie, Steve	Melton	ALP
Benham, Jade	Mildura	Nat	McLeish, Cindy	Eildon	Lib
Britnell, Roma	South-West Coast	Lib	Marchant, Alison	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Colin	Bundoora	ALP	Matthews-Ward, Kathleen	Broadmeadows	ALP
Bull, Josh	Sunbury	ALP	Mercurio, Paul	Hastings	ALP
Bull, Tim	Gippsland East	Nat	Mullahy, John	Glen Waverley	ALP
Cameron, Martin	Morwell	Nat	Newbury, James	Brighton	Lib
Carbines, Anthony	Ivanhoe	ALP	O'Brien, Danny	Gippsland South	Nat
Carroll, Ben	Niddrie	ALP	O'Brien, Michael	Malvern	Lib
Cheeseman, Darren ²	South Barwon	Ind	O'Keeffe, Kim	Shepparton	Nat
Cianflone, Anthony	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Pallas, Tim	Werribee	ALP
Cleeland, Annabelle	Euroa	Nat	Pearson, Danny	Essendon	ALP
Connolly, Sarah	Laverton	ALP	Pesutto, John	Hawthorn	Lib
Couzens, Christine	Geelong	ALP	Read, Tim	Brunswick	Greens
Crewther, Chris	Mornington	Lib	Richards, Pauline	Cranbourne	ALP
Crugnale, Jordan	Bass	ALP	Richardson, Tim	Mordialloc	ALP
D'Ambrosio, Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Riordan, Richard	Polwarth	Lib
De Martino, Daniela	Monbulk	ALP	Rowswell, Brad	Sandringham	Lib
de Vietri, Gabrielle	Richmond	Greens	Sandell, Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Dimopoulos, Steve	Oakleigh	ALP	Settle, Michaela	Eureka	ALP
Edbrooke, Paul	Frankston	ALP	Smith, Ryan ⁷	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 ^{5,6}	Prahran	Ind	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 ⁸	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 Greens until 1 November 2024

⁶ Resigned 23 November 2024

⁷ Resigned 7 July 2023

⁸ 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

CONTENTS

BILLS

Transport Infrastructure and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2024	3403
Introduction and first reading	3403
Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing) Bill 2024	3403
Introduction and first reading	3403
Agriculture and Food Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024	3404
Introduction and first reading	3404

COMMITTEES

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee	3404
Alert Digest No. 12	3404
Annual Review 2023: Statutory Rules and Legislative Instruments	3404

DOCUMENTS

Documents	3404
-----------------	------

BILLS

Aboriginal Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2024	3405
Council's agreement	3405
Aboriginal Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2024	3405
Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024	3405
Prahran Mechanics' Institute Repeal Bill 2024	3405
Youth Justice Bill 2024	3405
Royal assent	3405
Criminal Organisations Control Amendment Bill 2024	3406
Short Stay Levy Bill 2024	3406
Appropriation	3406

COMMITTEES

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee	3406
Membership	3406

MOTIONS

Energy policy	3406
Planning policy	3407
State forest access	3407
Energy policy	3407

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Program	3409
---------------	------

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Jewish New Year	3416
Rabbinical Council of Victoria	3416
State Emergency Service Glen Eira unit	3416
Kalkallo electorate sporting achievements	3416
Morwell Bowling Club	3417
Gippsland Business Awards	3417
Ashwood electorate school productions	3417
Gardiner Preschool	3417
Vaccinations	3418
Severe weather event	3418
Monbulk electorate schools	3418
Belfast Aquatics	3418
Severe weather event	3419
Australian Chaldean Family Welfare	3419
Roxburgh Park Football Netball Club	3419
Greenvale Syrian community	3419
Yarrawonga Friends in Common	3419
Ovens & King Football Netball League	3419
King Valley rubbish dumping	3420
Ovens Valley electorate police resources	3420
Bayswater electorate schools	3420
Wantirna College	3420
Suburban Rail Loop	3420
Victoria University mental health initiative	3421
Point Cook electorate community hubs	3421
Land Forces International Land Defence Exposition	3421
John 'Jack' Hallowell	3422

CONTENTS

Water safety	3422
Albert Park College	3422
Pascoe Vale Community Centre	3423
Coburg West Primary School	3423
Bentleigh Secondary College	3423
Lara Primary School	3424
State Emergency Service Corio unit	3424
Cranbourne Football Netball Club	3424
Onam festival	3424
Cranbourne mosque	3424
BILLS	
Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024	3425
Second reading	3425
MEMBERS	
Minister for Government Services	3430
Absence	3430
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE AND MINISTERS STATEMENTS	
Construction industry	3430
Ministers statements: social media age limits	3431
Construction industry	3431
Ministers statements: Victoria's Big Build	3432
Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union	3433
Ministers statements: women's health	3434
Transport infrastructure	3435
Ministers statements: housing	3436
Transport infrastructure	3437
Ministers statements: State Electricity Commission	3438
CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS	
Eildon electorate	3439
Bass electorate	3439
Gippsland East electorate	3439
Box Hill electorate	3439
Brighton electorate	3440
Tarneit electorate	3440
Narracan electorate	3440
Thomastown electorate	3440
Warrandyte electorate	3440
Northcote electorate	3441
RULINGS FROM THE CHAIR	
Constituency questions	3441
BILLS	
Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024	3441
Second reading	3441
ADJOURNMENT	
Electricity infrastructure	3490
Suicide prevention	3491
Princes Highway West	3491
Norlane Community Centre	3492
Great Ocean Road traffic management	3492
Committee for Wyndham	3493
Shepparton electorate ambulance services	3493
South Melbourne Primary School	3494
Mental health and wellbeing locals	3494
Marnebek School	3494
Responses	3495

Tuesday 10 September 2024

The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 12:04 pm, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.

Bills

Transport Infrastructure and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Introduction and first reading

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (12:05): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009, the Planning and Environment Act 1987, the Road Management Act 2004, the Suburban Rail Loop Act 2021 and the Transport Integration Act 2010 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:05): I ask the minister for a brief explanation of the bill.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (12:05): The objective of the bill is to continue the government's strong commitment to developing and delivering priority precincts and major transport projects. In doing so this will aid Victorians with better housing, transport, employment opportunities and access to health, education and other critical services and amenities. The bill will further extend and modernise the Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009 to better facilitate the development and delivery of all major transport projects and precincts. This will allow for more timely and efficient delivery of major transport projects and precincts in accordance with the government's priorities while maintaining safeguards. The current delivery powers to support precincts are not fit for purpose and are scattered across legislation. To address this, the bill will enable the Premier to declare precinct projects under the Planning and Environment Act 1987, and this will enable access to the Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009, delivering powers for precincts to minimise existing challenges.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing) Bill 2024

Introduction and first reading

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:06): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 in relation to drug-checking services and opioid overdose and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (12:07): I ask the minister for a brief explanation of the bill.

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:07): The bill establishes a legislative framework for the operation of drug checking, otherwise known as pill testing, services in Victoria and automated dispensing machines for naloxone.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Agriculture and Food Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024*Introduction and first reading*

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (12:08): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Dairy Act 2000, the Food Act 1984, the Meat Industry Act 1993 and the Seafood Safety Act 2003 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (12:08): I ask the minister for a brief explanation of the bill.

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (12:08): This bill will address significant regulatory risks relating to animal welfare and high-risk foods, being raw milk, to ensure regulations can more effectively implement existing government policy on all matters. The bill will also improve overall consistency between the acts that make up the agriculture food safety legislative framework, providing increased clarity for the Victorian primary production businesses that the framework regulates. Amendments to the Food Act included in the bill respond to two recommendations in the June 2023 report of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office on regulating food safety.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

*Committees***Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee***Alert Digest No. 12*

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (12:09): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 12 of 2024, on the following bills:

Criminal Organisations Control Amendment Bill 2024

Short Stay Levy Bill 2024

together with appendices and extracts from the proceedings.

Ordered to be published.

Annual Review 2023: Statutory Rules and Legislative Instruments

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (12:10): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Annual Review 2023: Statutory Rules and Legislative Instruments*, together with appendices.

Ordered to be published.

*Documents***Documents**

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Improving Cancer Outcomes Act 2014 – Victorian cancer plan 2024–2028

Inquiries Act 2014 – Interim Report of the Formal Review into Victorian Government Bodies' Engagement with Construction Companies and Construction Unions – Released on 30 August 2024

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

Ballarat – C248
Brimbank – C227
Campaspe – C126
Glen Eira – C258
Glenelg – C110
Knox – C185
Latrobe – C132
Mitchell – C168
Moorabool – C113
Mornington Peninsula – C241
Wyndham – C260
Yarra – C319

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Building Act 1993 – SR 82
Children's Services Act 1996 – SR 80
Supreme Court Act 1986 – SR 83
Wildlife Act 1975 – SR 81

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rule 83
Documents under s 16B in relation to *Water Act 1989* – East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority By-law No 2024-1 Waterways Protection.

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission – 2023 report on the Operation of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities – Ordered to be published

Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal – Members of Parliament (Victoria) Guidelines No 02/2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board – Report 2023–24.

Bills

Aboriginal Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Council's agreement

The SPEAKER (12:11): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Aboriginal Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 without amendment.

Aboriginal Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024

Prahran Mechanics' Institute Repeal Bill 2024

Youth Justice Bill 2024

Royal assent

The SPEAKER (12:11): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Aboriginal Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024, the Prahran Mechanics' Institute Repeal Bill 2024 and the Youth Justice Bill 2024.

Criminal Organisations Control Amendment Bill 2024**Short Stay Levy Bill 2024***Appropriation*

The SPEAKER (12:12): I have received messages from the Governor recommending appropriations for the purposes of the Criminal Organisations Control Amendment Bill 2024 and the Short Stay Levy Bill 2024.

*Committees***Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee***Membership*

The SPEAKER (12:12): I have received the resignation of Dylan Wight from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, effective from today.

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

That Eden Foster be a member of the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee.

Motion agreed to.

*Motions***Energy policy**

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (12:12): By leave, I move:

That this house condemns the member for Melton for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our growth areas, leaving his constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

John PESUTTO: By leave, I move:

That this house condemns the member for Niddrie for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our suburbs, leaving his constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:13): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Point Cook for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our growth areas, leaving his constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (12:14): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Bendigo West for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our regions, leaving her constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (12:14): By leave, I move:

That this house condemns the member for Macedon for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our regions, leaving her constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Emma KEALY: I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Wendouree for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our regions, leaving her constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (12:15): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for St Albans for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our suburbs, leaving her constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:15): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Carrum for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our suburbs, leaving her constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Planning policy

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:16): I move, by leave:

That this house notes the Minister for Planning spoke out of both sides of her mouth when she previously said developers are motivated by one thing and one thing only – that is, profit – and now plans to remove all community third-party rights but leave developers with sole appeal rights.

Leave refused.

State forest access

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:16): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier for saying only 15 days ago 'I will never put a padlock on our public forest' but saying the opposite yesterday by admitting the government was looking 'at the land that used to be harvested ... those areas that are, must be protected, must be conserved'.

Leave refused.

Energy policy

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (12:16): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Cranbourne for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our growth areas, leaving her constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (12:17): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Eureka for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and indeed rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our regions, leaving her constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (12:17): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Narre Warren South for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our suburbs, leaving his constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (12:18): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Eltham for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our suburbs, leaving her constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (12:18): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Mordialloc for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our suburbs, leaving his constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (12:18): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Hastings for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians, leaving his constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (12:19): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Bass for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our regions, leaving her constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (12:19): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Box Hill for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians in our suburbs, leaving his constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (12:20): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the missing-in-action Labor MP for South Barwon for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes right across the Geelong region, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our growth areas, leaving his constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (12:20): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Monbulk for failing to call out the Premier's outrageous ban on gas in new and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying cost-of-living pressures facing Victorians, leaving Dandenong Ranges residents repeatedly subjected to power outages worse off.

Leave refused.

David HODGETT (Croydon) (12:20): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Bayswater for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our suburbs, leaving his constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (12:21): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Yan Yean for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and exacerbating the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our growth areas, leaving her constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (12:21): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Pakenham for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our growth areas, leaving her constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Chris CREWTHOR (Mornington) (12:22): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Frankston for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our suburbs, leaving his constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (12:22): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Sunbury for failing to call out the Premier's ideological ban on gas in new homes and rebuilt homes, denying choice and intensifying the cost-of-living crisis facing Victorians living in our growth areas, leaving his constituents worse off.

Leave refused.

Business of the house

Program

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:23): I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5 pm on 12 September 2024:

Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Short Stay Levy Bill 2024

Criminal Organisations Control Amendment Bill 2024.

The Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 enacts some of the commitments that this government has made with regard to the 24-hour truck bans in the inner west, which is part of the delivery of the West Gate Tunnel Project. I note the member for Footscray is in the house; this is something that she has long advocated for. The bill will deliver the framework so that the government

will meet the commitment that has been made. I know that members on this side of the house will be very proud to stand up and speak not only in regard to this project and this benefit but in regard to all the ways in which our government is delivering for the people of Melbourne's west. What a great asset the West Gate Tunnel will be when it comes to taking trucks off local streets.

We will also be discussing the Short Stay Levy Bill 2024. We have talked about housing quite a bit. I have to say on this side of the house it is one of the reasons that we come in to this place every single day to work, in order to deliver the housing that people need. The housing challenges being experienced in this state are being felt right across the state, and I say that as a regional MP. The Short Stay Levy Bill is an excellent initiative by our government, which seeks to get the balance right when it comes to ensuring that we can deliver houses that working people can afford. I know in my own electorate of Macedon one of the greatest challenges facing tourism operators is the lack of available staff to work. It is a circular problem that we have and one that we will look to address.

Our government has a long list of commitments that we have made, a significant number of initiatives that we will deliver, because we want to ensure that both social housing and affordable housing are available right across the state – and that is indeed what our government is doing. As we will discuss, when residential properties are used for short-stay accommodation they cannot be used to house the essential workers that are needed in our communities. I know full well from travelling right around the state that some of the significant challenges we face in the healthcare workforce, the education workforce and the tourism and hospitality workforce come from the inadequacy of housing options. That is why our government has a housing statement. It is why we have a raft of legislative initiatives that we are introducing and a whole range of other programs.

The government business program includes the Criminal Organisations Control Amendment Bill 2024, an important bill that contributes to the government's broader work to tackle organised crime as set out in our *Community Safety Statement 2018–19*. This bill complements earlier legislative work of the government, including the Confiscation Amendment (Unexplained Wealth) Bill 2024, which of course was passed earlier this year. Collectively this work has helped to expand powers around cybercrime, cryptocurrency seizures and electronic and specialist search powers, giving our law enforcement the tools they need to deal with organised crime.

Of course this is the last sitting week before most of us in this place head out to work in our communities to do the important work of a member of Parliament – that is, meeting with community groups, meeting with local sporting organisations, meeting with the CWA, meeting with our Rotary clubs and so on. In my role I get to travel all around the state meeting with our healthcare workers and seeing the real difference that our significant investment in health has made. I know that representing our communities is the reason that we are all here. It is what drives us every single day. While we are out there visiting our local constituents, helping them to resolve challenges and issues and advocating on their behalf, where will those on the other side be?

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:29): I will start on the government business program by letting the house know that we will be opposing the government business program this week. On the Short Stay Levy Bill 2024, the coalition again went to the government and said we would like to take a bill into consideration in detail – it has only happened once in this term – and the government again said that they did not have a minister who was able to stand up and argue the case, so the offer was declined. It is disappointing to know that no-one has the capacity to stand up to the scrutiny. That is something the Parliament should expect; the Parliament should expect bills at times to go into consideration in detail so that the detail of those bills is not just rushed over and the bills are not simply rushed through. I will say for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, although we agree on nothing, that in one case he was the only minister who agreed to take a bill into consideration, so he deserves one point for that. He is the only minister thus far who has had the skill level required to take a bill into consideration. So the coalition will be opposing the government business program.

The Leader of the House spoke about the ‘excellent initiative’, the short-stay levy. In her words it is an excellent initiative, or as Victorians I am sure will come to say of it, the 55th new tax this government has introduced – 55 of them. Though the bill has disingenuously been titled a levy, it was somewhat bizarre to hear the speaker stand up in the last sitting week and read out a statement in which he confirmed that the levy was in fact a tax. The levy was a tax, but the bill was not called a tax. No, of course the government would not have called it a tax, because why would they be honest? The Treasurer in the last sitting week stood up in his speech and admitted that the levy was in fact a tax – the 55th new tax – and we will have a lot to say about that 55th new tax that is being imposed on the community, which the Leader of the House describes as an excellent initiative. The Shadow Treasurer has made the point a number of times that this new tax has not got a single friend. I will let the Shadow Treasurer know that there is one: the Leader of the House. The tax has one friend, the Leader of the House: the ‘excellent initiative’.

The other things that are worth noting: each week the government notes in the business program notification that the Leader of the House will be providing an opportunity to speak on the budget bill. I know I get up every week and I plead on behalf of the third of the Labor caucus who have not had a chance to speak on the budget that this week maybe the government will give them their shot. Both on our side and on the government side a third of the members have not had a chance to speak on the budget – the budget the government is clearly trying to hide. Every single week it is on the government business program: ‘We might deal with the budget bills.’ Last week, no. The members did not have a chance to talk about it, but why would they? Why would the government want to provide an opportunity to debate that budget? They want to hide it. So again I am going to get up on behalf of the government members and the coalition to say: Leader of the House, you are letting your own side down. There are so many members of this place who have not had an opportunity to talk about what the government has not delivered and the \$190 billion in debt. Hopefully we will see an opportunity for all members to have the right to speak up on behalf of their community.

This week there are a number of other bills, but there are also roughly 200 motions on the notice paper, and the government has not provided any opportunity to talk about those motions other than previously allowing time for sledge motions. The 200 motions that are sitting on the notice paper are being ignored, and there are important ones, including standing order reform in relation to questions not being answered in question time. So we will be opposing the government business program for the reasons that have been outlined.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (12:34): I rise more in sorrow than anger at the news that the opposition is opposing the government business program today. I do take exception to the member for Brighton’s characterisation of some of the motions that have been brought to this place, suggesting that they are sledge motions when, as he has said himself, there are some 400 motions on the notice paper –

James Newbury interjected.

Iwan WALTERS: 200, I beg your pardon, member for Brighton – 200 ad hominem motions, which apparently should pass for an energy policy today if we are led to understand anything. But I rise to support the government business program. As the Leader of the House said in her contribution, this is the final sitting week for some time. The previous week was an incredibly busy one in the electorate of Greenvale, a week indeed where, in the words of HG Nelson, too much sport was barely enough, with footy finals and with soccer completing its regular season. It was wonderful to be at so many of those events and also with organisations like Australian Chaldean Family Welfare and many other multicultural organisations. I mention these organisations because they are indicative of the kind of constituents and residents that we all represent and at whom the government business program this week is targeted. It is substantive, meaningful policy that is reflected in bills like the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

The member for Footscray is in the house. Like her, I have worked with organisations like the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group in the past, so I emphasise how timely it is that this bill is being brought before the Parliament this week in the context of the West Gate Tunnel nearing completion and in the context of money having been allocated in the recent budget to ensure that there is a system of vehicle cameras – I am not sure what the terminology is, not speed cameras but road safety cameras – that can monitor truck movements in and out of the Port of Melbourne on what are residential streets, streets where real people live and where we know that there is a particularly high incidence of carcinogen-related diseases as a consequence of truck movements and the diesel particulate that congregates in those places. That is why it is timely to bring this bill to the house. There is also a significant level of investment in things like the port rail shuttle as well as the West Gate Tunnel, which enable bills like this to begin to have an effect. There is no use in having measures that deter trucks from entering the Port of Melbourne if there is no other way for the freight to get in there, but with initiatives like the port rail shuttle and with major infrastructure projects like the West Gate Tunnel there is now the basis for a bill of this nature and the measures that it contains to be brought to this house.

Another provision within that bill relates to digital drivers licences, which have been taken up with alacrity by many Victorians. I believe over a million people across the state have already taken the option to have a digital drivers licence on their phone. As the members for Wendouree and Eureka could attest, the trial in Ballarat that occurred recently was hugely successful, with a really high uptake, which gave us the basis for a statewide rollout. It is now timely to ensure that the legislative framework that surrounds those digital drivers licences is fit for purpose to ensure that people can have confidence that the licence that is on their phone will be treated as a legal document in the same way that a plastic licence is – or the polymer that is used for licences.

Roma Britnell interjected.

Iwan WALTERS: The member for South-West Coast's interjection I think is just indicative of the fact that those opposite have a paucity of ideas and only indulge in ad hominem motions – 200 of them – rather than engaging in the substantive policy work that is reflected in the kinds of bills that have been brought to this house today, which will have a profound impact, a positive impact, on our communities. Bills like the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill I talked about, as well as the Criminal Organisations Control Amendment Bill 2024, really get to the heart of one of the fundamental responsibilities of government, which is to keep communities safe.

Sam Groth interjected.

Iwan WALTERS: I look forward to the member for Nepean's contribution. It would be lovely to see him make a contribution on his feet at some point as an audition for his movement down to the front bench and into that leader's chair, which will be vacated soon enough.

Members interjecting.

Iwan WALTERS: I think it is pretty poor form to suggest that people who may stutter, member for Brighton, should be somehow mocked. I think that is a pretty poor thing to do.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, what an outrageous assertion. The fact that the member does not want to use the word 'tax' should not be misused.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. Members will show some respect to members on their feet.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (12:39): I rise to speak on the business program once again this week. As the member for Brighton said, we will be opposing the business program this week, although we do have, this time, three bills to talk about. I will be up and talking on all three because whether it be something that just needs dotting the i's and crossing the t's, a little bit of cleaning up and housekeeping, or bills that are really, really important to the people of Victoria and the people of my

electorate, I enjoy being able to get up and talk on them. A lot of the time we do oppose the business program because we should be having hard conversations in the chamber about the things that really do affect Victorians right across the board.

We are talking about roads and road safety at some stage this week, and that may be up today. We are talking about trucks entering the new tunnel that is being built down Footscray way. The member for Footscray I know is very happy about that – being able to get trucks off the roads down there – but it also affects truck drivers coming from my patch and from out of Gippsland on their journey to get down to the ports to unload their goods, with the atrocious country roads that they need to navigate. A lot of the financial gain, a lot of the money, that they get for doing long hours and delivering this stuff to the port and bringing it back is going into maintaining their trucks so that they are up to the standard that VicRoads need them to be at. It is not their fault that the roads are in disrepair and they need to spend extra time making sure that their trucks are safe. These are issues outside of what that bill goes into that we should be actually talking about.

On the Criminal Organisations Control Amendment Bill 2024, I think this is the third time the act has been amended, and I note that the last time it was amended I do not think there was any notice given to any of the organisations. Once again the government is amending it to make Victorians safer. The first time it was not done and the second time it did not quite get it right, so hopefully the third time, when we discuss it this week, we can get it right to keep Victorians safe.

We move on to the Short Stay Levy Bill 2024, which will be very interesting, and I notice that it is proposed that it is going to be spoken about on Thursday – not for a very long time. It will be one of these bills that is possibly rammed through the house with a limited number of people able to speak. But in talking to people in my electorate, I do not think I have spoken to anyone that thinks this is a great idea. People are not going to be taking their houses off the short-stay register, they are just going to be passing on these costs to other Victorians that want to get away and enjoy a holiday. I know we cannot speak a lot now about what is in the bill, so I am really hopeful that we do get an actual timeframe so that every member inside this chamber gets to speak about it, because, as the member for Brighton said, this is just another tax. You can sugar-coat it and call it what you want, but it is just another tax that is going to be dumped on not only the owners of these short-stay dwellings but also the rest of the Victorians who like to get away for a holiday, whether it be for two or three days or for a week. It is just going to be an extra cost.

I would love to be able to talk about energy. Why has the Premier got a vendetta against plumbers and gasfitters? Trying to shut down the gas industry here in Victoria is really affecting a lot of people. I am a former plumber myself. What have they got against us? We are trying to do the best we can and supply home owners in Victoria with a safe, cheap and reliable option for their energy needs. Unfortunately the government will not let us do that. They want to shut down and ban gas, and I think it is poor form that the Premier has got a vendetta against plumbers.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (12:44): I rise to speak in support of this fantastic and busy government business program. I note that those opposite are opposing this business program. We heard from the member for Brighton that essentially they are having a little tantrum because they did not get what they wanted. They want to consider the Short Stay Levy Bill 2024 in detail, and I think that is because maybe they do not realise, they have not been in touch, they do not understand or they have not been listening to the people who need affordable, accessible and safe housing. But those of us on this side certainly understand the pressure that people are under to get access to housing.

Just last week in my electorate I met with a man who is homeless and living behind our local library in his car because there is a shower there and a microwave. His car is not the only car behind our local library, and that is heartbreaking. So this government is doing heavy work, busy work, to make sure that we have housing available for people like Macca. Also, from speaking with the council for single mothers, we know how difficult it is for single mums at the moment in the rental market.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, this is a very narrow debate which is about the government business program. I ask you to bring the member back to that point.

The SPEAKER: Many members have strayed far from the government business program this morning. The Member for Yan Yean to continue, remembering that this is the government business program.

Lauren KATHAGE: My heart really belongs with this bill, Speaker, which is why I am dwelling on it, having spoken to a homeless man in my electorate last week. We heard from the member for Brighton '55, 55' – he is obsessed with the number 55. On this side of the house we are obsessed with women over 55 who are experiencing increased homelessness at a rate of knots. We have fantastic people like the member for Footscray, who is looking forward to the Lions village in West Footscray – affordable, accessible housing for women over 55, Vietnamese women in her electorate. This is the action we are talking about. This is the 55 that we are focusing on – getting women into housing, keeping women safe – and we will not apologise for that, because we are focused on what matters. We are focused on getting roofs over people's heads and on safety, as you can see with the Criminal Organisations Control Amendment Bill 2024.

The member for Morwell thinks that we should just set and forget with bills, but that is not how it works. We are actually busy and active in responding to changes and updates in our context as they happen. We are busy people. We have already had the Confiscation Amendment (Unexplained Wealth) Act 2024 and the major crime act as well.

It would be a crime if I did not mention that it is the last sitting week for a while. I cannot wait to stay away from the city; it is not always great being in here. MPs on this side of the house will certainly be busy in their electorates while the MPs on that side of the house will be busy testifying in court. I know which activity I would rather be involved in.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I do appreciate it is a wideranging debate and normally I would not call a point of order, but in this instance I would ask you to bring the member back to the government business program.

The SPEAKER: Members are reminded that this is the government business program and to speak to the government business program.

Lauren KATHAGE: On the government business program this week we also have the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, so we are going to hear a lot about the West Gate Tunnel, which is very exciting. It will create a smoother journey not just for locals but for freight as well and get those trucks off the road. We are also going to be talking about customised plates, and I thought those opposite would be taking that up quickly. I can see the member for Nepean with 'R2SERVE' as a great plate. Maybe the member for Hawthorn will have 'SOSUEME'. The member for Brighton could go for 'NASTY1'.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the member – I cannot recall the electorate – from the impartial speakers panel should come back to the government business program.

The SPEAKER: Member for Yan Yean, come back to the business program.

Lauren KATHAGE: It is a busy week. We have not been wasting time this morning like those opposite. Let us get on with it and deliver for the people of Victoria.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (12:49): I rise to oppose the government business program and support the opposition's position this week, because as has already been stated, we would like the opportunity to go into consideration in detail. Once again the government have decided that they have all the understanding needed and we do not need to actually be able to ask questions in detail on bills to be able to provide answers to the community.

The bill in question that we wanted consideration in detail for is the Short Stay Levy Bill 2024, or the short-stay tax bill. This is a bill that even the Treasurer had to make a special statement about, because he did not want to call it a tax, he wanted to hide it under the guise of a levy. But it is quite clearly the 55th tax, and the short-stay bill will be taxing mainly regional Victorians who are already hurting from the 55 taxes that this government has introduced and putting enormous pressure on the hip pockets of taxpayers, trying to fund the big black hole, the \$188 billion debt that has been created by this government, who have spent all their time trying to spin their techniques to the community about how they think they are looking after Victoria. What we have seen now are 55 taxes. This is the 55th tax that they have introduced, and the reason they have done that is because of their mismanagement.

The government have been spinning the story that this will assist the housing crisis. There is no doubt we are in a housing crisis, and that is because after 10 years in government the targets that they even set themselves have not been met – in fact dismally missed – and people are struggling. They will not provide and cannot provide any modelling or any evidence that this new tax will actually return properties to the rental market. In fact just today a lot of the evidence is becoming more clear that this will actually dismally fail in achieving that and what will happen is 50 per cent of this tax will come from regional Victorians but only 25 per cent of the tax will be returned to regional Victoria. The lack of fairness and the typical behaviour of this government to punish regional Victorians is something we have seen a long history of.

We have also got the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, a bill that will do a number of things, one of those being that it will make sure that trucks that are going on certain roads in the western suburbs will be photographed and have to provide evidence as to why they are on those roads. There are concerns around that bill from the industry, which I will outline when I contribute to that bill, and once again the industry feel that they have not had the consultation. They are unaware of how it will play out, and one thing the truck drivers are very concerned about is the amount of red tape that they will be dealing with on top of all the other issues that affect the transport industry that keep our state from being efficient – things like trying to get permits efficiently. Victoria fails dismally compared with the other states, and this is an imposition on truck drivers which is passed on to the cost of goods, which increases consumers' cost of living – another way that this government just do not understand the opportunity they have to streamline systems like the transport permit system to be able to get the cost of goods down. We are seeing a bill that does a number of things but does not go far enough. We have got the worst roads in the nation, and that is quite clear and evident in South-West Coast, where even today my constituents are telling me about a four-wheel drive that was damaged coming into the town of Portland because of the size of the potholes – in a road coming into a main town like Portland. That is how disgraceful the state of our roads has got.

The third bill we will be discussing is the Criminal Organisations Control Amendment Bill 2024, and it again shows the chaos of this government. This is the third time Labor have had a go at this bill, and they have clearly failed time and time again. Nothing from this bill has been achieved, and they are going to have another go. I am not sure it will work. We have seen how it has all been laid bare: their association with the corrupt unions and the cost of projects that has blown out, which is why we are seeing \$40 billion in cost overruns – because the government are in bed with the unions. It is quite clear that this is another go at trying to do something, but they fail time and time again.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (49): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson

Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Belinda Wilson

Noes (28): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Chris Crewther, Gabrielle de Vietri, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, Sam Hibbins, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, John Pesutto, Tim Read, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Ellen Sandell, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallance, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

Jewish New Year

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:59): As we approach Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, I want to wish all of the community a peaceful, joyful and happy new year, and particularly a safe return of the hostages that have been taken since 7 October. I also want to say that the Jewish community are really finding it tough at the moment, so if you know a Jew, please reach out to them and wish them well, and if you do not know one, I would be more than happy to introduce you to a member of the Jewish community at the moment, who are really finding it quite tough.

Rabbinical Council of Victoria

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (13:00): On Thursday the Rabbinical Council of Victoria will be visiting Parliament. We have some 40 synagogues in my electorate. They will be meeting with the Leader of the Opposition and me. I want to give a big shout-out to Rabbi Moshe and Dina Kahn from DaMinyan; Rabbi Philip Heilbrunn from Caulfield Hebrew Congregation; Rabbi Glasman from St Kilda Hebrew Congregation; Daniel Sarah Rabin from Caulfield Hebrew Congregation; Rabbi Mendy and Lifshy Ajzenszmidt from the Caulfield South Hebrew Congregation that celebrated 75 years of being around – it is a shul; Rabbi Shmuel Karnowsky from Central Synagogue; Rabbi Alex and Ahuva Tsykin from Brighton Hebrew Congregation; Rabbi Menachem Sabbach from North Eastern Jewish Centre; and Rachel Mihalovich, who is the executive director of the rabbinical council. Shana tovah u'metukah to you and all of your congregations.

State Emergency Service Glen Eira unit

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (13:01): Our SES does a fantastic job, and I want to particularly give a shout-out to Glen Eira SES – Danielle and the team. *(Time expired)*

Kalkallo electorate sporting achievements

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (13:01): Congratulations to Craigieburn local Lucas Mamonitis for taking home the silver medal in taekwondo at the KPNP Malaysian international championships, where he was representing Australia. Lucas was up against 20 other competitors in the 37-to-41-kilogram, 12-to-14-year-old cadet division, where he won in the first round before taking on Thailand and Malaysia's national champions in the second and third rounds, only narrowly missing out on the gold medal. These championships are huge, with over 2500 athletes competing from over 40 countries, so just making it to the championships is a huge achievement. Our community is proud of Lucas's efforts and cannot wait to see what he achieves next.

There have been many more recent sporting achievements in my electorate, with several Wallan Secondary students attending the northern metropolitan secondary track and field finals last week. Congratulations to Levi Tolevski, who came first in the 3-kilometre event in his age group, and Hayley Waddell for her second javelin. Cooper Nunn had an outstanding day, coming first in triple jump, hurdles and long jump and second in high jump, while Zac Nunn came home with first in discus and hurdles, second in javelin and high jump and third in long jump.

Finally, congratulations to the Hume Anglican Grammar senior mixed hockey team, who once again triumphed as state champions, with a terrific 4–0 win against Notre Dame College for their third straight victory in the School Sport Victoria state championships. Well done to all our local sports champions and to everyone who participated. Go well in your future sporting endeavours.

Morwell Bowling Club

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (13:02): The Morwell Bowling Club has been a much-loved community asset for over a century, and in many ways it has been a heartbeat of the town of Morwell. On 27 August we woke to the devastating news that the club had been destroyed by fire overnight. While the new bowling greens and function centre were undamaged in the blaze, the rest of the building was lost despite the best efforts of local CFA and FRV crews. More than 100 years worth of invaluable memorabilia has been lost, and it can never be replaced.

The club has been the hub of the community spirit, continually and generously sponsoring local sporting clubs and fire brigades and donating support to events across the Latrobe Valley. As we do in the valley, we are banding together to support the staff and the members of the Morwell Bowling Club, and one thing is for sure: they will rebuild. The club is hopeful it will be open for bowling, even though it will be a limited program, very, very soon.

Gippsland Business Awards

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (13:03): The Gippsland Business Awards last weekend was a terrific night full of well-deserved recognition for businesses across the region. The top honour of the evening was the Business of the Year, and that went to the valley's own Foundation Civil & Mining, run by Matt and Emma Weddell, who not only provide local jobs for local people but also put so much back into our community. Well done, Matt and Emma, on a huge effort.

Ashwood electorate school productions

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (13:04): We have been out and about for the last month in Ashwood, and school productions are the flavour of the month. What an incredible couple of weeks it has been. We kicked off with Huntingtower School's senior production of *The Adams Family*, which was nothing short of spooky, kooky and absolutely entertaining. I then grabbed my golden ticket and went over to the sweet success of Avila College and Mazenod College's wonderful rendition of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, which had us all wanting more. Mount Waverley North Primary School – the young people down there wowed us with a number of performances. For a start the preppies showed us that everything was just right in *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. In *Snow White* they taught us you should not eat an apple from a wicked queen, but I tell you the teachers need apples for all the work they have put into these shows, and the *Wizard of Oz* had us walking down the golden path.

In a particularly proud dad moment for me, Salesian College and Sacred Heart did a little production of Cole Porter's *Anything Goes*, and, with the indulgence of the house, my daughter was pretty good as Reno Sweeney, by the way. But the whole cast were fantastic and did an awesome job.

On Monday, just yesterday, Parkhill Primary School took us all on a colourful music journey through the eras, including Taylor Swift, with a performance of *Step Back in Time*, and I have got to say it is a bit shocking when the kids go through all the decades and you have been alive for all but one.

Gardiner Preschool

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (13:05): I want to praise the efforts of the parents and teachers of Gardiner Preschool in Glen Iris, a terrific community-run kinder which is much loved by local families. Sadly, its future is now under threat. The Uniting Church, which is the landlord, wants to close the kinder so it can sell off the land, presumably to property developers. The Uniting Church is:

A community of people following Jesus and God's call to live with love, grace and hope in the world.

Now, I am no theologian, but I do not think Jesus would be into flogging off kinders that are so loved and needed. I urge the Uniting Church to think again, work with Gardiner Preschool and allow this amazing kinder to continue to thrive.

Vaccinations

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (13:06): I am calling out the Allan Labor government for breaking their promise and putting a new immunisation tax on local councils and ratepayers. In 2022 the state government established Central Immunisation Records Victoria, a statewide cloud-based immunisation management system. When CIRV was rolled out councils were guaranteed:

The program, eLearning modules, ongoing support and maintenance, and text messages will remain free of charge throughout the lifecycle of the platform.

But on 31 July this year Stonnington council received a letter from the Department of Health requiring it to pay a base fee of \$6000 a year plus \$2 for each immunisation. A clear broken promise, another new Labor tax, attacking councils immunising kids – could this government sink any lower?

Severe weather event

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (13:07): Over the course of the past two weeks Victoria has seen more significant wind events and parts of the Dandenong Ranges were severely hit by high gusts several times. Many of us in the hills lost a lot of sleep over the worst of those nights, and Emerald SES received more than 480 calls over the 12-day period of severe winds. To all our emergency services volunteers, who worked tirelessly over the past fortnight, including Father's Day, I know I speak for everyone across the hills when I say thank you for keeping our roads safe and our damaged properties secure. To the lineys from AusNet, who repaired the lines around the clock as quickly as conditions would allow, sincerest thanks too.

Monbulk electorate schools

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (13:07): I recently had the pleasure of welcoming Premier Allan to the Monbulk electorate, where we visited two great schools undergoing significant building upgrades. Eastern Ranges School in Ferntree Gully is wrapping up its \$5.7 million refurbishment project. The upgrades to the learn-to-play room, the senior wing and admin areas are ahead of schedule and will be complete in time for term 4. It is looking marvellous.

We then visited The Patch Primary School, where a fabulous \$6.4 million modernisation project is taking shape. This project will transform the school by upgrading the main classroom wing, including the library, admin area and classrooms, and we are building a new learning hub with toilets and an art centre with additional facilities.

Whilst a good teacher can teach under a tree, our students thrive when they are in environments they can be proud of. Great teachers and students deserve world-class facilities. It was wonderful to have the Premier visit, and I look forward to welcoming her back to see these projects in their completed glory.

Belfast Aquatics

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (13:08): Belfast Aquatics Port Fairy swimming pool is a vital resource for the health and wellbeing of our community, offering a warm, accessible and inclusive environment that provides for all ages and abilities. The pool, located in Port Fairy, was initially funded by the local community. It has many unique services that are not able to be found in surrounding areas and centres, like the AquaZone in Warrnambool. Those services include disability access, which provides relief for those with chronic pain or mobility issues, and the warm, balmy 31-degree water is ideal for those needing rehabilitation following injury, illness or surgery. The pool is run by a committee of volunteers, who do a fantastic job and have continued to do so for over 17 years. While the pool currently receives funding from the Moyne shire, it is largely reliant on grants and support

from its members. Despite the centre's best efforts, the pool will face some financial challenges over the next several months, so we must continue to support our dedicated volunteers through this time and thank them for their efforts in keeping the facility operational.

Severe weather event

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (13:09): I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all our emergency services volunteers, particularly in South-West Coast, who have worked tirelessly over the past few weeks as a result of the fierce winds that battered Victoria recently. Victoria's SES received more than 4000 requests for assistance over the 24-hour period, with the majority of these calls being made for fallen trees and building damage. This was an all-agencies response, so thank you to everyone who assisted our communities throughout this time.

Australian Chaldean Family Welfare

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (13:10): Congratulations to Dalal Sleiman and Australian Chaldean Family Welfare for hosting yet another spectacular community celebration this weekend, which I was delighted to attend alongside Hume city councillor Joseph Haweil. ACFW works tirelessly on behalf of Assyrian Chaldean Australians, and Saturday's celebration brought together many hundreds from across the north, as well as many different cultural traditions, for a joyful and belated celebration of Father's Day and the Assyrian-Chaldean New Year.

Roxburgh Park Football Netball Club

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (13:10): We are at the pointy end of the season in the Essendon District Football League, with finals underway across the north-west. As a proud sponsor of Roxburgh Park Football Netball Club I want to acknowledge the fantastic leadership of president Tom Mason across the past three seasons and his immense contribution to the club and its community. Tom has announced that he is stepping down at the end of the 2024 season. Having worked with Tom to secure funding for a major upgrade of facilities at Lakeside reserve and seeing his incredible impact on the wellbeing of all associated with the Magpies on and off the park, I want to sincerely thank Tom for his contribution and wish him and his family the best in the next stage of their journey.

Greenvale Syrian community

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (13:11): Thank you to Norma and Rahaf and all the ladies of Zenobia for their hard work in hosting such a successful Syrian lammeh, or gathering, last week, which I was delighted to join with the members for Thomastown and Preston. A proud and strong community which has overcome so much hardship to establish a new home in Australia, the women of Zenobia are so generous in sharing their often-ancient cultural, artistic, musical and culinary Syrian traditions. They make such an immense contribution to our community in Greenvale and beyond.

Yarrawonga Friends in Common

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (13:11): I want to make a shout-out to Friends in Common in Yarrawonga. Friends in Common raise money throughout the year to support locals fighting the big C. Cancer is a curse on many local families, and the constant travel to the Albury cancer centre or Peter Mac makes it even more arduous. Friends in Common help in their own way to make respite available for sufferers, and I always throw in a few dollars wherever possible to help out their efforts. Thanks a million, Friends in Common.

Ovens & King Football Netball League

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (13:12): It is local footy and netball finals time of the year again. Spring is in the air and the liniment oil is on the biceps. We know local footy and netball clubs are the glue to our communities, but I especially want to thank the umpires, people like Jack Norris, who do a wonderful job in northern Victoria, and also the trainers and the officials who keep the games going.

Without your dedication and commitment, the rest is history. Best of luck to all the teams in this week's Ovens & King grand finals. You have earned a shot at the title. Put your best foot forward.

King Valley rubbish dumping

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (13:12): I was recently approached by the Edi Black Range Landcare group from out at the King Valley. They are extremely concerned about the level of rubbish dumping that is going on near what is known locally as the gravel pit. We love tourists, we love them coming to our region and we share everything that we have, but we respectfully ask the Minister for Environment to help us with signage and deterrent notices about dumping rubbish illegally, to stop these actions in their tracks.

Ovens Valley electorate police resources

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (13:12): Thanks to the Cobram Neighbourhood Watch team for their discussion last week about 24-hour policing in the Moira shire. Neither Cobram nor Yarrawonga has a 24-hour police station, and it is time the Victorian government gave us our fair share of resources. The crooks know when the police have gone home, and we need 24-hour support.

Bayswater electorate schools

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (13:13): I want to give a shout-out and say thank you to the hundreds of students in primary schools right across my electorate who put in writing entries for my competition. Every year I have run it since being a member of Parliament. Splendid entries – they get better and better every year. I want to give an even bigger shout-out to the winners from each and every single school. To James in grade 3 and Zara in grade 5 from Bayswater Primary, to Mia in grade 3 and Georgia in grade 4 from Boronia Heights Primary, to Kasey in grade 3 and Mackenzie in grade 6 from Templeton Primary, to Brodie in grade 5 and Gabriella in grade 5 from Regency Park Primary, to Abik in grade 5 from Kent Park Primary, to Lexi in grade 3 and John in grade 6 at St Luke's primary, to Pehal in grade 6 and Aayan in grade 5/6 at St Joseph's Primary, to Remi in grade 2/3 and Millie in grade 5/6 at Boronia K–12 College and to Eli in grade 6 and Kallista in grade 6 at The Basin Primary: well done to all of you for being the category winners in prep to grade 3 and grade 4 to grade 6. Wonderful entries again, so thank you to all of you.

Wantirna College

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (13:14): I would also like to give a quick shout-out for the fantastic construction work happening at Wantirna College. I drove past recently, and the frames are up. It is very exciting. It is a huge piece of construction, the biggest school project undertaken since I was elected as the member for Bayswater. There is a double-court, competition-grade gym; basketball and drama facilities, performing arts, staff amenities – the whole kit and caboodle. It is going to be fantastic. It is part of the over \$90 million of school infrastructure since I was elected as the member for Bayswater as part of a Labor government.

Suburban Rail Loop

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (13:14): Last Thursday I hosted a community forum to discuss the impact of Labor's Suburban Rail Loop in my community, and I am pleased to report that over 300 local residents attended to ask questions and to voice their concerns. Unlike Labor's faux SRL consultation sessions, where locals were often asked to place a coloured sticker on their preferred drawing, I was pleased to host an old-school town hall meeting where community members were encouraged to ask and say whatever they liked.

Members of my community never asked for an SRL, and they certainly did not ask for the lasting and negative impacts it will have on the community. People are worried, scared and distressed. Some fear their homes will be compulsorily acquired with compensation not meeting their property's true value. Others are alarmed by the prospect of 18-storey-high residential towers, which would strip away the

unique charm and character of our community, not to mention cause increased traffic congestion, overcrowding in parks and strain on local facilities.

One resident was even in tears at the thought of waking up to dust on her balcony from the removal of the 6000 cubic metres of category A waste that is required to be removed from the Sir William Fry Reserve for the project to proceed. Unanimously those who attended the community forum want Labor's SRL to be paused, for the government to publicly release the contracts they have signed and for the Allan Labor government to prioritise people over vanity projects such as this. On behalf of my community, I urge Premier Allan and Labor ministers to heed this message: pause the Suburban Rail Loop; prioritise people first.

Victoria University mental health initiative

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (13:16): Good mental health has been prioritised in East Werribee, with a joint venture from Headspace, Orygen and Victoria University on their East Werribee campus now open. The federal Minister for Education Jason Clare launched it, and I would like to thank all those involved in getting this project up and running. Mark Brown from the Bunurong Land Council did an extraordinary welcome to country, as he always does; we always learn something new about our Aboriginal brothers and sisters through that process. Jason Trethowan from Headspace gave a wonderful speech. Professor Patrick McGorry, former Australian of the Year – and rightly so – talked about the benefits to our community, and the Honourable Steve Bracks, the chancellor, alongside Victoria University vice-chancellor Adam Shoemaker and many other dignitaries, joined us. The wonderful and extraordinary MCs Pranav Anup and Sharla Eddleston brought the day together. Congratulations to all involved. It is a great partnership which will help those people who are suffering from poor mental health across our community.

Point Cook electorate community hubs

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (13:17): Last Sunday I was at Laverton Bowling Club and I bowled the jack, which is before the first bowl. I thank president Doreen, secretary Jill and assistant secretaries Marie and Brian for all their efforts in getting the new greens up and rolling.

I also had the pleasure of joining the Point Cook community hub recently on their cook, chat and learn. I took home some wonderful cakes. I enjoyed it very much. Thank you to them for all the work that they do.

Land Forces International Land Defence Exposition

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (13:17): Tomorrow the world's top weapons companies will arrive in Melbourne for the Land Forces weapons expo. This three-day weapons trade fair is only made possible because of one primary sponsor: the Victorian Labor government. This event brings together global weapons manufacturers to make deals and sell their bombs and munitions. It will include Elbit Systems, the largest Israeli weapons manufacturer – Elbit, whose weapons have been used by the Israeli military to kill tens of thousands of Palestinian children, men and women over the last 11 months; Elbit, who make cluster bombs, bombs designed to break into smaller bombs that can last for years before they are found, often by children, and then explode in their faces; Elbit, the company that made white phosphorus designed to burn human flesh off the bone.

Labor is not only sponsoring this weapons expo but they are bringing in thousands of extra police from interstate, police with horses and rubber bullets, to dissuade community members who might want to protest against this trade fair for war machines. And let us be clear: the peaceful protesters standing up against war are not the problem here. There is something deeply wrong when all the resources of the state, police and even military helicopters are being used to escort tanks through the streets of Melbourne to the convention centre. There is something deeply wrong when police are being used to defend the rights of multinational weapons corporations to make profits rather than defending the people on the streets, the community members, who are saying no to war. The people of Melbourne do not support profiteering from war.

John 'Jack' Hallowell

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (13:19): I am sad to say that a good friend and long-time Altona activist passed away on 13 August: John Hallowell, better known as Jack to his friends and family. I had the great pleasure of meeting both Jack and his beautiful wife Eveline at my first Altona ALP branch meeting. Jack was a staunch Labor man – as staunch as they come – and you always knew that Jack would have your back. He was a staunch Labor member for 34 years, and for 25 of those years he was the secretary of the Altona ALP branch. I must admit Jack taught me everything I knew when I was his deputy secretary at the branch. Jack worked tirelessly on many election campaigns, both state and federal. Jack was in every way a true believer.

Jack was also a keen golfer at the Koorringal Golf Club, where he was a member until recently. He was always supportive of young players coming through, and for many years he volunteered, driving the bus around to many tournaments throughout Victoria. He was president of the Truganina Explosives Reserve Preservation Society for many years and was pivotal in ensuring that the historical site in Altona was preserved for future generations. Jack and his late wife Evie volunteered many hours at the St George's residential aged care facility in Altona Meadows, helping and looking after residents. Jack eventually found himself living there once he could no longer live alone in his family home, and this is where I last visited Jack.

Jack lived a good and full life, was a mentor and supporter and a good friend to all who knew him. He is now reunited with Eveline. May they rest together in eternal peace. When John Williamson penned *True Blue* I am sure that he had Jack in mind.

Water safety

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (13:20): The Mornington Peninsula is in the grips of a tragic crisis. As recently as just over a week ago we saw the drowning death of a man in Rye, and this adds to the growing list of incidents of this kind over the peninsula in recent months. Promising rugby player Jona Kinivuwei was swept away in a deadly rip at Rye in February, there was another drowning off Rye Pier on 5 January and late last year a kayaker tragically passed away near Rosebud Pier. Last summer we saw the highest drowning death toll in over two decades, and despite over 800 lives being saved through the rescue efforts of our Victorian lifesavers – and I thank them very much – we still lost 27 lives last summer alone.

There can be no doubt that a lack of signage and awareness has contributed to these devastating events. They impact families locally and right across our state. We need to be committed to doing something about this issue. Across the country we see the use of life-saving flotation rings near waters, and they have helped mitigate some of the risks. In Victoria we have to do everything we can to avoid tragedies like these in the future and encourage safe and responsible use of our beaches and our waterways. I hope the minister will join me this Friday when I meet with local stakeholders and heroes who have been on the front line of saving lives and building solutions to these challenges. It is time to rise above politics, which I know in this place is rare, and work together to save lives.

Albert Park College

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (13:22): I want to do a shout-out to Albert Park College for *High School Musical*.

The cast: Lily Hall, Leif Weingott, Nina Buchler, Max Vucic, Evie McGinley, Andy Stamatakis, Joshua Johnston, Tallula Bogusz, Ben Jones, Ivy Glenfield, Mischa Jefferies, Julien Brown-Paquier and Olivia Harvey. Then we have the senior ensemble: Beatriz White, Hannah Lawrence, Lav Smith, Madeline Lawson, Natalia Vucic, Saskia Chatfield, Scarlet Grieve, Noah Esse, Zara Jacobson, Natalie Jaensch, Sabrina Mott, Claire Seare, Lulu Zamora Thornton, Matisse Turner, Stella Webb and Miranda Wilde. Then we have the featured dancers: Agnes Dapper, Audrey Waring, Eliza Voss, Indigo Brown, Mina Annan, Oexia Page-Riniti, Scarlett Marshall, Eden Keith, Jack Ryan, Aria Black and Sophie Kvatsky. Then we have the junior ensemble: Anna Lobley, Baxter Zwiers, Claire Goh,

Ella Clarke, Elsa McKerrow, Gopikaa Sonthalia, Lila Chatfield, Madhu Chheda, Mathilde Finlay, Polly Lang-Farrall, Salome Umbach, Ditya Chaudhary, Audrey Perkin and Lola Pagh. Then we have the band: Owen Wilkins, Matilda Lester, Will Lawrence, Lucy Ellenberger, Alex Hansen, Asha Fonteyne, Nathaniel Taylor, Vivienne Van Horne and Dante Plunkett Pirassopoulos. And finally we have the creative team, crew and others.

It was absolutely fantastic. They absolutely smashed it. I could not even imagine that you could say it was amateur; it was absolutely not. It was wonderful. I am so glad. They should keep punching these wonderful musicals out.

Pascoe Vale Community Centre

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (13:23): On 9 September – yesterday – I was delighted to join the Minister for Children to officially open the new and expanded Pascoe Vale Community Centre kindergarten and maternal and child health centre on Prospect Street, just next to the Pascoe Vale outdoor pools, all made possible via a major \$1.5 million Victorian Labor government investment that I was so happy to have secured. The new and improved facilities will improve services for local families through 59 early childhood and kinder places for local children, which is an extra 33 places on what was previously the case; expanded classrooms and learning spaces; improved outdoor learning and play areas; new staff office spaces, rest rooms and amenities; and enhanced maternal health and wellbeing consulting spaces. Along with the rollout of free kinder for three- and four-year-olds, saving families \$2500, this is all part of our \$10.7 million investment to upgrade 11 local kinders.

Coburg West Primary School

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (13:24): Recently I have also had the pleasure to welcome many grade 5s and grade 6s from Coburg West Primary School, my old primary school, here to Parliament House. Along with answering many of their curious questions about the functions of the Parliament and the chamber, it was also very humbling to talk to students about my journey from Reynard Street to Spring Street and how all students from Coburg West too can dream, strive and work hard to help make a contribution to our community through their life and career journeys.

On 4 September it was also a pleasure to visit Coburg West to celebrate their Italian culture day, a day full of fun-filled Italian heritage dress-ups, singing, speaking, performances, artworks and even a Ferrari display. Commendations to principal Mark Colagrande, Italian teachers Marie Peterson, Nadia Di Vincenzo and the entire school community for a beautiful celebration. I also spoke about the quattroceto dollari bonus per gli scuoli e studenti – the \$400 school bonus.

Bentleigh Secondary College

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (13:25): Back in June I had the pleasure of seeing Bentleigh Secondary College's production of *Freaky Friday*, and you all know what that means – congratulations to everyone involved. To the cast: Eboni Crawford, Leela Toth, James Downs, Gabe Yianni, Stanley Khmelevski, Scarlett Moss, Madison Bates, Georgie Guengerich, Madeline Gough, Luca Coombs, Charlie Byrne, Bella Schneider, Nicola Schneider, Reuben Neal, Milly Nankervis, Blake Cunningham, Nathan Joseph, Kaan Bakanyildiz, Billy Rintoul, Cisco Biffin, Ariel Young, Jacquilyn Demirtzis, Matteo Maxwell, Alison Richards, Mia Workman, Erin Wheelan and Asha Ring. To the chorus: Tiana Bray; Violet Cunningham; Charlotte Fitzgerald, who was also in the band; Will Hardy; Skylah Hardwick; Louisa Jones; Jaya Mor; Teagan Sealby; Megan Smith; Liam Smith; Zoe Vines; and Alana Wajnberg. To the band: Noah Clifford; Hugh Dellar; Jack Ellis; Cameron Gabler; Hugo Heppingstone; Timothy Hill, who also helped backstage; Matthew Yianni; Evie Hodges; James Lee; Peter McNair; Olivia Murphy; Matthew Portelli; Tim Rex; and Annie Stone. And finally to the backstage team: Ruby Blundell, Issy Butcher, Oscar Green, Kate Hulme, Sahara Hurlstone De-Har, Many Lin, Leia Marwick, Zara McMahon and Talia Newnham.

It was really a pleasure recently to join the Premier at Bentleigh Secondary College to tour the new performing arts centre. It is fantastic to see it nearly complete. It is going to be a state-of-the-art theatre, and it is fitting that an outstanding school like Bentleigh Secondary College has such a facility.

Lara Primary School

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (13:26): We have the most incredible schools in the Lara electorate, and Lara Primary School is no exception. I recently had a wonderful visit to Lara Primary. School captains Kayden Sidnam and Skylah Helps did a phenomenal job of taking me on a tour of their school and chatting to me about all the great things they are learning about at Lara. I even had a cuddle with their school pet Scar, the bearded dragon. I was particularly impressed by the work they are doing on the student representative council. Kayden and Skylah explained to me how the SRC has been fundraising to improve some of the amenities around their school. They have almost finished a project to build new school bike racks and a shelter to cover the area. A lot of work has gone into this project, including a survey of students to understand how many students ride their bikes to school to know what capacity was needed before works began. The next project they are focusing on will be a quiet space in the playground for students who find the noise a bit overwhelming. The leadership and thoughtfulness of Kayden, Skylah and their classmates will leave a great legacy for future students at Lara Primary. Once again, thank you to Kayden and Skylah and principal Toni Scott for having me at your wonderful school.

State Emergency Service Corio unit

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (13:27): I want to thank the members of the Corio SES for their outstanding work in responding to incidents and keeping the Lara community safe. The Corio SES is one of the busiest in the state, and they are often the first responders on the scene at major road accidents. In recent days they have been responding to calls resulting from wind and storm damage and working around the clock to protect and secure people's homes and local roads. I cannot thank them enough for everything that they do to keep our community safe.

Cranbourne Football Netball Club

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (13:28): On Sunday I was really very pleased to visit the Cranbourne Football Club all-abilities presentation day. It was ably led by Julie Cass, who is one of the real diamonds of Cranbourne. We cannot go without people who support our sports clubs, but particularly this club that makes such a big contribution. I would like to thank Paul Garrett as well for always bringing me in and inviting me to contribute.

Onam festival

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (13:28): Happy Onam. I was really very pleased to be able to join the Cranbourne Malayalee Community Onam festival last week. The festivities happened at Arthur Wren Hall, the music was amazing, the dancing was spectacular. I would also like to thank Casey Malayalee for their extraordinary hospitality and say happy Onam to the Casey Malayalee community. On Saturday 31 August I was able to visit and experience the incredibly solemn ceremony of the lighting of the candles. I was there with the member for Narre Warren South and the member for Berwick, so that was terrific. I am very much looking forward to visiting Kerala, God's own country, later this year.

Cranbourne mosque

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (13:29): I would also like to say how grateful I was to join with the member for Narre Warren North at the Cranbourne mosque last week. As always, the hospitality was extraordinary, but I am also very grateful for the friendship.

*Bills***Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024***Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Melissa Horne:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (13:30): I am pleased to rise and be welcomed to speak on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I am happy to go to some of the detail of the bill throughout my contribution and also talk more broadly about some of the challenges we are facing on roads issues at the moment. This bill is something of an omnibus bill, with a number of different road and road safety aspects to it, notably the introduction of no-truck zone cameras and the legal framework for those cameras to operate in the inner west. I am informed that there is no truth to the rumour that internally this bill is known as the save Katie bill, but I am pleased that it will support both the minister at the table, as the member for Williamstown, and the member for Footscray, who will make an excellent shadow minister one day, I am very pleased to indicate. I do know this legislation is very important to the member for Footscray and probably to the member for Williamstown and I think maybe even to the member for Tarneit – no, not quite. The member for Laverton does not need any help. She is already in the safest seat in the state, so we know that she does not need any assistance. This aspect of the bill has been coming for a long time as there has been a long-time concern about trucks in the inner west, and this legislation provides the framework, as I said, for new no-truck zone cameras.

The legislation also clarifies the arrangements around the digital driver licence, which I know has been embraced by Victorians. It has been somewhat belated. I think South Australia introduced digital driver licences in 2019, and – here we are – they were introduced in Victoria in May this year. I understand from the government announcements that there have been over 1 million Victorians taking up the opportunity – including this little black duck; I have added the digital drivers licence to my phone in recent months. I am sure people are enjoying the freedom and the security that it gives them when driving just to have that. This legislation gives some clarity around that. I must say when I first read that this is to ensure that digital drivers licences are effectively a legal document, it was a little bit concerning that they had been operating since May and yet this bill was just coming through. However, it is clear the digital licences are simply a function of your hard copy, your plastic licence, and are actually linked directly to it in real time. So if those licences are cancelled, suspended or otherwise dealt with, that will appear on the digital drivers licence too.

There are other parts to this legislation. There are some amendments to custom numberplate legislation which will allow for the operator of the VicRoads joint venture to either charge an up-front fee or a periodic fee for custom plates, and what this legislation does is allow them to do one or to do both if they choose to. Also there is the introduction of a framework to allow the charging of fees for transfer of custom plates, which to be honest I could have taken issue with in that it is potentially another slug on Victorians. We do not know, though, what the transfer fees will be. The government has not given any indication, certainly not in this bill, as to what the transfer fees might be. I was a little bit surprised to get some information from the minister's office that there are something like 14,000 transfers of custom plates every year and I think about 250,000 registrations of custom plates in Victoria every year. So there is a considerable number, and I am sure the joint venture partners will be looking to see what they can monetise out of this bill.

Finally, there are a couple of other minor changes, some with respect to the wording of disability access permits and also some changes to the way fines are dealt with, in particular that fines and associated costs are refunded if a person has been granted an extension of time to deal with an infringement notice. So not just the fine itself; if you have been given an extension of time, you will

actually also be refunded any additional charges that you might have incurred on that. That applies to a number of different pieces of legislation, which again, we have no issue with.

As I said, the introduction of no-truck zones itself was facilitated by legislation a number of years ago. This is particularly for the inner west and the issue of trucks, particularly container trucks, running to and from the Port of Melbourne, and historically they have run through some of those seats – sorry, streets; Freudian slip there – in the inner west. They also run through seats, notably the member for Footscray's and the member for Williamstown's. Those no-truck zones have been introduced, and what this legislation does is actually provide the framework for the introduction of no-truck zone cameras. There are a number of things that are still to be cleared with that. I understand these cameras will be placed on existing road infrastructure where possible, whether that is traffic lights or other signage, and they will be able to show things instantly to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, which will be the police, if you like, in respect of these no-truck zones. They have been that for some time, but one of the challenges has been that they have literally physically had to be there to catch trucks in the act of going through these no-truck zones. These cameras will make that a far more efficient process.

As a result, this aspect of the bill is supported by the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group (MTAG), who I reached out to about this. They do have some other concerns, though, as do some of the freight operators with respect to how this will actually operate in practice. I understand from the minister's office we will have business rules implemented as to how these cameras will actually work, but there are questions that need to be clarified on those rules. That is exactly how it will work. There are exemptions for those operating in prescribed circumstances. That of course will allow trucks to go through those streets that are designated no-truck zones if they have a legitimate reason for being in those streets. Whether they operate from a premises in those areas, whether it is for supermarket deliveries or whether it is a truck delivering equipment or materials to a building site, for example, they will be able to do so. The question I guess, though, is: how will that actually operate? One of the issues from the freight sector of course is that they do not want a situation where they have to be constantly proving why a truck was in a certain location. I would hope that that would be done automatically and that through whatever means possible the regulator will know 'Okay, this truck is there because it's a supermarket truck delivering,' or 'This truck is there because its depot is in this location and it has to go through that zone.' What we do not want to see is the transport operators having to be constantly responding to infringement notices, for example, and saying, 'No, this is the reason why that truck was there.'

Container Transport Alliance Australia is also keen to ensure that there is a strong communications campaign for this legislation – not just for the industry and truck drivers but for the wider community and residents in the inner west as well. The government does like to say that there is a truck ban and that there are going to be no trucks, but in fact there will be trucks. There will still be trucks in parts of the inner west.

Melissa Horne interjected.

Danny O'BRIEN: They will still be going in different parts. You are not actually getting rid of trucks altogether; they are just going to different locations.

The intention of this legislation is that they will be going through the West Gate Tunnel, and that is an important point because of course this legislation does not take effect until the West Gate Tunnel is open. But a communications campaign is needed there because, as I understand it, the cameras indeed will specifically be on a set number of streets, being Francis Street, Buckley Street, Moore Street, Hudsons Road, Somerville Road and Blackshaws Road, in various different suburbs in the inner west.

And there will be some areas that will not; I think Williamstown Road is one that MTAG has raised concern about. There are also concerns about the location of tolling points on the West Gate Freeway and what that will mean with respect to Millers Road and others in the area. But it is not something

that we oppose, that these cameras will come in and enforce the no-truck zones; indeed I do not believe we opposed the introduction of the no-truck zones, or at least the legislation that allowed them, back in 2019, I think it was.

As I said, MTAG, the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group, are anxious that the proposed tolling points for the West Gate Tunnel Project will funnel more traffic onto Williamstown Road and also have raised a concern with me that although this will take trucks off the road, their concern remains about filtration on West Gate Tunnel vent stacks. They remain concerned that diesel pollution will continue in the inner west. In their opinion, even though the trucks might be off those roads, they will still be running through the West Gate Tunnel and the fumes will come up those stacks.

I said there are issues from other agencies. The Victorian Transport Association wants to see some flexibility to allow trucks to still go through these roads in the event of an emergency or significant traffic disruption. Congestion in itself I do not think is something about which we can say, 'Okay, it's congested, so you can go back through the no-truck zones.' I am sure the member for Footscray would not support that. But there does need to be a commonsense response to when there is an emergency, and I understand that that will be undertaken through powers for police to be able to take a commonsense approach. If there is an emergency, if the tunnel is blocked, then there will be an opportunity for trucks to divert back where they have historically gone. That might be something that government members might give some confirmation of, that discretion that emergency services have in the event of an emergency, because we certainly do not want to see our transport operators unnecessarily fined in the event that they do not have an alternative to taking the West Gate Tunnel.

I did hear some 'Hear, hears' when I mentioned the West Gate Tunnel before from those opposite, because of course they are very proud of it.

Mathew Hilakari: Hear, hear!

Danny O'BRIEN: There are some 'Hear, hears' there now. Thank you very much, member for Point Cook. But some of us have been around long enough to remember the genesis of this. I am sure it will be a beautiful, wonderful project, but I do recall as a newly elected MP hearing the then opposition leader Mr Andrews saying that the West Gate distributor, which was a Labor policy at the time before the 2014 election, was shovel-ready. Of course they came to government with this shovel-ready project that was going to cost \$500 million and was going to get the trucks off the roads in the inner west. Then they came across a group called Transurban, who said, 'Have we got a deal for you.' Probably those of us on this side could say that, no, we think Transurban came to the government and said, 'We've got a deal for us.' And yet the government still bought it and did the deal on what is now the West Gate Tunnel Project, whacking additional tolls on CityLink as part of the compensation for it. So – and indeed this was a part of the debate in 2019 – motorists on CityLink in the south-eastern suburbs have been paying for the West Gate Tunnel for some time now through the increased tolls in that area in compensation for the West Gate Tunnel, the shovel-ready project, which is still not open 10 years later. We know the history of this project – the cost blowouts, the issues with toxic soil and the delays – so I am sure that government members will be very anxious not only to get this legislation through but to see this tunnel actually delivered.

I will move on to other parts, because I think I have said enough about the future shadow minister, the member for Footscray and her opportunities there. The other aspect of this legislation is the digital drivers licence, and that is something that, as I said, has been embraced. Division 5 in part 2 of the bill basically gives legal authority to the introduction of the digital drivers licence. There are a number of aspects to that. It introduces definitions for digital drivers licences and learner permits, and I note that P-plates and learner permits are coming. I believe this summer they will be made available in a digital format. This bill does allow that, whilst for the drivers licences themselves this is effectively retrospective.

The bill allows the secretary to approve the software for the purpose of delivering digital licences, and currently this is either the Service Victoria app or the VicRoads app. I might say from my own experience there probably could be some change to the wording on the VicRoads website. It says 'Download the VicRoads app' first, but then there is something after that that says 'or you can do it on the Service Victoria app'. Now, most of us post COVID have already got the Service Victoria app on our phones. You do not need to get the VicRoads app if you choose not to. I must say it was pretty straightforward using the Service Victoria app to get the licence on my phone. This bill gives that approval to the secretary to do that.

It also allows the driver to display the digital drivers licence by showing it to a police officer or other authorised officer and clarifies probably a question that many are asking – that is, you are not required to hand over an electronic device that holds your digital licence to a police officer or other authorised officer. I know probably it is an issue of concern for some people: do I have to give it to them? Are they going to take it away to the police car to check? None of that is required under the bill as long as you show it and it is easily visible to the officer.

The bill does give the government power to confiscate, destroy, copy or check the validity of a digital drivers licence, which does make you wonder how they do that physically, but I am told this is done in practice via the registry database. Effectively, as I said earlier, the digital licence is linked directly to your hard-copy licence, if you like, and as a result the department can make changes to those, which are updated in real time on the digital drivers licence. On that point, though, it is important to note that even if your licence is suspended or cancelled you will still be able to use your digital licence for the purposes of identification – for example, for proving age or identity. In other parts of this bill it allows the digital drivers licence to effectively mirror the rules for physical driver licences as well, so there is no particular issue with that. As I said, Victorians have embraced that.

There is a question that I have asked the government through the preparation of this bill about what this legislation means for people using a digital licence interstate. Now, I note that this legislation recognises interstate and indeed overseas digital licences in Victoria for the purposes of authorised officers or enforcement, but we cannot impose on other states to recognise ours. That is a question that is probably still to be answered for the public, as to if you are interstate and you want to use your digital licence, will it be recognised by interstate authorities? I have had examples of people who have not been able to use it for certain purposes in other parts of the country and have been frustrated by that. I guess the advice is to take your physical licence or other ID with you if you are going interstate until this is sorted out. I understand this is being addressed at a national level, but unfortunately this Parliament cannot legislate for other states. It would probably be good if we could – we might do them a favour – but that is the situation at the moment.

I will just touch on the other changes in the legislation. The custom numberplate fee changes: there are, as I said earlier, around 250,000 custom numberplates sold a year – that has certainly been the case on average over the past five years – but there are around 1.35 million custom numberplates in Victoria, so it is a significant number. As I said, there are 14,000 transfers each year, so this legislation introduces the power for the government to charge a transfer fee for people transferring custom numberplates between different vehicles or different drivers or registered drivers and allows the VicRoads licensing and registration joint venture partnership, otherwise known as the privatisation arrangement, to either charge an up-front fee for a custom numberplate, an ongoing periodical fee or indeed both; in fact this legislation is allowing both to occur. That is a bit of a concern, I have got to say, as to what sorts of charges that might mean for Victorians seeking to get custom numberplates. I guess time will tell, because the legislation does not give us any indication of what those charges may be, what the quantum may be, or indeed what the quantum of transfer fees may be, so we will see. There are, as I said, some other minor changes around wording and terminology with respect to accessibility permits and also some changes to fine arrangements, but they are minor in content.

I cannot let the opportunity go, though, to talk about our roads more broadly and our roads and road safety legislation. Those trucks that are going through the inner-west zone, now having to avoid new

no-truck zones, are also driving all around the state, and we have seen over a number of years now a massive deterioration in the quality of our roads. This has come about in large part due to the reductions in spending over the last few years, and I can go back to the 2021 budget, where there was a road asset management spend of \$807 million. Now, that dropped last year to \$441 million on the actual road asset management figure, and it has gone up this year to \$680 million. That is still 16 per cent less than it was five years ago. The minister will say, 'That's rubbish; read the fine print.' Well, there is fine print that indicates that there is a total figure – and I heard the Premier use it yesterday, so I am pleased to see the Premier is keeping an eye on the road asset management budget line item – of \$964 million in total, including flood-related works.

What we have seen from this government, though – and absolutely we need to have spending on floods – is a misrepresentation of the situation. Constantly when we ask, when Victorians ask and when media ask about the state of our roads we are told that they have deteriorated because we have had some wet years. Well, the reality is we have had many, many wet years over the decades. Indeed if you look at the data available through the Bureau of Meteorology, there is no indication whatsoever that it has been any more wet over the last four or five years than it was, for example, in 2010–11, when we had floods in this state. There is no question that there were bad floods, in the north of the state particularly, in 2022 and that they caused a significant amount of damage to the roads, but to suggest that the potholes, the rutting and the cracking that is occurring right across the state is because of the wet weather is just wrong.

Indeed the government gave some figures to Parliament a few months ago when it comes to road resurfacing contracts. Road resurfacing is not fixing potholes, it is not fixing damaged roads, but it is preventative maintenance. You need to do road resurfacing to seal the road to stop water getting in. What happens when water gets in is it washes away the foundations of the road. As trucks and cars go over it, that pushes those foundations out, and what you end up with are potholes, so it is really crucial that you have an ongoing process. I have had discussions with the secretary of the department for about the last five years on this, and it is generally agreed, including by the secretary of the department, that as a principle you should try and do resurfacing across about 8 per cent of the network every year, which would mean that over a period of 12 or 13 years you will do the entire network. That has not been happening in the last few years, and indeed the information that was given by the government to this Parliament was that in 2022–23 contracts for road resurfacing totalled \$201.4 million but in 2023–24 that dropped to \$37.6 million. That is an 80 per cent drop in the amount of money spent on road resurfacing. The government will say, 'No, that was a deliberate decision because we've been fixing the roads.' Well, that does not help the future state of the roads.

It also does not help the roads that were not flood affected, which are in an absolutely dire state at the moment. Anyone in Victoria will tell you how bad the roads are, particularly in regional Victoria, but with the greatest respect, we half expect it. We do not accept it, but in regional Victoria we are not surprised when our roads are in poor condition. What I have seen in the last couple of years as the shadow minister is a significant spike in complaints from those in metropolitan areas, particularly even on freeways. We had the incident I think earlier this year where there were something like 19 or 20 cars that burst tyres on the Frankston Freeway due to a pothole that developed very quickly, and we have seen that right across the state.

It is absolutely an issue of concern, and it goes further because I see in the budget papers this year there will be a 96 per cent reduction in the level of maintenance undertaken on regional roads for last financial year, 2023–24. That is how dramatic it was. It was reduced dramatically from about 9 million square metres of road maintenance to just over 300,000 – a massive 96 per cent reduction. The area resurfaced or rehabilitated statewide was reduced by 75 per cent compared to two years ago, and that is the cause of the very, very high number of problems we have had with our roads over the last couple of years. And that comes to other points: nearly 400 kilometres of roads are speed-reduced due to poor pavement condition, and nearly 2000 Victorians have lodged claims for vehicle damage due to the roads in the past three years. This is manifesting in the state of our roads.

There was a survey undertaken by the government last year, and the government was very proud to highlight at the time that it was using the National Transport Research Organisation's intelligent pavement assessment vehicle technology to get an assessment of the roads. That assessment came out and found that 91 per cent of roads were rated poor or very poor – 91 per cent. There were no roads in good condition. I will mention it here because I know if the secretary of the department is watching he will be saying, 'No, that's wrong,' because I asked for a copy of this survey in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee back in June. I said, 'We've got this one slide that's been released, but could I have a copy of the whole survey?' The secretary said no, but then he tried to tell me, 'What you're saying is wrong' – what I have just given, that 91 per cent of roads were rated poor or very poor. I said, 'Well, Secretary, there's a simple solution here: be transparent and give me the full survey.' Until the government is going to be transparent and actually provide that full data I am going with what is publicly available, which is that 91 per cent of our roads were rated poor or very poor in the government's own survey. I wish the secretary well. I understand he is leaving, but I wish him well going into the future.

We do not have any particular issue with this legislation, but there is a massive issue with roads and road safety right across our state. On road safety, the government reduced road safety funding by \$88 million in 2023–24 –

John Pesutto: How much?

Danny O'BRIEN: \$88 million – and there is no funding for tactile line marking or roadside safety barriers in the current budget. But this legislation, as I said, with the no-truck zones and the digital drivers licence, we are not opposing. I wish the member for Footscray well in her campaigns on this and the member for Williamstown as well. It would be good, though, if the government would actually fix our roads.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Members

Minister for Government Services

Absence

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:01): 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.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Construction industry

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Premier. How can the Premier hope to stop outlaw bikies from working on taxpayer-funded construction sites if she cannot even stop convicted criminal and her friend John Setka from walking onto and holding rallies at these same sites?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:02): I remind the Leader of the Opposition that we are introducing legislation on this very question, and the legislation will be considered by the Parliament. It is part of our comprehensive response to stamp out a rotten culture that I have zero tolerance for. In terms of unauthorised attendance on worksites, the director-general has written to the construction companies that are responsible for the management of people who come in and out of worksites to make absolutely clear the government's expectation on who enters those worksites. There is no place for John Setka on those worksites, and any unauthorised access should be referred to Victoria Police.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:03): Last week hundreds of CFMEU members chanted 'Johnny Setka, here to stay' at an unlawful rally on a government construction site

organised by Mr Setka, a convicted criminal. When will the Premier regain control of government construction sites?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:03): Of course I remind the Leader of the Opposition that the only reason he can ask questions about government worksites is because we are investing in them. We are investing in a pipeline of transport infrastructure projects that are supporting tens of thousands of workers across the state and of course are building the important and vital transport connections our growing city and state need. In terms of the workers who work on those worksites, I say to those tens of thousands of workers that they absolutely deserve the best of union representation because they go to work in difficult and dangerous conditions building the transport infrastructure for our city, for our state and for our future.

Ministers statements: social media age limits

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:04): One of the biggest concerns Victorian parents raise with me – and they raise it with me on a regular basis – is their worry and their anxiety about kids on social media. Certainly as a parent – and I am sure many of us in the chamber would share this experience – it can feel like a never-ending war. Sometimes you feel like you are up against a social media tsunami, and busy parents have to constantly stay up to date with the latest trends, the latest dangers and the latest online black holes that your child could just so easily fall into with the accidental click of one button. I have seen that in my own home, where a simple YouTube search can turn into a rabbit hole of deeply inappropriate content, content that no child should ever have to watch. When parents push back they also become the enemy. It causes fights; it creates fractures. It is damaging families; it is damaging relationships. We know it is a full-time job for parents to keep on top of it. But it is not just parents who are concerned about this, it is kids themselves. During a recent school visit one student told me that he wished social media just did not exist.

I do not want kids and parents fighting about social media. The fight should be up against those tech giants who fail to look after our kids, and that is why our government strongly backs the proposition that was put forward by South Australia and has now been picked up as a national approach by the Prime Minister. I thank South Australia for the commonsense place to start in terms of banning it up to 14, requiring parental consent for 14- and 15-year-olds and having a system that is flexible enough to respond to the needs of families. We will be running our own consultation with parents, schools and children because it is those voices that must be heard the loudest, not the tech giants. This is a reform that will help parents at home and help reduce harm to kids.

Construction industry

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:06): My question is to the Premier. The Premier said:

There is no place on Victorian Big Build worksites for John Setka.

Victoria Police have said that Mr Setka did not commit any offences when he walked onto multiple taxpayer-funded worksites. How will the Premier prevent him from walking onto more taxpayer-funded worksites?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:07): In answering the Leader of the Opposition's question I draw his attention to my earlier answer, where we have, via the director-general, made absolutely clear the government's expectations around unauthorised access by any individual on our government Big Build worksites and how those expectations are to be managed on those worksites. Any unauthorised access should be referred to Victoria Police. I draw the Leader of the Opposition's attention also to the reference that he made in his supplementary question. He called that an unlawful rally. He has now referred to VicPol's response. The Leader of the Opposition needs to get his story straight when he is putting forward these propositions in this place.

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

The SPEAKER: The Premier has concluded her answer.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:08): Victoria Police found that John Setka, a former CFMEU boss, convicted criminal and friend of the Premier, did not commit an offence by walking onto taxpayer-funded construction sites as:

For there to be a trespass offence, a person must be asked to leave ...

Why did nobody at multiple taxpayer-funded construction sites ask John Setka to leave?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:08): I refer the Leader of the Opposition to the now two times that I have referred to this in my previous answers. The government has, via the director-general of the Victorian Infrastructure Delivery Authority, written to construction companies outlining the government's expectation –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Premier is being evasive. It was a very, very specific question, and the Premier is avoiding answering it.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Speaker, there is no point of order. The Premier was being entirely relevant to the question, and I ask that you rule the point of order out of order.

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

Jacinta ALLAN: As I said, anyone who attends a worksite in an unauthorised way will be asked to leave and referred to Victoria Police, and that is what happened in the instance last week.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier, under standing order 58, is required to be direct in answering the question. The question specifically asked: why did no-one ask John Setka to leave?

The SPEAKER: A point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question. The Premier has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: Victoria's Big Build

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:10): I rise to update the house on the Big Build. What a glorious day it was yesterday joining the Premier and the member for Albert Park to head down to Anzac station to announce the completion of our third Metro Tunnel station. I know Victorians are excited about this project, but just think: just 10 years ago those opposite cancelled it. They said it would divide Melbourne like the Berlin Wall, but I guess they do know a bit about what it is like to be internally divided. In New South Wales, Labor and Liberal premiers rode on the first trains on the new Sydney Metro together, and I hope those opposite are not waiting around for their tickets.

Not only is the Metro Tunnel coming on time next year, we will also be opening the West Gate Tunnel. Anyone who has ever been stuck in traffic knows how important delivering a second river crossing is for our road network – everyone but those opposite, who could not find the west on a map. It is a project that is bringing Victorians together, even though the Liberals and the Greens teamed up in 2018 in the other place to cancel it.

Let us not forget that back in 2013 Liberal Premier Napthine said it was impossible to remove 50 level crossings. I am proud to share that since we were elected we have removed 84 level crossings while those opposite have blocked, have delayed and have opposed every single one of those. Victorians are excited by these level crossing removal projects, and I think those opposite might be too. I know many of you advocate in private to have a level crossing removed in your electorate or advocate for the Suburban Rail Loop to start in your part of the electorate.

Nearly 10 years ago Victorians made up their minds about those opposite: four miserable, wasted years of a do-nothing government. We have not wasted a day since we have had the great gift of government. Those opposite have not wasted an opportunity to tear themselves apart. We are the party of delivering; they are the party of division, disunity and defamation. That is what they will be remembered for, if they are remembered at all.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, ministers statements are not an opportunity to attack the opposition. And can the minister please provide a copy of his script?

The SPEAKER: To the first part of the point of order, I do ask ministers to refrain from attacking the opposition in their ministers statements.

Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:12): My question is to the Premier. A letter sent to the Premier in 2022 by an Indigenous labour hire firm raised criminal behaviour by CFMEU officials. Victoria Police have now arrested and charged one of the CFMEU officials who engaged in the criminal behaviour described in the letter. Why did the Premier assert on 30 July 2024 that this letter ‘did not contain allegations of criminal behaviour’?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:13): As the Leader of the Opposition has referenced, I have addressed this matter previously in this place. There was correspondence from Marda Dandhi, the company that raised allegations of a broad range of potentially unethical and unlawful behaviour, and this was correspondence that was sent to a number of different members of Parliament and organisations. That matter in my context – the entirety of that correspondence – as I have outlined to the house previously, was referred to the MTIA –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this question was very, very specific, and I ask you to bring the Premier on relevance back to dealing with the actual question. The Premier is avoiding answering that very specific question.

The SPEAKER: The Premier was referring to a letter that was in the preamble to the question. The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: As I was part way through giving the information I have previously provided to the house on this matter, these allegations were referred to what was then the Major Transport Infrastructure Authority, also reinforcing the government’s expectations around all organisations operating to the highest standards of lawful and ethical behaviour. As we have now seen, Victoria Police have responded to those allegations and are now investigating those allegations, and it would be inappropriate to cut across those investigations.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:15): When asked about the 2022 letter sent to her by an Indigenous labour hire firm, the Premier told this house on 30 July:

The allegation that was put to me in that correspondence did not contain allegations of criminal behaviour.

Given that Victoria Police have now arrested and charged the CFMEU official referred to in the letter, will the Premier apologise for misleading both the Victorian people and this house?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:16): I have answered this question previously. When these allegations were made they were referred to the appropriate authority for their response.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Premier is being evasive again. The question asked specifically went to statements the Premier made to this house. They are very, very serious, and they are contradicted by Victoria Police’s subsequent action. It is only reasonable that the Premier deal with that specific question.

The SPEAKER: The Premier addressed the question in saying that she has previously addressed the question in other answers.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the reference you just made in relation to the Premier's previous statement is the misleading statement which is the subject of the question. We are asking about that substance because the Premier has misled this house.

The SPEAKER: It is not for me to determine whether the Premier has misled the house or not. The Premier has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: women's health

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:17): I rise to update the house on the Labor government's work to improve access to abortion rights right across Victoria. On this side of the house we believe that abortion care is health care. Victoria has the strongest reproductive rights of anywhere in the nation, and that is thanks to the work of successive Labor governments in this place. From decriminalisation to safe access zones and now increased access to care, Victorian women know who to trust when it comes to protecting their reproductive rights.

This term alone we have taken even more decisive action to improve access to care. This includes nine new sexual and reproductive health hubs, new women's health clinics and a partnership with BreastScreen Victoria to make sexual and reproductive health care available for women right across the state. We have recently removed barriers to prescribing for endorsed midwives, which will improve access to medical termination, and we are expanding access to surgical abortion at public hospitals right across our state.

While the women of Victoria know and understand who they can trust when it comes to protecting their reproductive rights, can the same be said of those on the other side? Does the Leader of the Opposition also believe –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, ministers statements are not an opportunity to attack the opposition, and it is very, very disappointing that the minister would use this issue to try to play politics.

The SPEAKER: The minister will not attack the opposition in her ministers statement.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: In making my ministers statement I just wanted to make the point very clear that the women of Victoria need to know who they can trust when it comes to protecting their reproductive healthcare rights. What the people of Victoria know –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Bentleigh, you can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Bentleigh withdrew from chamber.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, as a woman of Victoria I find the minister's statement exceptionally offensive, and I ask her to withdraw.

The SPEAKER: It is very difficult for me to rule on points of order that require withdrawals when there is no personal attack on a particular member. I advise members to read the standing orders and *Rulings from the Chair* about imputations and personal reflections. When I make a ruling on this, it will be on the basis that the minister did not refer to any particular member in this house.

James Newbury: On the point of order, Speaker, in previous weeks you have ruled when a Labor member has asked for withdrawal not related to them specifically that the coalition withdraw, but when it comes to us asking for withdrawals you have done the opposite.

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business knows not to question my rulings in the house. You can come and see me afterwards in my office.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: Again I make the point that the people of Victoria know that they can trust this Allan Labor government to continue to protect their reproductive healthcare rights – not only that, to expand them. We will not be flip-flopping on this issue. We will not be changing our minds on this issue.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this ministers statement is an abuse of the standing orders, and I would ask you to sit the minister down.

The SPEAKER: The minister will come back to her ministers statement. I ask you not to attack the opposition.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I did not actually mention the opposition. I just made the point that it is the Allan Labor government that will always deliver, and we will not flip-flop.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Bulleen is warned.

Transport infrastructure

Darren CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (14:22): My question is to the Premier. Recent published ABS evidence suggests that public sector expenditure on road and rail projects has helped the economy avoid a negative quarter of economic growth. These road and rail projects include North East Link, West Gate Tunnel, Metro Tunnel, Suburban Rail Loop and level crossing removals which have been built by Victorians for Victorians and opposed by some in this place. Why are these projects important to the economy and for Victorians?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:23): I thank the member for South Barwon for his question, and from what I could glean from the member's question amongst the interjections –

Members interjecting.

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

Members for Bulleen and Polwarth withdrew from chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN: Certainly investment in road and rail infrastructure has been a big and important part of our government's agenda, and it has been a big and important part of our government's agenda because it achieves two aims. It keeps thousands and thousands of Victorians in a job, whether they are on construction sites or in the supply chain. That supply chain has been strengthened by our procurement policies that prioritise local jobs and prioritise local companies, and there is no better example of that than making sure that the trains that run on our network are made here in Victoria, as opposed to those opposite, who preferred those trains to be made in Korea.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Malvern is warned.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this Dixie from the member from creep corner is not an opportunity to attack the opposition.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Jacinta ALLAN: We invest in infrastructure, unlike the period of time those opposite were in government, who preferred to see our trains made overseas and no projects supported in this state and who went further than that and cancelled the Metro Tunnel project and have since run around and called it a hoax and said it could not be built. Well, it is now being built. This is the double benefit you get from investing in transport infrastructure. Not only are you supporting jobs right now; you are also supporting jobs of the future. You are supporting a productive economy and community. You are

supporting people getting to where they need to go safer and sooner, and certainly investing in rail infrastructure delivers a big equity outcome for our city and state.

It means that if you have that dream of going to Monash University and you cannot currently get there by train – Australia’s largest university without a train line – with the delivery of the Suburban Rail Loop you will be able to do that. Investing in regional rail connections has been absolutely vital in supporting the growth of our regional communities and economies, and we backed that in even harder with our fairer fares policy that has seen country people pay the same as city people on their public transport services. That is a fair outcome, and we have seen regional communities respond strongly.

Darren CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (14:27): My supplementary question is to the Premier. Why is it important that the Albanese government partner with the Victorian government and give Victoria its fair share of federal infrastructure money in delivering these state-shaping infrastructure projects?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:27): While those opposite mock calls for Victoria to get our fair share, they have been absolutely silent –

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN: You only raise your voice in here when it is politically convenient, don’t you.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will resume her seat. The member for Gippsland South is warned.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Premier is debating the question. We are calling out the hypocrisy of this Labor member at the same time as the minister is talking about women’s rights.

The SPEAKER: I ask the Manager of Opposition Business to be succinct with his points of order. There is no need to give a statement in the house.

Danny Pearson: On the point of order, Speaker, the member for South Barwon is perfectly entitled to ask a question. The former member for Morwell Russell Northe had six years asking questions, and not once was he interrupted.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I ask members to be respectful of members on their feet, irrespective of who they are. There is no point of order.

Cindy McLeish: On a different point of order, Speaker, I refer you to *Rulings from the Chair*, ‘Procedure for taking a point of order’, which says ‘Member with the call must give way’. This is on page 133. I bring to your attention the number of times, including the last time, when the Premier saw that a point of order was being taken and refused to give way.

The SPEAKER: I ask the Premier to come back to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: We on this side of the house will always advocate for our fair share, because we will put Victoria first, unlike those opposite, who were silent year upon year upon year when the former federal Liberal–National government duded Victoria royally on our fair share of infrastructure projects. I will consistently remind any government in Canberra that Victorians are federal taxpayers too and that we deserve our fair share of infrastructure funding, and that has certainly been the consistent message I have delivered to the federal Labor government. But at least we have a federal government that knows where Victoria is on a map and is supporting projects in this city and state.

Ministers statements: housing

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for the Suburbs) (14:30): Just last year, as part of this government’s housing statement, we announced some of the boldest reforms to planning in a generation, because on this side of the house we understand that every Victorian deserves

a home – the right type of home in the right type of place, close to transport, close to jobs, close to services and close to family and friends. And we are doing exactly what we said we would do, making good decisions faster and making sure that more and more Victorians can find a safe, secure and affordable home.

This government understands that the way to make homes more affordable is not to block them; that is not leadership. You cannot say you want more homes but then block more homes being built; that is definitely not leadership. The way to make homes more affordable, especially for young Victorians, is to build more of them, working with local government, working with industry and working with our communities to build more well-located, well-built homes, because every house we build is a place for someone to call home and every house others block denies someone a home. That is not leadership; that is just unfair.

Our government is focused on getting more homes built right across the state, and indeed Victoria continues to lead the nation in approvals and construction of new homes. In fact last week CoreLogic called Victoria ‘the poster child for getting more supply into the marketplace’. But we know there is a lot more work to do. There will be some spending the next few weeks in a courtroom – not us. We will be getting on with the job of doing what needs to be done.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is the third minister who has abused the standing orders in their ministers statement and attacked the opposition. This is an outrageous abuse of the standing orders.

The SPEAKER: I ask the minister to come back to her statement without attacking the opposition.

Sonya KILKENNY: We will not be in a courtroom next week; we will be getting on with the job of doing what needs to be done.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I understand it is difficult to change the script when you are reading, but you did ask the minister to stop attacking the opposition. I know the script says so, but I would ask you to ask her to stop.

The SPEAKER: I did not hear her attack the opposition.

Sonya KILKENNY: As I said, we will not be in a courtroom next week, we will be saying yes to getting more homes built for more Victorians.

Transport infrastructure

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:33): My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. The minister personally met with former CFMEU boss, convicted criminal and friend of the Premier John Setka on 10 April 2024. What did the minister discuss with Mr Setka?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:34): I meet with various representatives of the construction industry, be it employers or trade union representatives. The reality is that construction sites are –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this question asked what the minister discussed when he met with John Setka. I understand why he does not want to answer it, but that was the question.

The SPEAKER: The minister had just commenced his answer, but I do ask him to come back to the question.

Danny PEARSON: I meet with trade unions and I meet with employers. The reality is the construction sector has some of the most dangerous worksites in the state. If you look at the construction sector, it accounts for 13.9 per cent of workplace injuries and 18.2 per cent of workplace fatalities.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, could you ask the minister to come back to the question? The minister is refusing to do anything other than talk about the general issue.

The SPEAKER: Manager of Opposition Business, I did ask the minister to come back to the question that was asked. He has still got 2 minutes and 30 seconds to answer the question.

Danny PEARSON: I meet with various representatives, and these matters are disclosed in the normal way, including the purpose of the meeting. That is publicly available on the public record.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:35): On 9 May an adviser from the minister's office attended a meeting with 10 asphalt contractors and the CFMEU, where allegations of misconduct were raised with the minister's staff. On what date did the staff member inform the minister of these allegations?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:36): The meeting that the member refers to involved representatives of the AWU, not the CFMEU, and subsequent to that meeting those matters were raised with me by my staffer.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the question was: when were they raised with the minister? This is just an outrageous abuse, all day, in evading the questions.

The SPEAKER: I cannot direct the minister how to answer a question. The minister was relevant to the question. The minister has concluded his answer.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, it is a requirement of the house that ministers are factual in their responses. The minister has stated this was not a meeting with the CFMEU. It is clear through the ministerial diaries that have been published that multiple members of the CFMEU were present. I therefore ask you to invite the minister to correct the record.

The SPEAKER: I am not in a position to determine whether an answer is factual or not.

Ministers statements: State Electricity Commission

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:38): I am absolutely delighted to update the house on how the SEC is delivering government-owned renewable energy to keep the lights on. Some of them are a little bit dimwitted in here, but we have always got the lights on on this side of the house. And power bills –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have repeatedly asked today for members to be respectful of members on their feet. The minister to continue, without assistance.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: Last Friday I was absolutely delighted to join with the Premier and the member for Sydenham in Plumpton. And why was that? Because we visited the SEC's first project in Plumpton. This is not just any battery, it is one of the biggest in the world – 1.6 gigawatt hours that can power 200,000 homes during the peak period of 5 pm to 9 pm. Not only will this big battery give us 600 megawatts of energy storage capacity, it will also enable the connection and the building of 1800 megawatts of new renewable energy projects that can connect into three renewable energy zones right across our state. This is about accelerating the renewable energy build and delivering on our target, keeping the lights on and the bills down and creating 59,000 jobs by 2035 – and all of this on this side of the house. That is what we are delivering because we are not a bunch of dimwitted people; we actually keep the lights on for everyone to see.

We met some fantastic apprentices. That is all part of our commitment. As we create 59,000 jobs by 2035, we are also creating 6000 apprenticeships and traineeships. Not only is the SEC back in the business of building the big projects, creating the jobs and accelerating that transition; the SEC right

now is out in three municipalities – Casey, Ballarat and Merri-bek – helping families to electrify their homes and save on their energy bills. This is what we will deliver, and we will keep doing it.

Constituency questions

Eildon electorate

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (14:41): (800) My question is for the Minister for Water. This year Mount Buller had to close five weeks earlier than expected due to the lack of access to water for the village and snow-making. The limitations on pumping rights led to a loss of revenue and jobs and impacted trade by small businesses in regional Victoria. What work is currently being undertaken by the minister to resolve this issue so that the 2025 season does not suffer a similar fate? Despite an \$11.3 million investment to secure water and optimal temperatures for snow-making, the current Goulburn–Murray Water licence is not flexible and does not allow 12-month pumping. This means opportunities to make the most of the spring and summer rains, particularly when Lake Eildon is full, are lost. Alpine resorts in Victoria contribute \$2.14 billion annually to the state economy, largely during the snow season. Mount Buller needs a reliable supply of water to underpin the survival of the village and the ski area.

Bass electorate

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (14:42): (801) My question is to the Minister for Environment. How is the government supporting the Inverloch community following the extreme weather conditions across the state recently? We saw a one-in-10-year storm surge event which has caused damage to Victoria's land and coastline. I want to thank our fantastic emergency services members, local community groups, land managers, councils and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action working to help our community in affected areas. I visited the Inverloch surf club several times, met with club reps to discuss coastal erosion and damage and the cape-to-cape resilience plan, which has mapped out and modelled the adaptation pathways from present day to 2100. The C2C plan clearly outlines the present-day pathway being nature-based dune enhancement and restoration, which is an engineering solution, and this is what is being done, and the design's tender process is also underway. I look forward to informing my community on what we are doing to best address the impacts on the Inverloch coastline, backed by science and informed by experts.

Gippsland East electorate

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (14:43): (802) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the information that I am seeking is whether there are plans to review the speed limit on the Great Alpine Road in Sarsfield. Very recently we had quite a serious accident when a vehicle waiting to turn right was rear-ended at high speed, which caused significant injuries to the occupants of that car. It is an area where the community has previously called for speed limit reviews and reductions, and given this very, very serious accident that took place the community is seeking for the minister to again review that situation there. That is the information I seek.

Box Hill electorate

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (14:43): (803) My question is to the Minister for Environment, and the question I seek is: when will the heritage trams at Wattle Park be replaced and made available for community use? Wattle Park is a wonderful suburban oasis, providing a vital space for surrounding communities to connect with nature. Over the last couple of years the Allan Labor government has invested more than \$5 million in this much-loved park, which has included the creation of a new all-abilities play space featuring swings, spinners, water play, a sensory garden, a double-storey tram fort, an upgraded picnic area and 3.25 kilometres of upgraded running and walking tracks for visitors to enjoy. But the undoubted highlight of any visit to Wattle Park is the heritage trams, which for decades have been a key feature of the picnic area. The Box Hill community is looking forward to knowing when the famous Wattle Park trams will once again be ready to board.

Brighton electorate

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:44): (804) My question is to the Premier, and I ask: when will the state Labor government address the collapsed drain on Hampton beach? The Bayside community is fortunate to be custodians of a unique natural environment, including roughly 7 kilometres of Port Phillip Bay foreshore. We believe the environment must be preserved so that it can be enjoyed and passed on to our children. My community knows the state Labor government's record of neglecting that foreshore. Labor closed the Middle Brighton Pier until it was shamed into funding basic safety upgrades, tried to illegally charge bathing box owners land tax and had a secret plan to get rid of the boxes. The Hampton open drain opposite Orlando Street in Hampton has collapsed, and the government has refused to fix it. The site is extremely environmentally damaging, with drain water pooling on the beach. It is unsafe for thousands of passers-by each day. All Labor has done is erect cheap tape. The minister is yet to even acknowledge community representations. Premier, Labor needs to stop ignoring this dangerous issue.

Tarneit electorate

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (14:45): (805) My question is to the Minister for Police and Minister for Crime Prevention. How will the recently announced funding for the Change It Up program impact my community of Tarneit? Programs like Change It Up are essential for not only helping individuals but also enhancing community safety. They provide our youth with the tools they need to make positive choices and to contribute constructively to our community. The youth crime prevention program funding is supporting fantastic programs like this to help kids keep safe and out of the justice system. I am particularly pleased to share that the Centre for Multicultural Youth has been granted \$668,000 in funding for the Change It Up program in Wyndham. This funding builds on the crucial services being provided to young people who are at risk of offending or reoffending, offering them the opportunity to redirect their lives away from crime. I want to thank the minister for his continued commitment to addressing youth crime through prevention programs like this, and I look forward to his response.

Narracan electorate

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (14:46): (806) My question today is to the Premier. What guarantee will the Premier give that state parks will remain state parks and no new national parks will be created? The Premier recently told a bush summit that she would not padlock state parks and would allow activities such as dog walking, dirt bike riding, detecting and prospecting to continue but stopped short of clarifying if her government would recommend the creation of new national parks. This affects my electorate, being that two-thirds of the electorate of Narracan is actually state park at this point in time. This is also in contradiction to what is being studied at the moment by the Minister for Environment, who is doing studies into turning my state parks into national parks. I am asking the Premier to clarify her intention. Are my parks going to be national parks or remain state parks?

Thomastown electorate

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (14:47): (807) My constituency question is for the Minister for Health, and the question I ask is: how will our Allan Labor government's ongoing investment into women's health clinics benefit women in the electorate of Thomastown? We already know a women's health clinic is being delivered in Epping, at the Northern Hospital, and also a reproductive health hub nearby. However, residents are very interested and eager to receive more information.

Warrandyte electorate

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (14:47): (808) My question as to the Minister for Equality. How many of my constituents were surveyed prior to the rollout of the rainbow library toolkit in Victoria? Many parents in my community have contacted me with their concerns, saying that when they use library services they do not appreciate topics of sex and gender being discussed with their children

without invitation. Their stance is that public libraries should not be a place for activism and that it is inappropriate to require taxpayer-funded government staff to approach little children to ask about their gender without parental consent or permission. Yet the rainbow toolkit assumes that every family is ready and willing to talk about these questions, with children as young as five being asked about their pronouns at the door. In a multicultural state like Victoria it is neither culturally sensitive nor appropriate to deprive parents of their right to approach sensitive topics like sex and gender with their children in the way they deem fit according to their culture, values and background.

Northcote electorate

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (14:48): (809) My question is to the Minister for Environment, and I ask: what are the next steps the Victorian government is taking to deliver an uplift to Merri Common in my electorate of Northcote? Residents living in the area around Merri train station have long advocated for improvements to the Merri Common, an important local reserve in our busy urban suburbs. We were thrilled when the Labor government committed \$1.5 million for the design and delivery of upgrades to this space. Since then it has been a long road through the bureaucracy of the Metro Tunnel, VicTrack and Darebin council, but I am excited to inform residents that we are getting closer, with Darebin council having agreed to appoint a project manager and begin early preparations for community consultation. Excitingly the funding envelope has allowed us to expand the scope of the project to Peters Reserve nearby, which has a much-loved kids playground. Just a few weeks back my family joined in celebrating 20 years since locals rallied together to save Peters Reserve from being sold by the council, an outstanding example of community advocacy. Residents will welcome knowing next steps on the \$1.5 million commitment to improve these vital open spaces.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, I have a number of questions that still remain unanswered despite having raised points of order on these a number of times. Question 745 to the Minister for Ambulance Services is an adjournment matter that is overdue. Questions on notice to the Minister for Skills and TAFE – there are 13 of these, questions 1137, 1139, 1141, 1151, 1220, 1229, 1231, 1234, 1355, 1356, 1357, 1358 and 1359. Also overdue is question on notice 1445 to the Minister for Energy and Resources, and question 1460 to the Minister for Economic Growth is also overdue. I would appreciate if these ministers were able to respond to my constituents.

The SPEAKER: Order! A point of order is not an opportunity to make a statement to the house. You state what you are asking for. Please hand your list to the clerks.

Rulings from the Chair

Constituency questions

The SPEAKER (14:51): I have reviewed the constituency questions from 29 August 2024. The member for Polwarth asked the minister to come and provide planning support, which is an action and is out of order. Further, the member asked two questions for his constituency question. Therefore I rule the member for Polwarth's constituency question out of order.

The member for Brighton asked when the government will accept that something is happening and so sought an expression of opinion from the minister. Guidelines for questions from *Rulings from the Chair*, December 2023, page 143, state that questions should not seek opinions. Therefore I rule the member for Brighton's question out of order.

Bills

Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (14:52): I am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to debate on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. This bill makes a number of changes to a

number of acts, those being the Road Safety Act 1986, the Road Safety Camera Commissioner Act 2011, the Melbourne City Link Act 1995, the EastLink Project Act 2004, the West Gate Tunnel (Truck Bans and Traffic Management) Act 2019, the North East Link Act 2020 and the Marine (Drug, Alcohol and Pollution Control) Act 1988. The key purposes of what is contained in the legislation go to the delivery of the government's commitment to removing trucks from the inner west, the facilitation for the modernisation of drivers licences and learner permits, to make improvements to custom plates and to improve the clarity and operation of various transport legislation.

We know and understand as the Allan Labor government the investment in, the commitment to and the delivery of transport right across our community is something that enables people to get to where they need to go safer and sooner. The consistent, strong, sustained delivery and advocacy from this side of the house has seen a strong pipeline delivered, and it continues to be delivered in our major projects space.

This legislation goes to specifically the West Gate Tunnel. I listened quite closely to the member for Gippsland South's contribution, which on the whole was fairly measured and quite a solid contribution. He did at one point mention my good friend here the member for Footscray, and I think he said it was the 'save Katie bill'. I have worked pretty closely with the member for Footscray, and we know of course that there is no saving required for the member for Footscray. She knows and understands her community well, and this legislation and the delivery of the truck ban is something that we know has been long called for by residents in the inner west. It is a commitment that this government made to the local community, and the delivery of the West Gate Tunnel will be a significant and important project for the community in the inner west. I will go to some of those changes and the mechanisms around how the truck ban will work, but broadly, both for those communities and of course for the state, the West Gate Tunnel is a critically important project.

We know that more than 200,000 vehicles rely on the West Gate Bridge, and an incident at the bridge creates a significant and problematic event for our road network. Having the West Gate Tunnel will give people the choice of the tunnel or the bridge. Nine thousand trucks off local roads and 24-hour truck bans on six local roads, slashing travel times, will ensure that those connections are made a whole lot easier and a whole lot better for many of the fastest growing communities in our suburbs. What we know along that journey is that there are more than 6000 jobs created and 9 hectares of new public open space created.

This is part of the wider project. I had the opportunity some time ago, just a couple of months ago, to join a number of colleagues to have a look at the incredible work that is being done on the project ensuring that we are taking the West Gate Freeway from eight to 12 lanes, with twin tunnels under Yarraville. A whole range of different connections will make sure that as you come in from the west – and also for communities, dare I say, Speaker, out our way – if you are moving north up through Sunbury and up the Calder to our northern communities, this is a significant and important project. We know unlocking that area is of course something that is vital to, as I said earlier, getting our local communities home safer and sooner.

This is part of a suite of projects that go to supporting communities as they grow, to creating jobs and to delivering on those important promises, those commitments that we made specifically to local communities. We know that the Road Safety Act 1986 already allows for the declaration of no-truck zones. The amendments provided in this bill allow for the enforcement. This is the enforcement provision, and the provision to make the ban in the first place was already contained in the act of 1986. The government plans to declare no-truck zones on certain roads in the inner western suburbs of Melbourne once the West Gate Tunnel is open and operational, those streets being Francis Street between Roberts Street and Hyde Street, Somerville Road between Geelong Road and Whitehall Street, Buckley Street as part of Napier Street, all of Buckley Street and Napier Street between Geelong Road and Whitehall Street, Moore Street between Ballarat Road and Hopkins, Hudsons Road between Melbourne Road and Booker and Blackshaws Road between Grieve Parade and Melbourne Road. This is just one element of what is in many ways an omnibus bill, and I heard the previous speaker

refer to it as an omnibus bill. There is quite a lot in this, and the other provisions revolve around both the plates, which I mentioned earlier, and our digital drivers licences.

We know that these provisions go to modernising the network, they go to safety and they go to improving what is a significant and important investment from this government as we continue to deliver for the fast-growing and ever-changing Melbourne and Victoria. One of the stand-out features, I would say, of this bill, recognising that digital drivers licences are contained within the Road Safety Act –

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

Josh BULL: Absolutely, member for Frankston. We promised to bring Victoria into the digital age, making sure that those digital drivers licences were available and are able to be used and working with providers to ensure that the most modern and streamlined approach can be delivered. It certainly is worth reflecting on. I know that I try and take the time to reflect on both our road network and technology and the way they have transformed over decades – to know and understand that by using technology, by getting the best outcomes and by ensuring that we are investing and working with many providers who really come up with some great new technology we get a more efficient, safer and more effective road network. That should be not just the aim of government but the aim of all members of this house, knowing and understanding that one life lost on any Victorian road is one too many and ensuring that we are doing everything that we can to both protect Victorians and give Victorians the opportunity within their local communities to be free from some of the pains, might we say, of that truck congestion, pollution and noise, making sure that the logistics and the movement of materials across our state and across local communities is something that is incredibly important.

I do have to apologise as I am losing my voice. I may have bellowed a little bit too loudly at the TV on Saturday night when the Swans played GWS, so I do apologise for that. I am paying for it now.

I do want to sum up by saying we are a team that is committed to delivering the key transport projects that Victorians have voted for. Unfortunately what we saw today in question time, what we saw last week and what we consistently see from those opposite is that they block, stop and get in the way of projects that Victorians (a) voted for but, most importantly, need for a growing state. It is always easy to put your feet up, to put the car into reverse and to basically sit there and do nothing. That is not the team that we are. We are about delivering. We are about building projects like the West Gate Tunnel, removing 80-plus level crossings, delivering the North East Link, delivering the Metro Tunnel, five new stations, a 97-kilometre direct connection between Sunbury and the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines, making sure that we are delivering to enable our community to be their best, to grow and thrive and get the education and the life opportunities that they deserve. That is the government that we are. This bill is critically important to enable many of those facets of the network to be enhanced through technology and investment. As my voice just about fades away, I commend the bill to the house.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (15:02): I rise to make some comments on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, and I say from the outset that unfortunately road safety is something that this government has absolutely neglected. We saw in the last budget \$88 million ripped out of the budget when it comes to road safety. At a time when you would think there would be more money being invested in road safety, the Allan Labor government is investing less money in road safety.

I think it would be fair to say that right across the state people will tell you in conversation just how bad the state of our roads is. I used to come in here as a member of Parliament and quite often hear from our country MPs about situations in rural and regional Victoria, particularly the state of the roads, but I never would have thought that as city MPs we would be talking about that ourselves. This morning the member for South-West Coast came past my office to say that she was driving in my electorate – I think it was this morning or yesterday – and on the corner of Hotham Street and Williams Road in St Kilda East she saw pothole after pothole after pothole. As a member from country Victoria

she could not believe that she would come to St Kilda East and find so many potholes and in fact a big sign saying 'Rough surface'. I think that is pretty symbolic of the state of our roads right across the state, and it is because the Allan Labor government has not invested in them.

It is not just a matter of having a ride that is free of bumps, it is about safety and what the consequences are when you do not have roads that are properly invested in. Ultimately, if a tyre or rim blows, the consequence of that can lead to an accident, as we have seen time and time again. Unfortunately this is the consequence of you – the Allan Labor government – ripping \$88 million out of the budget on road safety, let alone the actual investment in roads, on which we have seen a lack of investment.

Just on that, the figures provided to the Victorian Parliament show that money spent on resurfacing and resealing contracts for our roads in the 2023–24 financial year was just 18 per cent of the previous year, dropping from \$201.4 million to just \$37 million across the state. That is absolutely appalling. The Victorian government-owned road contractor has been forced to tender interstate due to the lack of work available in Victoria. They are just not getting the work because the government is not investing the money. Infrastructure Victoria predicts that congestion in Melbourne will cost \$10.2 billion per year by 2030 because of a lack of investment by the Allan Labor government.

Before I move on to some of the other things, this particular bill does not tackle many of the roads that have missed out on upgrades and on funding. Stage 2 of the Mickleham Road duplication in Greenvale and Kalkallo remains unfunded even though the state government has approved 10,000 new homes in the Craigieburn West structure plan. How is a single-lane road meant to accommodate such levels of growth? There is no planning in any of these roads for this accommodation, particularly in the growth suburbs. We see time and time again Melbourne's north and Melbourne's west missing out because of a government that is infatuated with the Suburban Rail Loop – \$218 billion for a Suburban Rail Loop, and Melbourne's north and Melbourne's west miss out.

Other examples are no funding for the upgrade of Mount Dandenong Tourist Road in Monbulk and no funding for Donnybrook Road in Kalkallo and Yan Yean. Epping-Kilmore Road between Donnybrook Road and the Hume Freeway at Wandong is in an appalling condition and has not been fixed. There is no funding for the duplication of Yan Yean Road in Yan Yean. Labor has refused to build the Lang Lang bypass in Bass; this has forced heavy trucks through Lang Lang's main street, and it poses a danger to residents and causes, again, congestion in a local town.

The Five Ways intersection is something we have heard the member for Warrandyte talk about time and time again. Despite countless accidents and continued advocacy from the member for Warrandyte and her local community, the Allan Labor government has continued to shut their eyes and cover their ears and do absolutely nothing on fixing that. Thompsons Road in Clyde North is, again, not being done. Even in my own and the member for Prahran's electorates we have potholes in many of the areas that I have spoken about before.

So that is an example: no investment in those roads – particularly taking into account the growth in many of these areas – ultimately leads to congestion, frustration and ultimately no planning for the future. They do in many instances become safety concerns, so when we talk about a road safety bill you have to have a government that is investing money. When a government is not investing money in our roads, in our safety and in fixing those roads, ultimately you cannot be serious when you are putting forward a road safety bill.

There are some things that actually are, finally, important, albeit late. The digital drivers licence, which is part of this bill, allows people to drive with a digital drivers licence, but I must say the Victorian Liberals and Nationals promised these in 2022 and New South Wales introduced this in 2019 and we are still talking about it – we are still talking about some of this rollout. The delays and the cost blowouts in this are just symbolic of every single project that the Allan Labor government touches – they unfortunately blow out in time and blow out in money.

Speed cameras to enforce the truck zones in the inner west – now, again, this is really, really important. I have met with some of those constituents, and I know the issues that have been raised for a long time. I can recall doing a number of different media stories about this, where these residents were promised this would be sorted, and only now are we talking about this and is something finally being done. It is three years late. The project is \$4.7 billion over budget, at a total cost of \$10.2 billion. The original project, the western distributor, was meant to be shovel-ready and was meant to cost \$500 million, so again, the government cannot manage major projects. They certainly cannot manage money, and ultimately all Victorians end up paying for it. They all pay the price; taxpayers pay for this.

Most constituents that I talk to just cannot believe these kinds of blowouts. Okay, you might get a 10 per cent overrun or a 20 per cent overrun, but when you have got a project that starts at \$500 million and ends up at \$10.2 billion, how does that happen? You could not build a house like that and say, ‘Oh yeah, our house is going to cost us \$200,000,’ but it ends up being \$2 million. You could not finish the house; you would have to walk away. If households have to manage their daily budgets and have to watch every penny that they have, why is it that governments cannot do the same? How can this government be trusted to do anything when we see these failures time and time again?

Just on the neglect in terms of road safety, there have been a number of surveys, in one of which 91 per cent of Victorian roads were classified as poor and very poor, and pavement condition assessments undertaken by the state government. The National Transport Research Organisation conducted a survey for the Department of Transport and Planning across 8400 kilometres of the state’s roads network. In 2023 not a single road in the survey was classified as good or very good, with the remaining 99 per cent only listed as fair. I think that again says it all when you have got these surveys that are saying that the state of our roads is in atrocious condition and that the government is doing very little about it. Another survey, the My Country Road survey, found that 64 per cent of Victorian motorists cite potholes and poor road conditions as their primary safety concern, and the 65-kilometre stretch of the Melba Highway between Coldstream and Yea tops the list of the worst regional roads.

This is a missed opportunity in terms of a government that really needs to invest in roads, invest in road safety and ultimately ensure that in areas where we see huge growth they are not neglected – a government that is absolutely focused on delivering a Suburban Rail Loop at the expense of so many others across the state and so many other constituents in the north and in the west. There are many on the backbench that I know are very concerned about this, because they are not able to get the roads that their constituents are demanding done, finished, started because of an infatuation by the Allan Labor government and the Premier with doing the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop. When the Premier talks today about ‘Our fair share’, everybody and all Victorians should get their fair share.

Katie HALL (Footscray) (15:12): I am absolutely delighted to be making a contribution on behalf of my community on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. Today is a historic day for residents in the inner west because today we are debating a bill that will deliver truck enforcement cameras to the streets that will have a 24-hour truck ban when the West Gate Tunnel opens. It is a proud day for me and my colleague and friend the member for Williamstown, because this has been hard and complex policy work in a very long series of hard and complex policy work to deal with the challenges that come from living right next to the port and not having the road infrastructure that we have needed to carry heavy vehicles into the port. So today we are delivering on something that the community has been calling for, which is enforcement cameras on the roads that will be having 24-hour truck bans with the opening of the West Gate Tunnel.

I would like to note and I would like the record to show that both the Liberal Party and the Greens opposed this bill coming to the floor today. They opposed the government business program, and it goes without saying that the Liberal Party do not care about the western suburbs. They would not even meet with the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group (MTAG) when they were last in power. It goes without saying that the Liberal Party do not care, but what it also shows is that the Greens political party are all about protest and not about policy, because today we are delivering something very, very powerful for the community of the inner west, and that is enforcement cameras and a legislative

framework that will deliver something that our community has desired for decades. This is powerful reform. This is community action being delivered by a progressive and effective Labor government, and I am enormously proud of it.

Trucks and their impact on our community are one of the most common issues raised by my constituents. Footscray and its surrounds have changed significantly, like many other parts of the inner city. Footscray is now home to more cafes than factories. Once upon a time our community next to the port was a place of industrial heritage, and that is evolving and changing. But the port is also getting busier, and it has been a wicked and challenging problem without having the road infrastructure that we needed, which will be delivered through the opening of the West Gate Tunnel. We have had huge residential growth next to this busiest port in the Southern Hemisphere, which has created enormous challenges, and many of the roads that connect the port to the Western Highway are now residential areas where constant heavy vehicle traffic has posed health and safety risks to residents.

In 2019 we legislated the no-truck zones, and the enforcement of these zones has since then become a question in the community, because I know where we have had curfews I have worked with residents where the curfews have been breached by some truck drivers. It has been a source of frustration, because residents in my community have said to me, 'How do we know that this truck ban is going to work?' Well, we know it is going to work because we have done the hard work. We got the money to trial the cameras, and we know that the cameras work. Now we are delivering \$10.2 million in this year's budget to deliver the cameras to create the enforcement for those truck bans in the no-truck zones.

The current enforcement methods, which are sometimes a source of frustration, rely on the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator officers being in the right place at the right time. This bill makes provision for the use of specifically designed no-truck zone cameras which will be able to enforce the 24/7 truck bans across the inner west. This new camera technology employs the latest video analytics software developed in Victoria over the last 18 months, and I would like to acknowledge all of the hard work of people in the minister's department, who I know have worked tirelessly getting this technology right, using the smart camera trials to distinguish trucks from cars and other vehicles.

Once the West Gate Tunnel opens these cameras will be deployed to enforce the 24/7 ban on Francis Street between Roberts and Hyde streets; on Somerville Road between Geelong Road and Whitehall Street – and I know that that will be an enormous relief to the families at Kingsville Primary School; all of Buckley Street; Napier Street between Geelong Road and Whitehall Street – again, a huge relief to the families of Footscray City Primary School; Moore Street between Ballarat Road and Hopkins Street – the challenges Moore Street residents have experienced have been really tough, because of course Moore Street connects the port with Ballarat Road, but they will have a 24-hour truck ban and they will have enforcement cameras; Hudsons Road in the minister's electorate between Melbourne Road and Booker Street; and Blackshaws Road between Grieve Parade and Melbourne Road.

The \$10.2 million funding allocation is just another example of what you can achieve with hardworking Labor representatives who live in their communities and experience all of the same things everyone else in the community does. We have a minister who has worked tirelessly for years to try and resolve this issue, and so I am really proud to be standing here as the representative for Footscray in Parliament and speaking on this bill, because it means cleaner air, quieter neighbourhoods and less traffic every single day. I am proud to be part of a government that is getting on with making a real and meaningful difference in my community.

This bill is one of the most important to the inner west in a very long time, and the opening of the West Gate Tunnel as well as expanded container yards along Footscray Road will transform the inner west. This is another extraordinary achievement from Minister Horne, the member for Williamstown. Just last week she announced that the old Melbourne Market site on Footscray Road will be transformed into a place for container logistics and truck transport logistics. What that means in practical effect is that we are not going to have empty containers running through the container yards in the inner west.

Those containers are going to be going across the road from the port, where they should be, and stored there.

This is an extraordinary change that we are going to see in the inner west over the next few years, with truck bans, with the West Gate Tunnel and with an amazing container logistics centre at the old Melbourne Market site. This was not an easy problem to fix – it has taken lots of complex policy work, it has taken budget allocations, it has taken a whole heap of work from the minister's department and it has taken community advocacy. I would like to acknowledge and thank the members of the MTAG who have for years been raising these issues. I know that they are delighted that these enforcement cameras are coming to the streets with the truck bans. The legislative framework that this bill implements makes sure that the enforcement will be managed easily and clearly.

I am really delighted that we are setting up a process that provides certainty to my community, because too many members of my community have had to become experts in truck legislation while they are dealing with movements around their neighbourhood. This is a really momentous day for the people of Footscray. I commend the bill to the house.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (15:22): I rise to make a contribution to the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. There are a number of purposes to the bill: the enforcement of no-truck zones, digital drivers licences, some changes to the arrangements for custom numberplates and some minor amendments around infringements and the language relating to accessibility parking permits.

I am going to start with the enforcement of the no-truck zone. For a very long time – Labor have been in government for the best part of 2½ decades almost – they have had this issue of trucks in the inner west, particularly around Francis Street. I think it has been well recognised across all of Melbourne that this is an issue. They have had these no-truck zones in place. I am amused that the member for Footscray talked about the 'progressive and effective' Labor government, because part of this is around the West Gate Tunnel. It is due to open in 2025, but it was only as recently as 26 May 2024 that an article appeared in the *Age* by Patrick Hatch saying the West Gate Tunnel is years delayed and \$4 billion over budget and now builders are suing. It states:

The builders of Melbourne's West Gate Tunnel Project say design errors caused delays and significant cost blowouts on the trouble-plagued toll road, which is already three years late and \$4 billion over budget.

That is not an effective government at all. Part of removing the trucks from the inner west – which is a bit of a problem for the transport industry, and perhaps when that tunnel opens that will be much less of a problem for them – is about the enforcement to keep the trucks off the road. This is something that I am actually quite interested in, because they have camera enforcement for truck bans and they have significant investment behind it. What this means is that cameras will detect noncompliant trucks and there will be a vehicle recognition system which helps that detection. The images captured will be evidence of a heavy vehicle being in a no-truck zone.

The second-reading speech talks about what happens now. The enforcement of existing truck curfews is reliant upon authorised officers catching drivers breaking the rules red-handed. This is an issue, and I have a similar issue in my electorate about Heidelberg-Kinglake Road. Not only is Heidelberg-Kinglake Road riddled with potholes, opening up more and more all of the time, but it is a very dangerous, steep, windy road and very narrow. Far too often trucks find themselves on that road and there is not room to pass traffic coming in the opposite direction, and it is extremely stressful. The government have had a few signs up here and there saying 'Don't use this road', and then the signs have had to get bigger, but they have had nothing that has been really effective to keep the heavy vehicles off this road. I get calls and contacts to my office all the time. Every time that there is a truck that should not be on that road half of the population of Kinglake actually contacts me to say, 'Here's what has happened. Here are photos.' People take photos of the trucks being on both sides of the road because they are far too large. Any of the drivers that get to the top are absolutely terrified. They have

had that treacherous drive. We have asked time and time again for the minister to really make a difference and to keep these trucks off the road.

Of course there are some trucks that do need to be on roads, and this technology is going to be able to work out which ones can be there and which ones cannot be there. If you are building on the Heidelberg-Kinglake Road, it is between St Andrews and Kinglake which is the really, really tricky stretch of road for a few kilometres. You could have cameras that are detecting it rather than waiting for people to try and enforce it, because it is not all day every day, it is here and there. But it causes such grief for the community particularly of Kinglake, who use that as the major thoroughfare heading south. I implore the government to have a look. If this technology does work so well, they could think about how they might be able to use it in this situation in my electorate. I know that Google Maps and Apple Maps will often put that as the most direct route, and people who follow those maps religiously and ignore the signs saying 'You really shouldn't be on here if you're a big truck' really end up causing a lot of safety issues for residents in my area. So I really implore the government to have a look at this technology to see if it can be used in some way on the Heidelberg-Kinglake Road between Kinglake and St Andrews.

I want to refer now to the digital drivers licence component. This is something that the Berejiklian government managed to get in 2019 – five years ago. This government is just so slow at getting things done and keeping up with what is happening. Again I want to refer to the second-reading speech, because there is a classic line here:

The bill provides clarity and certainty for drivers, the community and law enforcement, putting beyond doubt that digital driver licences and learner permits are valid documents under the *road safety act 1986*.

Were they invalid? That is a question that I think people need to ask, because the government only half implemented digital drivers licences. Perhaps this bit should have been done some time ago. We have had the Ballarat trial, where 15,000 people downloaded digital licences, but I think there was a bit of anxiety around what was described as a 'technical blunder' in June last year when letters went out addressed to the wrong people. VicRoads blamed the agency's electronic mailing system. Thousands of people were worried about a data breach because they received official correspondence that contained an incorrect surname. They were inviting fully licensed drivers in Ballarat to participate in the early rollout and to be the first to get their licence on their phone, but there was a real electronic bungle. You have got to wonder with this government again whether they should have spent a little bit more time getting things right before they pushed the button to make it go.

There are some changes in the arrangements to custom numberplates, and the government refers to 'venture partnerships'. That means where things have been privatised – let us be clear about that. The changes here allow for an up-front fee or an ongoing periodical change as well as transfer fees. Of course there are going to be transfer fees, and I would expect that those transfer fees, with what happens, get indexed all of the time.

Some of the minor amendments are about infringements and the language relating to accessible parking permits, and I actually implore the government and VicRoads to be flexible in this area. They are changing some of the language about the Australian disability parking permit, which a lot of people would know and have seen the Victorian double time permit and the national disability parking permit. But I want to talk about the Australian disability parking permit, because I have a constituent who after a workplace accident was left in a wheelchair. He has gone on to really kick goals, and he has become an internationally recognised award winner in safety – James Wood of Dixons Creek. He goes interstate for his work, and he has a disability permit that he puts on his car at the airport at Tullamarine, but when he gets off at the other end he does not have a second permit. The government refused to give him that second permit. He photocopied one for using at the other end – I think it was in Perth – and he got a ticket because they said, 'That's not a real permit.' Well, he needed to, because he needed one for the disability access at Tullamarine and he needed the second one for the city that he was visiting, because he was hiring a car there.

Fortunately when I wrote to the minister she saw good sense and thought that government really do need to be flexible here, and he was able then to have a second permit issued to him, which was a little bit unusual. But these sorts of things do happen, and they are real. I urge the government to not just rely on intervention by the minister but to use some common sense when they are assessing some of these things. He was not trying to rip it off and give it to somebody else to go and park in all sorts of areas in Melbourne and get the best car spot. This was for legitimate work activity, and he had a workplace incident that left him a paraplegic relying on a wheelchair. I was glad that the minister could help here, but I really want the government and the department to use common sense when they are assessing some of these situations. Again, I really want some action on trucks on Heidelberg-Kinglake Road, and if the government would think about this camera technology there that would be appreciated.

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (15:32): I rise with pleasure to speak on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. As we have heard from several who have spoken before us, this bill will accomplish a range of things. There has been great excitement from the member for Footscray and the member for Sunbury in their contributions, talking about the delivery of our government's commitment to removing trucks from the inner west. I will speak a little bit later on about the fact that it is not just people who live in the inner west that this is important for, it is for those who commute that way – it may be for work; it may be for pleasure. As I say, there is a lot of excitement about this West Gate Tunnel Project, and that is fabulous.

Another aspect that this bill is focused on is the modernisation of our driver licences and learner permits. It is bringing them into the 21st century, which is always a wonderful thing. As the member for Eildon just mentioned, there are custom plates being looked at as well, and there are improvements to the clarity and operation of transport legislation.

I do want to address something, though, that the member for Caulfield raised. It is also something that the member for Evelyn raised the other week. It is about a project that the former coalition federal government had floated, and that was the widening of Mount Dandenong Tourist Road, back in 2018. They had a desire to widen the road, and they actually demanded that the state government, our state government, match their funding of \$20 million. The state Liberal opposition here too were also very supportive of this, and given they are making noises about this road again, I do wonder if they are rehashing this idea.

I have to be incredibly clear: the potential environmental impact of that project would be devastating. The official advice from VicRoads back in 2018 was that at least 1000 significant trees would need to be removed – 1000 significant trees. We are not just talking about some scraggly vegetation along the way. We are talking about very old, big important trees that are loved by the residents who live there. We live in the hills because we want to live amongst the trees. We know that there is risk with them, and we kind of accept that in living there. But there are other environmental and cultural impacts which are also expected from this proposed widening. Incredible loss of vegetation and massive construction works would leave a catastrophic scar on the mountain – it would indeed scar the mountain. When I have spoken with my constituents there are not many people who are keen on the idea of that at all.

I drive that road every day. I cannot even comprehend where one could widen the road. You would have to cut into the mountain to be able to do that. They are significant works. It would be environmentally devastating; that is for sure. I just wanted to raise that, because it has been floated a couple of times now, not just by one but by a couple of members, and I want to make that really clear.

Another matter – and I did hear the member for Eildon – I can empathise with to a degree is roads. There are some roads which are struggling, and the weather is absolutely not on our side at the moment. I think it is really important, when talking about road conditions, to acknowledge the impact of incredibly heavy rainfall. Asphalt is oil based and water is obviously water based; the two do not like each other. Asphalt is hydrophobic; it does not like water. If a small crack appears and water gets in, it starts to expand against it, and that is physics. Unfortunately we have had incredibly high rainfall,

which causes damage to the roads, and then to repair those roads really well the gold-star standard of repairs requires the conditions during repair to be dry. Well, there has not been a lot of that where I am, that is for sure, so it makes it very challenging for VicRoads to do this. I just think it is really important that there is understanding here. It is not for lack of will. It is certainly not for lack of funding. I mean, we have actually committed \$6.6 billion over the next 10 years towards road maintenance, so it is not for lack of that. It is literally Mother Nature working against us, or us against her; it depends from which point of view you are coming. It is a challenge for us, that is for sure. I think it is really important to acknowledge that this rain is impeding crews from repairing roads, and it is actually causing more damage all the time.

I did want to speak about digital drivers licences, because I have to say I am very excited by this. Apart from the fact that carrying a rather heavy handbag around for most of my life has given me an incredibly sore shoulder, I felt quite liberated by being able to leave my house with nothing more than my phone and my keys – except when I had to drive in my car, because I thought, ‘You’re meant to carry your drivers licence on you, so I need to have that with me too.’ I do not like loose cards, so it became an issue. Then I am like, ‘Do you leave it in the car? Probably best not to, because if someone steals your car or breaks in, then they can take your licence,’ so I have got this extra bit of plastic around. Can I tell you how thrilled I was the day that I was able to download that digital drivers licence onto my phone, leave that plastic back at home and just walk out the door with my pockets full of keys and a phone – and I needed nothing else. I can pay for things with my phone, and now I can identify myself and drive, in compliance, with my digital drivers licence on my phone. It is absolutely fantastic. I am excited about it. I currently have a learner driver in the house and a probationary driver, and they cannot wait until theirs are available on their phones as well. They are very excited at that prospect, and it is coming next year. I think it is fantastic.

I do remember the days of the old plastic cards before the safety features, the holograms and the embossing. I do remember there was a bit of a forgery thing going on amongst some young people back at high school who were there trying to make sure others could attend nightclubs before they were of legal age – terrible, terrible, terrible. Definitely the technology got better with the holograms and the safety features we put in, but having it on the phone with safety features in there is quite remarkable. I think it is fantastic. We are always looking to the future, and that is what we have done here as a government, making sure that people can access it. But it does not mean that you must use it on your phone; you have the choice to use your card as well.

I want to just mention the West Gate Tunnel Project because, as I say, I was listening to the members for Sunbury and Footscray and they were very excited about this – in particular the member for Footscray; you could hear her smiling through her contribution. It is making a big difference, and it is a fantastic way forward. We can see the traffic going through there is significant. Even for me, living in the outer east, my husband was driving to Truganina every day, five days a week, and the traffic he was encountering was really difficult. This does not just help people who live in the area, it helps everyone who commutes through there. The West Gate Tunnel Project is just fabulous. The 24-hour truck bans, the implementation of those, which this bill will support, are a win for the residents around there but also for anyone who uses the roads. It can be very intimidating when you are in a car in that middle lane and there is a huge truck on your left and there is another huge truck on your right. It is a very easy way to feel quite vulnerable.

This bill is going to do some incredibly important things there in connection with the West Gate Tunnel Project. Francis Street, Somerville Road – trucks are being banned along sections of them, and in some cases along the whole length of them, along with Buckley Street, Moore Street, Blackshaws Road and Hudsons Road. That is going to make a huge difference to people there. It is not just the noise of the trucks, it is the damage they do to the road and the pollution that they emit. Having them removed from there is going to be significant for those who live around there and those who need to go through there on their journey to work, or those who may be going out for pleasure over to the west as well or coming from that way to here.

Another issue I want to touch on is the inclusive language update, and I think this is really important. I have said it in here a number of times: words matter. We know words matter, because we here are in the business of speaking and communicating with people. I think the way we refer to people who have a disability is really, really important. Take away phrases that call someone an 'injured person' or a 'disabled person' – no, we should not be defining people by their injury or disability. They are a person with an injury or with a disability. That is giving them dignity and respect, and it reflects that to them. The way we speak and the words we use have an impact, and it is important that we are very careful with our language and we reflect upon the best way to refer to people. So the term 'parking permit for people with disabilities' is going to be an 'accessible parking permit' because that is precisely what it will be doing – it makes the parking accessible for the person who otherwise would struggle to park there. My mum has a parking permit – which will now be titled 'accessible parking permit' – and I know it is a struggle sometimes for her to get around and that parking permit makes all the difference. So I am delighted by the changes in this bill, and I commend it to the house.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (15:42): I rise today to speak on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. Speaking on roads is something that I do quite regularly for my electorate, because in the 10 years that I have been in this position I would have to say that complaints about our roads have consistently been the issue that is raised to me most often. But I can say it is an issue that is being raised now, 10 years on from being in this position in Parliament, 10 years of being under a Labor government, that our roads have never, ever been as bad as they are now.

I note that that the previous member, the member for Monbulk, was trying to somehow apportion the blame to the increased rainfall that we have – that rain is preventing crews from repairing roads. Well, I am sorry, but on one hand we get the Labor government lecturing us that climate change is real and that it is having a massive impact and that we have got drier conditions – in fact the Premier was out saying the other day the reason we need VNI West and renewables projects is because there is no future in farming because of climate change – and now we are hearing actually the reason that roads are in such bad condition is because the road crews cannot get out because there is too much rain. It has got nothing to do with the cut to road asset management funding, a massive cut of 16 per cent from just a couple of years ago, back in 2020. It has got nothing to do with the projected repair amount, the road and resurfacing volume that will take place. It was 12 million square metres just two years ago. This current year the Treasurer switched on and thought, 'There's going to be more rainfall this year. I'm going to cut the budget to make sure that only 3 million square metres, just a quarter of what was done two years ago, can be repaired by Labor.' So we have got this insightful Treasurer who has got this crystal ball, who perhaps should get a job with the Bureau of Meteorology after he finishes up as Treasurer later on this year, as the story goes. Perhaps he can get a job with the Bureau of Meteorology, because this man knows, as Labor knows, that the increased rainfall means that Victoria has got terrible roads. It is not about the roads budget; let us just make that very, very clear. It is not about Labor's cuts to the road asset management budget at all. It has got nothing to do with that; it is rain.

I am sure my constituents are going to take great comfort from that, even though they are going through a drought at the moment. We have got half my electorate suffering from a green drought. The top half of my electorate is having terrible rainfall conditions because of apparently more rainfall. I am sure they will take an enormous amount of comfort from knowing that Labor are saying even though they have got drought conditions now it is going to have an impact on their local economy, and even though they have got that position the reason why they also have to drive on pothole-riddled roads with crumbling edges is they have got too much rain. What a conundrum you find yourself in if you are part of the Labor government. We have members of the Labor government making comments in here that the reason our roads are bad is because our rainfall is too high. It just blows my mind.

I cannot wait to do media on this, because it just seems like it will be a walk in the park. The lies about what is happening with the road asset management budget and what Labor have done to our catastrophic roads in regional Victoria, as the road toll increases, are absolutely unbelievable. I look forward to every member of the Labor Party standing up today and trying to lecture the people of

country Victoria, who drive on horrific roads every single day, that it is the rain's fault that they have got bad roads: 'It's got nothing to do with us. We've been in for 21 of the past 25 years. We haven't put any money towards the roads budget. You have to suffer, but don't blame Labor, blame the rain.'

Matthew Guy interjected.

Emma KEALY: *Blame It on the Rain*, absolutely. Who was that? I cannot remember, but they were found to be frauds. I believe *Blame It on the Rain* was redone by a group, and I just cannot remember their names at the moment.

A member interjected.

Emma KEALY: Milli Vanilli! They could not actually sing. They were found out to be frauds. I think that is what we are finding out about the Labor government right now. We are finding out that Labor cannot manage money. They certainly cannot manage projects. They cannot manage Victoria's road network, and it is Victorians, particularly rural and regional Victorians, that are paying the ultimate price.

I would like to take the opportunity to highlight some of the roads in my electorate which are of great concern to local people. For people who live in the city, we do not have a public transport system of any value whatsoever. We do not have a train. We have very limited bus services. If you do not have access to a car, then you find it very, very difficult to get around, so we rely on a safe road network to get to work safely, to get to school safely and to get to footy and netball training. Also, though, for work purposes – we utilise our roads as a basis to get all of our freight to market, all of those beautiful products that we grow right across my electorate of Lowan, all those things that are reliant on canola and wheat and barley, our fine wool and our fat lambs – prime lambs as they are now, although I do like a little bit of marbling through my lamb I must admit. We have got dairy. We have got beef cattle. We have got the lot. We have even got raspberries in the far south-west of my electorate.

Danny O'Brien: Raspberries. They're my favourite.

Emma KEALY: They are delicious, my favourite too. But of course we need to get that produce from our region to other areas so that it can be packaged, it can be washed and it can be put in a beautiful container or processed so that you see it on the supermarket shelves.

In my electorate of Lowan, in the Kaniva region in the far west of the state, we grow a significant amount of durum wheat. The durum wheat from that area is mostly contracted to San Remo, and that is processed in Adelaide. Whenever you are going down the shopping aisle and you are looking at San Remo pasta, please think of my fantastic electorate of Lowan, because we are growing the wheat that goes into that fabulous product. That is what we do; we are the growers of raw produce. But we have got the biggest challenge because our growers cannot get their produce to market in a cost-effective way simply because there are so many tyres that are blown, there are so many rims damaged and there is damage to vehicles and rattling.

I hear of horrific things like nuts and bolts falling out of cars, and then of course you have a lot of debris on the road which can be picked up. I have heard of a valve being picked up and then stabbing through somebody's windscreen – exceptionally dangerous. These are all the consequences of Labor's cut to the road budget. This is what happens when you do not put sufficient money into road asset management, when you are not looking to build better roads, when you are not looking to build roads that last and when you are looking at doing the cheapest possible option of a patchwork quilt rather than rebuilding roads – doing it once and doing it right.

Now we see that road contracts are not being issued in my part of the state. One of the major contractors, Millers, have in the past done an enormous amount of roadworks in the local area. They are highly respected and a really, really respectable civil engineering company. They have not had the opportunity to tender for a single roads project in the west of Victoria for the past year. That has got nothing to do with rain. That has nothing to do with rainfall. When Labor MPs tell people in regional

Victoria, ‘Your roads are falling apart because the road crews can’t get out because it’s raining,’ that is nothing more than a lie. The reason the road crews are not getting out there is because they are not being funded. Tenders are not being offered. The roads will never be fixed if the government of the day, which is Labor, does not put money out there and put tenders out there to enable road crews to get out and actually fix our roads and make them safe.

In speaking on this bill I condemn the Labor government for their failure to fund country roads for the past 10 years. I condemn the Labor government for their endless excuses over why roads are not being repaired. What they perpetually fail to mention is that whatever the situation is, Labor fail to manage money and they fail to manage projects, particularly road projects, and it is every single rural and regional Victorian that is paying the price.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (15:51): The first thing to say in response to the member for Lowan’s contribution is: you did not speak on the bill. It was an elongated members statement. While fascinating, hearing about vertosols in Kaniva and their impact upon –

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, it is not a time to attack the opposition, and I ask you to bring the member back to the bill.

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

Iwan WALTERS: I will not speak on the point of order or the rank hypocrisy that was built into it, but I will respond to a few things before I return to actually speaking on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, rather than making a 10-minute members statement. Rather than simply talking about my own electorate, I will put some facts on the table.

Firstly, over our term of government \$700 million has been spent on road upgrades and maintenance as opposed to \$400 million per annum, which was the average under those opposite. The rabid socialists at the Insurance Council of Australia have talked about the incredible increase in claims that were made at the back end of 2022, which a bipartisan inquiry in this place described as the most devastating flood event in Victorian history. That is why the Allan Labor government is spending this year \$964 million on road maintenance. It is imperative, as the member for Lowan suggested, that we have safe roads in country areas and our rural communities to get produce to market and to enable people to travel safely, and it is part of a \$6.6 billion package that will be rolled out in the years to come. I think it is important to get those facts on the table before I turn to the very important provisions in the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

This is an economic reform, it is an environmental reform and I think above all it is a productivity reform. The measures in the bill of course relate to truck bans, custom plates and digital drivers licences, among other provisions, but I want my contribution today to focus on the issue of the truck bans as well as the digital driving licence dimensions. The Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill we have got before us today does make important changes to the road network in the inner west of Melbourne that deliver on our commitment to removing trucks from inner west streets following the opening of the West Gate Tunnel, and I think that is an incredibly important thing to be happening. The member for Footscray has already spoken in her contribution about the impact that will have on her community.

To come back and return to the member for Gippsland South’s contribution earlier, that is not because of local votes or considerations of such nature; it is because it is something that matters for the health of people in inner Melbourne. Professor Lou Irving at the Royal Melbourne Hospital has talked extensively in media coverage recently about the profound carcinogenic effects that diesel particulate matter has, the accumulation of that, in terms of incidence of asthma, of lung cancers and of other forms of chronic lung disease, like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. As someone who grew up in a household surrounded by respiratory academics who were doing research into this, this is something which has been a kitchen table discussion for many years in my own house, so I understand both the importance of the research base for a bill such as this but also the impact it is going to have

on real people and real communities in the areas of Footscray and Yarraville and those other areas of the inner west of Melbourne close to the Port of Melbourne that will benefit because heavy, B-double trucks and other heavy goods vehicles will not be trundling down their streets belching out diesel fumes into their homes and gardens. It matters. As I say, Francis Street, Somerville Road, Buckley Street, Moore Street, Blackshaws Road and Hudsons Road are not just places on a map but places where real people, real families, live and play, and they deserve peace and safety from trucks and the particulate matter that they spew out.

I had extensive prior engagement in a previous professional life with the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. While they do a good job, they are stretched quite thin. That national regulator is enforcing a range of important regulations and laws relating to the safety of commercial vehicles in Australia across the country. Their officers cannot be everywhere at once. The current regime relies upon their officers physically seeing trucks drive in those areas which have been deemed no-truck roads. It is not a good enough solution, which is why this legislation is so important – to provide the legislative underpinning, the regulatory framework that both enables truck-detection cameras to operate but also enables us to deploy some of the world-leading technology that is embedded within them, which can recognise when trucks are driving in areas they should not be. The sophisticated technology that underpins this is a hugely significant step up from the pretty antiquated NHVR methodology, where as I say, the enforcement is contingent on authorised officers catching drivers breaking the rules red-handed. This bill introduces a range of measures to support compliance and will enable the enforcement of 24-hour truck bans.

In my contribution on the government business program earlier today I touched upon the fact that these no-truck zone cameras are different from road safety cameras. They will not fall under the oversight of the road safety camera commissioner, because they are focused solely on keeping heavy vehicles out of residential streets. Crucially with these no-truck zones and the opening of the West Gate Tunnel we are going to be removing I think up to 9000 truck movements per day off residential streets where families live, where people walk, where cyclists travel. I recall speaking with representatives of the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group and other deeply concerned residents about the problems that they and their families were encountering as a result not just of heavy trucks going down their streets at significant speeds and the obvious physical safety dimensions that stem from that but the accumulated effects of years living next to trucks which are inevitably emitting diesel fumes.

As a consequence of, I would suggest, the previous federal government's inaction on this issue, we have got one of the oldest truck fleets in the world, which exacerbates the challenge of particulate matter as a consequence of heavy goods vehicles moving in and around residential areas. It is not just the fact that they are there and in and of themselves quite dangerous when you have got a huge truck in the context of a small residential street but the fact that our truck fleet is old and does not have some of the built-in safety mechanisms and filters, for example, that more modern trucks do have. I think the measures in this bill just emphasise that we are serious about making the west and the inner west better places to live. The \$10.2 million commitment that was in the most recent budget to enable these cameras to be rolled out and to do their enforcement work testifies to that.

Of course the reason these cameras are relevant now is because the West Gate Tunnel is nearly complete. It will enable a further 9000 trucks a day to be taken off local streets and an additional 5000 trucks to be prohibited from taking rat runs around that area of Yarraville, Seddon and Footscray to enable them to avoid the West Gate Freeway. Their presence there in residential communities, where there are schools on those thoroughfares, where there are homes and where there are people living and working is inherently dangerous. The West Gate Tunnel provides those trucks with a direct and efficient outlet to the Port of Melbourne that could see them taken off residential streets, so it is a hugely important development.

Of course one of the other investments of this government is in the port rail shuttle, which is another means of getting goods traffic off trucks and onto rail so that the truck movements which are needed for those last-mile journeys can at least begin and end in areas of Melbourne which are separated from

residential premises, like in my own electorate of Greenvale, where a private consortium is developing a \$400 million intermodal container terminal at Somerton, connected with the Melbourne to Sydney standard-gauge railway as well as the north–east broad-gauge lines to enable direct access into the Port of Melbourne. The port rail shuttle dimension of that is a \$68 million Victorian government project which is integral to enabling truck movements to abate and to getting that vital freight that the Victorian economy depends upon, that the Port of Melbourne depends upon as Australia’s busiest port, off trucks onto trains with commensurate environmental benefits but also productivity benefits.

Just in the time that remains to me I do want to talk about the digital drivers licence dimension of this bill, whereby it provides the regulatory and legal basis to assure Victorians that the digital drivers licences on their phones are legal documents and are able to be used in the same way that the existing plastic devices can. I have one on my own phone, and it has been transformative for efficiency – I no longer have to carry my wallet everywhere. But therein lies the point: it saves time, and at its heart this is the kind of micro-economic incremental reform that does make a difference in terms of business costs and in terms of the costs that are occasioned to a job seeker, for example, applying for a new job. It saves at the margin a little bit of time every single time somebody needs to use their drivers licence for those purposes, but they can only do that if there is a sound regulatory and legislative basis. It is what this bill does, and I commend it to the house.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (16:01): I rise to speak on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I will start off with what we were just talking and just heard about. One of the reasons this is coming in now is obviously because of some of the changes that are happening here in Victoria with the soon to be – or we will say not too soon to be – West Gate Tunnel, which is going to be opening I think in 2025, sometime in 2025, so obviously we have to have legislation around the framework of what is happening there. It would have been interesting if we had had an opportunity to debate this legislation here back in 2022 when the West Gate Tunnel was originally supposed to be completed – by 30 September in 2022; some three years late this project will be here in Victoria, obviously costing billions of dollars over what the original estimates were. It started off, I believe, before an election, when it was originally the West Gate distributor, which was going to be a small new exit lane to take 500 trucks, I think it was originally, off the West Gate at the time, which then turned into the project of the West Gate Tunnel later on. We need to make sure that we do have legislation around it, but it is a bit disappointing how long it has taken and what it has cost Victorians as we have gone through.

It also goes to what the last speaker left off talking about – digital licences. He said that they save time, give people the opportunity to save that time when they are applying for things, and that they can use them a lot easier. If only we could use them on government projects, we may have saved time on a lot of projects across our state. But with digital licences, when you compare Victoria to the rest of the country, in 2019 digital licences already were being used in New South Wales, and there were calls for that to happen here in Victoria to ensure that we could have the same access to what they have up in New South Wales. Then South Australia and then Queensland and then the Victorian government eventually decided, ‘Maybe we should look at something in relation to digital licences,’ and it has taken them that long that we only got them last year. And then to find out they did not have the legislative framework around ensuring they were legal is another concern, and I think the government should have put that in place prior to having those digital licences come out; I think it would have helped a lot there.

When it comes to roads and road safety, I think I speak for many when I say that it is a very, very important topic, whether that is improved driving skills, giving young drivers the tools that they need to stay safe on the roads, ensuring vehicles are safe or having roadworthy vehicles. Having carworthy roads is something that would be very handy here in this state, which we have not got. What we are seeing over time is the need to ensure that road safety is paramount in all of our discussions. But right at the moment – I looked at the road toll of the deaths on the road here in Victoria effective midnight last night – we have had 199 deaths on the roads here in Victoria this year. That is above last year,

which was 196, which is well and truly above the last five-year average, and we have seen a gradual increase in deaths on the road over the last few years. It is something that I know we are very concerned about on this side of the house, and I assume it is something that most people in the community are concerned about.

One of the things that gets raised with us is the condition of the road and how that is impacting on people's driving. We have seen this government cut funding when it comes to road maintenance. We have seen their own report come out saying 91 per cent of roads effectively are not safe across our state, that they are in poor or very poor condition, and that is something we should be genuinely worried about.

I remember when I came into this place, you used to drive over to the west of Victoria, and I know that my colleagues out in the west used to say some of the western roads were some of the worst in Victoria. We had some bad roads out there, but overall roads in Victoria I would not say were terrible. You could go over the border and would not know much difference. The reality is now that you know when you have gone into South Australia or New South Wales, because the road quality is so different compared to here in Victoria.

Whilst it used to be the regional areas where we used to worry about getting damage to our cars or our wheels, it is now in metropolitan areas. I can guarantee now in Berwick we are starting to see potholes that continue to reappear because of the poor workmanship that is put into them because there is no investment to fix them properly. There is this bandaid approach at the moment where we will go around and effectively chuck in some loose tar – 'That'll be right'. I think we have even got some video of one down in Beaconsfield where the worker put the tar in and was jumping up and down on it, and that is the way they compacted it. That is not a safe fix for a pothole on a major road through a town in Beaconsfield or in Berwick, where potholes appear now on the Princes Highway – obviously all VicRoads' roads – and none of these potholes are getting fixed. They are just gradually getting worse. They are on bends, and it is a massive concern we have here in Victoria. If we do not have the correct investment for this road maintenance, for the preventative measures – it has all been cut, what used to happen with the sealing of roads – this is going to lead to longer term issues and safety issues here in Victoria for all of our drivers.

As I said, when we continue to see the impact of road safety and the deaths on the road increasing, whilst the road is one part of it, the other element of it when it comes to roads and road safety here in Victoria is ensuring you have a good and proper police presence on major routes, particularly through holiday periods et cetera. The challenge that Victoria Police have is they just have not got the resources to be out on the road in that preventative way. We have seen there are nearly a thousand vacancies when it comes to Victoria Police members. We have seen 43 stations that have had their hours cut or have been closed, and that means there are less opportunities for police vehicles to be responding throughout the state.

I think many would say when you used to go on holidays here in Victoria, you quite regularly saw a police car or two. You would see a camera that you would drive past. Sometimes you would see the flash, but most times you would see someone giving you a flash going the other way, and all of these things improved road safety across Victoria. One big issue we have now is we do not have the police vehicles. You can drive all the way up to the New South Wales border now. I have driven over to visit the member for South-West Coast and down to Portland. I can drive there and back and not see a police car on the road. They just do not have the staff for it.

Roma Britnell interjected.

Brad BATTIN: You say there are potholes. The last time I think I saw a police officer with their lights on at an intersection, which did slow me down, was when they were protecting a pothole. They were sitting on the road down on the South Gipps highway. The pothole was that big that the police were there parked in front of it until VicRoads could come down. VicRoads did not fix the problem;

they did not fix the hole. They put signs up around it that said do 40 kilometres an hour and they put witch's hats around it. That is the problem we have got here in Victoria. If I could go back 14 years to when I got elected and I had a choice in what I was going to do and I had an opportunity to invest in anything, I wish I had invested in witch's hats, because with the amount of witch's hats on roads here in Victoria you would make an absolute fortune. The amount of signs that are slowing people down across our state, slowing our major transport routes, is unbelievable.

I know the member for South-West Coast is here. I went over with the member for South-West Coast and we put her address into the GPS when she was coming back to Melbourne, and the route that it took us on I have still got video of. It is a major truck route, and it was like a single lane. Actually you cannot even say it is a single lane; it is a goat track. It is one road with no gutters on either side. When a truck came the other way, you had to drive off the road to ensure they could get past, with the risk of getting bogged. That is a major thoroughfare between Adelaide, South Australia, and Melbourne for B-double truck routes. That is what we are experiencing here in Victoria. If you want to put road safety first and ensure that that is paramount, then those major thoroughfares must be fixed. You need to ensure that the roads are maintained and that these major thoroughfares have the ability and are built to handle the trucks and vehicles that need to go across them.

All of these things are good for not just safety but also the economy. It is simply unfair that in Victoria we continue to see cuts whilst this government throws all of its money into one project in Melbourne with the Suburban Rail Loop and none into outer growth areas like mine, where you are seeing Thompsons Road not getting built, Clyde Road failing to get any funding put towards it and potholes on major roads through there. You have seen the delay on the Thompsons Road roundabout, which is now 2029, and there is no further funding down in Thompsons Road at all. When we talk about Clyde Road, it might as well be a roller-coaster, the way in goes in and out. The developers have done their bit, and the government have done nothing. They are not putting any money into maintenance, and then there are the potholes.

Pauline Richards interjected.

Brad BATTIN: I note the member for Cranbourne commenting on it. I invite the member for Cranbourne, like I invited the Premier, to come for a drive down there. Drive your car over it, because you know the damage it will do to your car with the potholes et cetera down there. The community keeps telling us. It is just a shame that the government fail to listen.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (16:11): I rise today to contribute on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I have just heard the contribution from the member for Berwick, and he made a reference to slowing traffic down. As an old paramedic – and I say old – I think it is a great thing, slowing traffic down, because if we look at the deaths on the road this year, most of them were caused by excessive speed or not wearing seatbelts. I think slowing traffic down is a great concept, so thanks for your contribution on slowing traffic down – that is great. I will also reflect on what the member for South-West Coast said and the commentary around Victoria having the worst roads in the country. I travelled down to South Australia just recently, down to Victor Harbor, towing a caravan, and I can tell you by comparison Victorian roads are very good. Maybe it was just that stretch down to Victor Harbor, but we are pretty good. Again, the member for Gippsland South gave us lovely pothole education.

I can say along the Western Freeway, which I travel every day, there have been enormous works done along the Western Freeway by VicRoads, and I commend their workers for getting out there in terrible weather and upgrading and fixing the road. I should say around Melton we are doing a number of intersection upgrades, and I thank VicRoads again in regard to the upgrading of High Street and Coburns Road and Norton Drive. These are major intersections in Melton, and they are making the place a hell of a lot safer. They will keep people safe and hopefully prevent people being seriously injured or killed in accidents in high-risk intersections.

This bill makes a few minor but important updates to the Road Safety Act 1986 to reflect that licences are not just physical cards anymore. The act assumes that licences were only ever in physical form. Some of us will remember the good old licences in that paper form that you used to fold up and put in a wallet, and by the time you pulled them out of the wallet they were all tattered and falling to bits and things like that. You did not have to have a photo in those days on your licence – that is how far back some of us go here.

Members interjecting.

Steve McGHIE: Yes, some of us here. I think I got my licence in 1973, so there you go, when Richmond won the Premiership. Good old Tigers: they went back to back, 1973, 74 – I remember that. And I had a licence to drive to the grand final, I should remind the member for Croydon. I had a licence to go to the grand final to watch Richmond win that year. Anyway, it was a good old paper licence in those days. Now we have come to digital licences, which is amazing and a great technology, and over 1 million people have got on board with those digital licences. I will refer to something a bit later about there being a million and one that have got the digital licence now, and that was me just before I came into the chamber. So it is not that hard. When you can have a dinosaur like me doing digital things, that is amazing. I have got a digital licence now. I do not know what I am going to do with it, but anyway, I have got one.

Of course this is not just about fancy technology, it is about making life easier and safer for all of us. The Allan Labor government is delivering on its promise to modernise systems, and the response from the community has been fantastic. As I said, over 1 million people are already on board with the digital licences, and that is fantastic. One of the stand-out features of this new bill is that it formally recognises the digital drivers licences in the Road Safety Act. We made a promise to bring Victoria into the digital age, and I am proud to say we have delivered in record time.

Like with most things in my life, I want to talk about something that is very simple but incredibly useful, like the digital drivers licences. I am not the most tech-savvy person, as I said previously, but even I can see how easy and helpful this is for all Victorians. Now that I have got it on my phone, I will work out what I do with it, and after that hopefully I will not be stopped by the coppers. I believe you do not have to hand the phone over to the cops, but we will see how we go. If they pull me up, I might say, 'Look, I was looking for my digital licence on my phone,' rather than them saying, 'You've been talking on the phone.' We will be all right. I know the police do a fantastic job, so good on them.

This bill gives legal clarity that digital licences are just as valid as the physical cards that we have been using. I did renew my physical card recently, and it is interesting that you do not have to go and get a new photo. I think in my old photo I was carrying about 20 kilos more; it does not even look like me. I have got a twin brother, so I will blame my twin brother. I will say it is him and not me. You do not even have to get a new photo when you get your plastic licence; it is quite interesting.

We promised Victorians we would have the option for them to carry their licences on their phones by 2024. That has been delivered. Digital licences have been available since May for anyone with a full licence. It is no surprise to this chamber that over 1 million people are already using them – 20 per cent of eligible drivers – and that is growing and growing rapidly. This all started in a trial in Ballarat, where more than 15,000 Ballarat residents and drivers accessed their licences through the myVicRoads or Service Victoria apps. People love the convenience. It is great. I cannot blame them for that. As I said, I have just had it put on my phone today, and it will be fantastic.

Acting Speaker, I am glad you are sitting down, because this part might surprise you. With little or no help, as I said earlier, I did do it myself. I had a couple of goes at it. I tried it on the Service Victoria app and had no luck, but of course we went to – it was MyGov or the VicRoads app; I cannot remember now – VicRoads. We put that on there, and hallelujah I have got a digital drivers licence. But I needed some assistance from my wife because I do not have a registered vehicle, because I do not own a

vehicle; my wife owns the vehicle. But I just bought a motorhome recently, and apparently that is registered in my name, so we had to give the registration for the motorhome.

I would like to highlight some of the key points of the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill which brings in important changes that will benefit our communities in many different ways. We will talk about the removal of the trucks from Melbourne's inner west. As someone that was born and bred in Melbourne's inner west – born and bred in Braybrook – I knocked around those western suburbs areas for many, many years and saw the traffic and the type of traffic increase over many decades in that area. I remember when I first got my licence my father was alive, and he worked at General Motors Holden at Fishermans Bend. I would drive him to the ferry at the end of Francis Street, if anyone knows it, and pedestrians would get on the ferry and go across the river to Fishermans Bend to the aircraft factory, to GMH and to all those big manufacturing companies that were on that side of the river. I remember the traffic in those days, and we are talking in the 1970s and 80s. There were high volumes of traffic in those days and many, many trucks because of the petrochemical companies that were all in that area. The trucks increased obviously with the West Gate Bridge, coming off the bridge at Melbourne Road, Millers Road, Francis Street or wherever it might be. There were enormous truck volumes, and it must have been terrible for the local residents.

I have got to shout out to the member for Footscray and the member for Williamstown in regard to their advocacy in getting these trucks off those local roads and making it a lot safer for their constituents. It is a fantastic effort by them.

It is all coming to fruition with the opening of the West Gate Tunnel next year, which will benefit not only the inner west but right through the western corridor down to the south-west, down from Geelong into Melbourne and also in my area of Melton, where many, many constituents will use that part and that road and access it to go into the city for entertainment, for work, for school for some people and also for travelling in for sporting events, in particular towards the MCG and down to the tennis centre and places like that. That road and that access in many different ways, not just through the tunnel but through all the work that is being done along Footscray Road and the elevated roadworks there, is going to be amazing, let alone the bicycle path. I am not sure what they will call it – velodrome or velo something – but it looks fantastic. It is great work and not only a great asset for this state but a fantastic asset for the western suburbs. And for the western suburbs people that think everything is happening in the east: it is not. Next year we will see the opening of the West Gate Tunnel and we will see the opening of the Metro Tunnel – two great transport assets and assets that people can travel along to get to places where they need to go. I commend this bill to the house.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (16:21): I rise to speak on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, and I want to start by referring to what was said by the member for Melton. There are two things I want to call out on what he said, and the first one was that he agrees with slowing down Victorians. From a safety perspective I understand that, but when you refer to what the member before him, the member for Berwick, was talking about, who said that the police are having to guard potholes because it is so dangerous on some of the roads, that that is what he witnessed, and the member for Melton saying, 'Well, slowing down Victorians is a good thing because of the safety issue,' that just demonstrates how out of touch Labor are with the breadth of what they are trying to achieve in this state. They do not govern for Melbourne; they govern from border to border. They completely misunderstand western Victorians and the regions and that getting people from 4½, 5 hours away, from the South Australian border, into Melbourne for medical appointments or to enjoy the football is exactly the same responsibility that the government have for the people in the city. It was absolutely unbelievable, and I have heard things like this before when I have heard the members of the government say everyone should be 15 minutes walking distance from a bus stop – it is a total misunderstanding of the state of Victoria. If we slowed everyone down to 40 or 60 because the roads are so bad and that was the solution to a lack of efficiency in this state for people even getting to work – and some people have explained to me the frustration experienced by people who end up going faster because the road is so bad and they are sick of the 40s and 60s – then actually we would have more

accidents. It is just out of touch for him to say, 'Let's just slow everyone down because it's safer.' Let us fix the road surface. Why don't the state Labor government think about that responsibility they have to the assets that they are responsible for?

The second thing the member for Melton said was that he had gone to South Australia recently. I can tell you now my constituents will just absolutely be shocked at this. He said the roads in South Australia in his experience were not as good as in western Victoria. The member for Melton said the roads in Victoria were better than those in South Australia. I do not know how many people contact my office and say the minute you get to the South Australian border the roads improve. I do not know what sort of coloured glasses you had on, but that is just as ridiculous as when we heard a member on the other side say some time ago that her mother had said how great the roads are in Victoria. Come to western Victoria. Come further out than the western suburbs and experience what western Victorian drivers are putting up with. Look at what the parents are saying, the older people are saying. People will not drive at night. It is just so dangerous. The mums and dads whose kids are starting to get their licences at 18 are terrified for their children's safety.

I started in this role nearly a decade ago, and I spoke about the roads a lot because it was the issue that would come into my electorate the most, and it still is. Nearly a decade on the roads have never been as bad – they are shocking. Last year, or it may have been the year before, the Minister for Roads and Road Safety came down to the electorate and she got on radio and she blamed the rain. This year, just last week, she came down and rather than taking responsibility for fixing the roads, she blamed the federal government. It is time to be honest with the people of Victoria, to do your job and be honest about the fact that you have a responsibility for state roads. You are not doing your job at all, and the lives of the people of South-West Coast are at risk, as are those of the truck drivers, the taxidivers, the bus drivers whose workplace it is, which they are on every single day. It is an absolute disgrace.

I was talking to a truck driver the other day, a young man in his 30s. He had his thongs on and it was quite cold. We were at a function at a footy oval and he said, 'You know the reason I have got thongs on is because my back is so bad. I am a fifth-generation truck driver, and I am just thrown around in the truck. But it is what I do, and I am just in so much pain because of the damage that has been done to my back from the roads.' That is pretty profound stuff.

This is Labor, and what they are doing with our South-West Coast roads, our regional roads is purely and utterly nothing to do with the rain. As farmers, every single year we watch the rain, so do not talk to south-west Victorians about rain. I can tell you what dates it rained on in 1992 and 83 – I can tell you all the rainfall. It is all documented. I am sorry it is not as a result of wet winters that our roads are failing. It has got everything to do with the fact that the Labor state government have cut the funding since 2020 to our roads by 45 per cent.

In 2017, when I was the shadow minister for roads, the Auditor-General came out and said if nothing changed, in six years time 90 per cent of our roads would be in poor condition. Sure enough, as the current shadow minister for roads the member for South Gippsland said just today, 91 per cent of our roads are in poor condition and none are in good condition. That is a result of Labor having been in government for 21 of the last 25 years and absolutely cutting the funding to the roads – not the rainfall. We have had rain in the Victorian state for many years. It varies from year to year but we get deluges quite commonly, and certainly we do in western Victoria – that is why we dairy farm them, because that is what you need, good rainfall.

The government three years ago was doing 12 million square metres of repairs of the roads and is now doing 3 million. That is a cut, and that is a real cut. Last week the minister for roads was in the region and said over \$900 million is being spent on the roads this year. That is right across the region, but imply that it is just in the South-West Coast while you are there. To mislead the community so blatantly like this when they are driving on these roads every single day – you just cannot fool people who are living it every single day. Lecturing country Victorians, like I have just heard from the member for

Melton saying, ‘It is a good thing to slow everyone down,’ come out to western Victoria and say that out loud and see how it goes down.

This is a government that cannot manage the roads. That is as simple as it is, because they are not interested in western Victoria. They are just not interested in regional Victoria, and it is demonstrated quite clearly by the way they spend no money in western Victoria and spend so much money in the city but waste that money at the same time. They just cannot manage money, cannot manage projects and certainly cannot manage our roads.

We are seeing more lives lost on our roads – in 2023 an increase of 22 per cent. That is because Labor cut \$230 million from the road safety program in 2021–22. These figures do not lie. These are the outcomes from the cuts that we have seen. Instead of fixing dangerous roads, they are just permanently reducing the speed limits. How much money is getting spent on ‘Rough surface’ signs? I could not count the amount. Sometimes when I go between Nelson and Portland I count the wallabies, but I think a better game would be counting the ‘Rough road’ signs, because there are just so many on the sides of our roads, and it is an investment that somebody is making a lot of money out of. We are paying the price for Labor’s mismanagement. We are paying the price in our community where safety is compromised. We are paying the price in our freight industry, where the cost of consumer goods is going up because the damage to our trucks increases year on year. I have said this in the Parliament before: kingpins that should not break, that used to last more than six years, are breaking within 18 months.

I remember bluestone being taken down to be used in the city of Melbourne – bluestone pavers breaking in the trucks on the way down on our south-west roads. So if this is a government that cannot see past their blinkers, which end at the West Gate Bridge, and do not realise their responsibility is to regional Victorians, then do not keep the mistruths up, saying, ‘It’s fine. We’re doing a really good job.’ Get out and take a look. Try and say in front of people in western Victoria that our roads are good and see what reception you get. I reckon you might incense some people.

But this is a bill that does a number of things. It will take trucks down different routes. What the industry are most concerned about in this bill is the red tape that they will encounter trying to prove that they are permitted on the roads that they have been banned from. They are not comfortable that the consultation has taken place, and that is something we consistently see with Labor. So we have an industry that is not confident, we have an industry that has not been consulted with in a way that it feels comfortable that it can see a way forward without being encumbered by lots more red tape and we have a community further out into south-west Victoria who would like to have the consideration of a government – the state Labor government – that understands that their needs are just as vital as those of the people of inner-city Melbourne and that their safety matters too.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (16:31): It is a real pleasure to follow the member for South-West Coast to rise and speak on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. It is an absolute pleasure to talk about the South-West Coast, because, as someone who does follow a little bit of social media, I saw a kind of flurry of events, with four fabulous Labor ministers spending a bit of time down in the South-West Coast recently. The Minister for Roads and Road Safety was actually down there having lots of conversations with residents in and around, I think it was, the Warrnambool area. The Minister for Agriculture was down there talking to farmers. Who would have thought? That is right. Also we had the Minister for Employment and Minister for Prevention of Family Violence down there, I believe, opening an Orange Door – a very, very important Labor government initiative for people in regional Victoria. And just because we have got the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events sitting at the table there, I will give him a special mention. He also was down there at South-West Coast, and I believe he was announcing a \$50,000 grant that will go towards Warrnambool Art Gallery.

Steve Dimopoulos interjected.

Sarah CONNOLLY: Four ministers. But what I liked most was that the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, who is at the table, was lucky enough to try something which I think is kind of fabulous, which was abalone – something fantastic. So if you are ever down in that part of Victoria, I am sure the minister and I would highly recommend checking out some abalone and talking to our abalone farmers about the incredible work that they do.

I do also want to put on the record that Labor knows the challenges ahead when it comes to roads. We have talked about them time and time again in this place in question time. Indeed, member for South-West Coast, if you had bothered to watch budget estimates, you would have seen them talk about it for hours as they were interrogated as to how much is being spent where and when. That is why Labor here has committed \$6.6 billion over the next 10 years so we can plan long term – planning long term is important – and we can get our roads into the best state that they can be. That includes \$964 million in this year alone. And I like to compare, right. Let us do a little comparison, member for South-West Coast. We will compare that with the \$493 million of those opposite – just an average, not a total indeed. We will compare the pair, as my kids would say.

As part of my contribution, I do want to give a really big shout-out to our wonderful truck drivers, who do such an incredible job in this state. We really noticed it during COVID – the incredible job they did to ensure that all of the things that we need to keep us well fed, clothed and all of that kind of stuff during COVID was delivered to our home. That was our truck drivers, who have never been more important.

In the debate on this bill we have talked a lot about trucks, particularly in the inner west. We have a little game in my family; I have not really talked about this, but I know the member for Footscray and the member for Williamstown will have a chuckle because I am sure their kids have the same game. The game is: when we stop at the lights on Melbourne Road, let us count how many big trucks there are before the light goes green and we head off to one of their favourite ice cream shops in Yarraville. We have gotten to 42, I think it was, from memory, trucks that we counted travelling along Melbourne Road and down Francis Street: 42 – that is extraordinary – in a couple of minutes being stopped at a red light.

It is amazing as a westie to be able to stand up and speak on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, and I have to absolutely commend the member for Footscray and the member for Williamstown for their tireless advocacy in trying to get trucks off local streets in local neighbourhoods in the inner west. It has not been an easy job, and I would say it has not been a cheap job, because it has been our government's investment and construction of our West Gate Tunnel Project that has at the end of the day made that possible, and that is opening in 2025. Yes, she has been a big project to deliver. We have had our challenges. As someone who has lived and breathed that project – I am trying to count back now – I feel like it has been seven years of construction pain and all of this other stuff, with daily conversations about what is happening where and traffic diversions. But in the last 12 months we have seen it working. Lanes are opening. She is freeing up, she is being built, she is almost done.

Most recently we have seen that the veloway, the incredible cycling veloway, is 50 per cent finished. The great big green thing hanging off the underbelly of the West Gate Tunnel is a veloway. I always think it is a fancy word for a cycling path, but that is me. She is bloody beautiful, and that is for westies. Let me just say this in the chamber, to my own colleagues here: it is not just for inner westies. Outer westies love riding bikes. I have met people living in Truganina and Williams Landing and, by God, Werribee who ride bikes to the city. They have invited me; I have said I will check my diary. It seems like a pretty big ride for a girl that does not ride a bike very often. They ride their bikes. It is for people across Melbourne's west.

When I am out and about in the electorate and I am talking to locals about the projects that matter to them most, we talk about roads almost on a daily basis. It was one of the reasons why we invested \$1.8 billion as part of the western roads package. When I was the member for Tarneit five of those

roads were inside my electorate. They are now open. It is unbelievable watching the free-flowing traffic in, around and on those roads, absolutely amazing – roads like Leakes and Palmers, which used to be banked up all the way to the freeway. These were major congestion belts along the arterial blood lines of our local community. They are now our major thoroughfares that run through our electorate. Even now, three years after they were completed – can you believe it has been three years – these upgraded roads are getting folks home quicker and easier and with much, much less stress.

But we know there is so much more to do. We cannot stop there. The conversations I have with locals turn very quickly to the freeway and how we are trying to ease traffic there. I say this like a chant to my husband: for folks who have to travel day in and day out over the West Gate to get to work, and there are a hell of a lot of westies, and, I do say, interlopers from Geelong, that do – and I notice the member for Geelong is not here, but including her on particular days, clogging up our freeway and our bridge – it will be our West Gate Tunnel that revolutionises the way in which we travel in and around our city. It is going to free up the traffic that is holding us back from getting where we need to go sooner rather than later but also getting us home sooner so we can do the things that we like with the people that we love most.

We know that the health stats of people in the western suburbs, particularly the outer west, are just a bit worse than the rest of Victoria. A lot of that has to do with us spending so much time in our cars, and the paper has reported for many, many, many years the amount of time that folks in the outer west spend in their cars. The West Gate Tunnel is about changing that.

Despite all of the challenges that we have faced with that project, like I said – we have lived through it, and I am pretty sure it is at about that seven-year mark – I can tell you, whether you are on this side of the house or that side of the house, westies cannot wait till that project opens. We will be counting down the days. We will be some of the first people to go through it. When we have the opportunity to walk across it or walk over it, we will be there in our numbers. That tunnel, that project, that incredible overpass, the highway with the incredible view of the city as part of that tunnel – that is for us. That is to make our lives better. Whether we are talking about spending less time in our cars and more time with our kids or having better health stats and health outcomes, that tunnel is our project, and we cannot wait to see it open in 2025. This is a great bill, and I commend it to the house.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (16:41): The Greens welcome this bill, and we will be supporting it, although we do have some ideas to improve it. There are five things that the bill seeks to achieve. There are powers for 24/7 camera enforcement for truck bans in the inner west of Melbourne; there is also the rollout of digital licences – something that we have been asking about even in the previous Parliament, and it is very good to see it happen; it raises charges for custom number plates; it modernises language for accessible parking permits, particularly using more inclusive language; and around infringement processes it clarifies that all fines and associated costs are to be refunded if a person has been granted an extension of time to deal with an infringement notice.

I would like to focus on two of these, powers for enforcing truck bans and fines for infringements. The majority of the bill provides new powers for 24-hour, seven-day-a-week camera enforcement for truck bans in the inner west of Melbourne. If enforcement can be made to work this time, this is a good thing. For decades residents across a number of inner west communities have borne the brunt of too many trucks travelling in and out of the port and too many trucks flouting the rules. The health impacts of the resulting air pollution include childhood and adult asthma, premature deaths and cardiovascular and respiratory disease. Everybody is at risk, but it is the elderly, pregnant women and young children who are most vulnerable to this, and recent evidence shows that the impacts are greater than previously understood.

There is a sorry history of trying and failing to deal with this issue, and the Greens have at various times attempted to hold the government of the day to account. Let us just recap some of that history: truck curfews were introduced in 2002, and cameras were installed in Francis Street in 2007 for \$300,000. In three years they fined just one driver – twice – because they could not correctly identify

numberplates. Cameras were installed in Hyde Street around 2018 or 2019, and they also installed signs which said 'Truck bans enforced'. Those signs were quickly changed to 'Truck bans monitored'. These cameras collected identification information, but VicRoads claimed to have no data on whether they had resulted in any fines at all. Cameras were then installed in the inner west in 2022 for \$350,000, and Labor committed \$10.2 million in the 2024–25 budget for camera enforcement for truck bans. The sum of money suggests it is getting more serious now. Every time cameras are installed the government announces that it is solving trucks on residential streets in the inner west, but there has to date been no evidence of enforcement and trucks regularly break the curfews.

In this bill enforcement responsibilities are shared across state and federal agencies, but given the abovementioned sorry history, why should the community believe that the Department of Transport and Planning or the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator will now start doing the enforcement work? To help answer that question, under standing orders I wish to advise the house of an amendment to this bill, and I request that it be circulated.

Amendment circulated under standing orders.

Tim READ: Simply put, this amendment is purely for reporting, with quarterly reports to be listed on the department's website on the number of infringements, the number of matters taken to the Magistrates' Court and the number of exceptions. Because there has been more than two decades of promising and then failing the community in inner Melbourne to get trucks off the road, we think this amendment on transparent reporting is an easy and simple way to demonstrate to the community the effectiveness of the powers in this bill in addressing the problem.

The second point I would like to address is fines for traffic infringements. In Victoria, more than any other state in Australia, fines drive people into poverty and keep them there. Let us just remind ourselves of what the situation is, and it only becomes sharper in the current cost-of-living crisis. We know, or we should know, that fines disproportionately affect disadvantaged people. It is by no means an even playing field for poor people, First Nations people, single parents, people in disadvantaged housing, people on government benefits, people with a disability and unemployed people. The current fines and infringement system discriminates against those who cannot afford to pay immediately, people who might not have hundreds of dollars just sitting in their bank account over and above what they need for rent, bills and food. People who can afford to deal with their infringements by payment can easily exit the system. They can afford to pay on time, they do not get additional late fees and they do not end up in court. They probably have stable housing, so the infringement notice arrives at the correct address, and when it does arrive it is likely that they read English, so they can understand and process the paperwork. But people experiencing poverty are often in very different circumstances, so they end up with the fine multiplying itself many times over. They may have to endure the stress of going to court and receiving a criminal record or, worse, end up in jail.

When the Australian Law Reform Commission conducted an inquiry into incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in 2018, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, the Federation of Community Legal Centres and the Financial and Consumer Rights Council came together for a joint submission demonstrating that the issue of fines was a major cause of imprisonment for Aboriginal people. They wrote that:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients disproportionately experience factors making –
imprisonment in lieu of payment (IIL) –

... order default more likely, including financial hardship, insecure housing, poor health including poor mental health and cognitive impairment, involvement with Child Protection and problematic substance use. People can be on IIL orders for many years. Our member agencies have seen IIL orders lasting as long as 40 years.

All of the case studies presented are heartbreaking, including Sara's, which states:

Sara's violent ex-partner incurred dozens of fines in her vehicle following the breakdown of their relationship. Because of her housing instability, her fines were sent to an old address and she did not find out about them until enforcement action was underway.

Sara was arrested by the Sheriff and bailed to the Magistrates' Court for a penalty enforcement warrant hearing. At the hearing, Sara was unrepresented and did not raise the family violence that she had experienced with the Magistrate. Two-thirds of Sara's fines were discharged and she was placed on an ILL order for the remaining \$4,500 ... which meant it would take her seven and a half years to pay off the debt.

New South Wales has a fairer system of concessional fines; they are ahead of us. In 2019 New South Wales introduced a system to make the system fairer. Anyone can now choose to pay fines in instalments and have more time for a fine to be reviewed, and those on benefits – Centrelink or healthcare cards – have their fines reduced by 50 per cent. I contend that 50 per cent is still too high to pay for disadvantaged people. Fines have risen so much that they have far outstripped the capacity for people on low incomes to pay them, even to pay 50 per cent of them. A basic Centrelink payment for a single person with no children is \$762.70 per fortnight, or just over \$381 per week. The most basic speeding fine, if you are less than 10 kilometres above the speed limit, is \$247. Even a 50 per cent discount on this would be a third of that person's weekly income. A red light offence is \$497. Imagine if one of us ran a red light. We would be annoyed with a \$500 fine, but we would not be in as much difficulty as a person getting \$381 a week on Centrelink. No wonder people find themselves unable to pay these fines.

Proportional fines are fairer still. Ellorie Mercer, an intern in my office, wrote a research paper on different fine schemes around the world about three years ago. Proportional fines, compared to concessional fines, are based on the income of an offender, and this ensures that the impact of a fine is neither too extreme nor too inconsequential. As a result, countries such as Finland, which have these proportional fines, are both more effective and more equitable than fixed fines. The Greens asked the Parliamentary Budget Office to cost a concessional system, and we found that it would cost the Victorian budget about \$200 million over five years in lost revenue to introduce a concessional system – \$800 million over a decade. But a proportional fine system, where there is a sliding scale of what you pay depending on your income, could well be budget neutral as well as much more fair, and it would probably end up with fewer people in jail, where, remember, the government pays about \$400 per prisoner per day.

Lastly, while not a direct reform to the system of economic penalties, increased access to and funding for legal aid would also significantly reduce the inequities of people experiencing distress from arbitrary and unfair fines in Victoria. Just imagine, members of the Assembly, if we had proportional fines and when you ran a red light it was about a week's pay. That might be about \$4000. It would probably be about as much pain as felt by the person on Centrelink who ran the red light, although it would be considerably more money than they would have to pay. But our likelihood of going to jail would be probably about the same if we each ended up having to pay a fine that was proportional to what we earned. If we make fines proportional to people's means to pay, they feel the same pain for whatever the offence is, but hopefully we wind up with fewer people in jail and driven into poverty. In a cost-of-living crisis, as we face at the moment, proportional fines would be a practical step that we could make that would actually help Victoria's most vulnerable people.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (16:53): This afternoon I rise to contribute on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. It is an amazing afternoon because any time that I get to speak about enhanced transport outcomes for people in Melbourne's west it is just an absolutely amazing day, and that is exactly what this bill does this afternoon. It is an important step forward in modernising our transport systems and improving the safety and livability of Victoria's communities. At its heart the bills focuses on several critical reforms, removing trucks from Melbourne's inner west and facilitating the transition to digital drivers licences chief amongst them.

Before I get to the substantive content of the bill, I think it would be remiss of me to not first thank the minister and her staff for putting this together but also to not mention the member for Footscray, who has spent countless hours tirelessly advocating for this outcome for her community there in Footscray. It has been a long campaign, and her advocacy has been absolutely amazing. She should be incredibly proud of herself, and the people of Footscray should be incredibly happy that they have such a fantastic local member representing them.

One of the most significant aspects of the bill, as I said, is the commitment to removing those trucks from the inner west of Melbourne. For too long the residents of the inner west have lived with the noise pollution and safety risks posed by trucks passing through their residential neighbourhoods. I spoke just previously about how one of the main reasons that we are able to achieve this outcome is the building of the West Gate Tunnel, the most significant road project that any government has ever undertaken here in Victoria. If you come in from the west, often you will see what a significant and complex piece of infrastructure it is. It has not been without hits and hurdles along the way; that typically tends to happen when you build significant pieces of infrastructure on the eastern seaboard, and this is no different. But the West Gate Tunnel is not just a project that benefits those people in the inner west by taking trucks off their roads and cutting travel times; this is a project fundamentally aimed at improving the lives of people in our outer western suburbs. Whether that be people in the electorate of Point Cook, whether that be people in my electorate in Tarneit or in Hoppers Crossing or whether that be people in Laverton or Truganina or Williams Landing, this is a project aimed at getting better outcomes for them. By getting shorter travel times you are spending less time in your car and you are spending more time with your family. You are spending more time doing recreation and spending time doing the things that you want to do rather than being stuck in gridlock. I travelled in on that road for 10 years during my time as a union official. I would come in every day typically to my office in Carlton, and I can tell you the last thing that you want to be doing when you could still be at home with your family or you could be home with your family at night is sitting in your car. This will significantly help people in those outer western suburbs with that.

It will create better health and outcomes for those people as well. As we know, it will relieve some of the stress that is involved with that daily commute, and of course it will give better work–life balance. What it will also do for business is it will increase productivity: you will no longer have to play the Russian roulette that sometimes you would have to coming in from the west, because if there was a breakdown or there was an accident or there was a lot of congestion, you may simply just get to work late. So it will really improve those productivity outcomes as well.

As I said and as I will continue to say, that project is not just for people in the inner west, it is for people in the outer west and it is also for people in Geelong. It is for people in the member for Polwarth's electorate as well.

Richard Riordan interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: I hear him over there at the table interjecting consistently. I can tell you, member for Polwarth, when people from Torquay – the ones in your electorate that do not like you, from Torquay – or people from Colac or from Birregurra come into the city to watch the football, they will absolutely love the West Gate Tunnel.

It gives me great pleasure also to follow the contribution of the member for Brunswick. I am not quite sure if he touched on the bill during his 10 minutes of contribution, but I think it is good to unpack the hypocrisy of the Greens with this particular issue. As I said, the fundamental reason that we are able to get trucks off the roads of the inner west is because of the building of the West Gate Tunnel. The Greens – and we can go through plenty of press releases – have been advocating for getting trucks off the roads of the inner west for some time. To be fair, they do it with weird pie-in-the-sky things that would cost the state \$50 billion, but they have been advocating for that for some time. However, they have been simultaneously opposed to the project that gets trucks off roads in the inner west – they have been opposed to the West Gate Tunnel the entire way through. It boggles the mind. I am not quite

sure how they would like to get the outcome of getting trucks off the roads in the inner west. Perhaps we can put snorkels on them, and they can just travel up and down the Maribyrnong. The hypocrisy that comes from the four members up on the back benches over there in respect of this stuff is just absolutely mind-boggling.

To get to my electorate of Tarneit, in Tarneit we have seen trucks driving down narrow suburban roads to avoid major intersections, causing safety concerns through the community, similar to what has been happening in the inner west for some time now. Granted, we do not have a port in Tarneit, so the problem has not been quite as bad, but we do have a large quarry out the back of Werribee there, and truck drivers have been using residential streets as rat runs for some time, which is incredibly dangerous. Residents living on Thames Boulevard reached out midway through last year to my office to express their concerns about a large number of trucks using Thames Boulevard, which is between Hogans Road and Heaths Road, instead of Tarneit Road, which is the major arterial road that should be going that way. The quantity of semis and trucks caused serious safety concerns for many nearby residents, including those who reached out to my office from the Tarneit Skies retirement village.

I would like to particularly thank Judy Fell and her husband Geoffrey for their amazing activism on this issue. Judy put in hours of work gathering support from local residents and campaigning to see a truck ban introduced on Thames Boulevard. Judy's dedication to seeing safer roads in Tarneit and Hoppers Crossing is truly admirable. I am incredibly proud to be representing an area of Melbourne's west where strong community activists, just like Judy, are coming together to help make our suburbs a safer place to live. After long conversations back and forth with local council and with relevant state departments, I am incredibly proud to say that with the help of Judy and the residents at the Tarneit Skies retirement village and our passionate local advocates we were able to secure a truck ban on Thames Boulevard. Community advocacy works. Judy and the Tarneit Skies residents worked hard to run a campaign. I could not be happier to see its success, and I could not be happier to play the role that I was able to to get trucks off those local roads.

As I said at the beginning of my contribution, the reason that we are able to get to one of the most significant outcomes of this bill – taking trucks off the roads in the inner west – is fundamentally because of the West Gate Tunnel Project, the most significant road project that this state has ever undertaken. We made a choice to increase infrastructure spending right at the beginning of our term of government in 2014, and it makes me very proud that this government made the choice to make that investment for people in Melbourne's outer west. It is a fantastic bill, and I commend it to the house.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (17:03): I am delighted to rise and make a contribution on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I am pleased to see that member for Tarneit touched on the bill as well, unlike the member for Brunswick. We sat through that for some time and I was hoping we were going to get somewhere near it, but we did not. But anyway, I will attempt to speak on the bill at some point in time. It is, we know, about truck zones in the inner west. It also talks about and clarifies the validity of digital drivers licences. It talks about changes to custom numberplates, other infringement notices and other minor amendments. But the bill is called the roads and road safety bill, and I want to talk to you about roads and road safety in regional Victoria in particular.

I was just amazed to hear some of the members – and the member for Monbulk, who is just leaving the chamber – talk about blaming the weather for the state of our roads. I just cannot believe that. She has come back for another go. Please do come back and have a listen, member for Monbulk, because you cannot keep blaming everybody else for the mistakes of this government and then, when you run out of people to blame, start blaming the weather. Anyway, if that is what they choose to do, can I just remind them that it still rains in Queensland and it still rains in New South Wales and their roads are nowhere near as bad as ours in regional Victoria. The reason why they are bad in regional Victoria is that the asset maintenance budget has been cut to smithereens – cut, cut, cut. Down, down, down, as

the minister says. Really, it is no wonder we have ended up with the roads that we have got in regional Victoria at the moment.

Up our way RRV is what they call it. We call it 'Wrecked Roads Victoria'. It is supposed to be Regional Roads Victoria, but people up my way think it stands for 'Wrecked Roads Victoria', because clearly that is the state of our roads. The Katamatite–Tocumwal road – I have been trying to get someone from Regional Roads Victoria for three years to come and look at a bit of it. There is a tree that is overhanging the road, and it is going to fall on a house. The bloke keeps asking me, 'When are you going to get someone out to fix this tree or pull it down or give me permission to pull it down?' Eventually I said to him last month, 'Mate, don't ask anymore. Just chop it down. It's easier to apologise than to ask permission. We've been trying for three years. Just get on and do it, and I'll support you all the way if you get into trouble over it,' because it is just disgraceful that we cannot even get a basic service to come and look at this tree that is causing grief. That is just up near Parnell Road at Muckatah, if Regional Roads Victoria would like to finally get off their backsides and have a look at it.

Broadway Street in Cobram – we have been waiting four years to get someone to come and have a look where it meets River Road. Where Broadway Street meets River Road you are heading over the border to New South Wales, over to Barooga, and on that section of road there is an intersection that has probably more than tripled – it has probably quadrupled – over the last five years in terms of traffic that now goes down River Road. There is no turning lane there, and there are near misses there every day of the week. There are cars and trucks coming over from New South Wales, cars and trucks going over towards New South Wales as well, and as I say, it is a very fine section. The worst part about this one is there is plenty of room to make the changes. You have just got to move the guardrail, do a bit of work there – honestly, a couple of hundred thousand would fix this problem and would make it a much safer place to be. I mean, I could do it with a Fergie tractor. In a couple of days work I reckon I would have it knocked over. But in this day and age we are talking hundreds of thousands of dollars. But still, we would knock it over pretty quickly, and it would be much, much safer.

The Great Alpine Road – I even heard the member for Gippsland East talking about the old Great Alpine Road, because I think that is designated as the worst road in Victoria. It starts in Wangaratta in my electorate, goes up through Ovens and winds its way through Eurobin and Bright and Myrtleford and over the hill – the big hill, Hotham – and Dinner Plain and then heads into East Gippsland. We both talk about the state of this road and the traffic that it takes from both ends, either going to Dinner Plain or going to Hotham, or the people that go to Bright – because Bright is one of the biggest tourist sectors in north-east regional Victoria by far. Beechworth and Bright are just poles apart when it comes to tourism, and with the amount of traffic it takes – cars, caravans, bicycles and people getting up there – again, we are not after billions of dollars to fix this road. We just want an investment in maintaining the road. We are very humble people in regional Victoria. We do not ask the world. We do not want a billion dollars in a tunnel that is going to blow over budget by so much or a railway line or a West Gate Freeway tunnel or something like that. We just want maintenance done on some of our roads.

The Murray Valley Highway is a stretch of road that starts up in Robinvale near the member for Mildura and winds its way down through the member for Murray Plains's, the member for Shepparton's and my electorates to meet the member for Benambra's. It is a fairly large section of road. All of us MPs know that that carries a lot of traffic, a lot of produce, and the shoulders on that road are absolutely appalling. If you ever want to see a road that is in disrepair, go to Rutherglen, either side – any direction outside of Rutherglen. I defy anyone to keep their false teeth in if they are driving around that road around Rutherglen, because it is an absolute disaster. It needs an investment, and again, we are not talking billions. Some genuine maintenance would fix that road.

The Hume Highway, which I travel to get down here from Cobram – again, no-one has ever seen the Hume Highway in the state that it is in now. It is our major thoroughfare, as we know, on the eastern

seaboard. Again, the parts that I drive through, along with the member for Euroa – I tell you what, there are holes in that road that you could lose your car in if you are not careful.

On the Goulburn Valley Highway as we come down near the Nagambie bypass there is a little community called Moorilim. It is not a town. It is not even a store. It is just a little rural community.

Danny O'Brien interjected.

Tim McCURDY: It is a locality, thank you. This is an absolute cracker, because they have got road safety cameras, permanent cameras, that have been up there for five, six or seven years, and I think for nearly 12 months there has been a 60-kilometre-an-hour speed limit there. There is nothing wrong with the road. The road is fine. There is not a pothole to be seen for this one section of the road for about 5 kilometres before it and after it. Everybody on the southbound side has to slow down to 60 kilometres, drive their 60 kilometres, and then they can speed back up to 100 kilometres again. I wonder how much revenue has been raised through that road safety camera, because people are just ignoring it, saying, 'I don't know what the 60 kilometres is here for,' because it should not be there.

Again it is about just getting on and fixing some of the small problems we have got. Even last sitting week I was talking about the Kiewa Valley Highway. A chap told me about a particular spot 25 kilometres I think from Mount Beauty on your way to Wodonga. It might be just on my side of my border with the member for Benambra. It is a pothole that people have to tackle at 100 kilometres an hour, and they literally have to swerve onto the wrong side of the road.

The Wangaratta-Whitfield Road – I have spoken about that for probably eight to 10 years, and again this government ignores the Wangaratta-Whitfield Road. There are tourists on that road – it is up near the King Valley, the beautiful wine valley – with caravans and four-wheel drives. There are grape trucks, there are milk tankers and there are cyclists, and it really is a recipe for disaster. Again nothing happens. We see fatalities from time to time, which is just awful for everybody involved, obviously, but the local community as well. Again it is the investment we need, and the government refuse to invest in our road maintenance because they cannot manage money. We have had \$40 billion in overruns in different projects. We do not want \$40 billion – not even a billion dollars. I think if we spread half of that around regional Victoria and fixed some of the really savage spots that we have got, we would save more lives. The member for Eltham, who is here at the table at the moment, I remember saying recently about her mother and father, who drove a particular road and the roads have not improved since. How long ago was it? Was it two years ago or three years ago? Five years ago?

Vicki Ward interjected.

Tim McCURDY: Member for Eltham, are you saying you did not say it or maybe you are sorry you said it? Is how you would gauge how good our roads are by what Mum and Dad said, who drove on those roads and said they were fine? Well, I will tell you what, try driving on those roads at night or in the rain or on a motorbike and you will have a different story to tell, because the roads are in absolutely poor repair, and it is a shame the government does not consider regional Victoria and consider investing in that maintenance aspect we talk about. Not the new stuff, not the shiny stuff – we just want the maintenance fixed, the potholes filled, before we lose more lives.

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (17:13): It is a pleasure to rise in support of the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. From the outset I would like to thank the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and her team for the tremendous work put into this piece of legislation. I trust that this bill will make a positive impact to road users and our state as a whole.

As a member of the Legislative Assembly's Economy and Infrastructure Committee, I have the pleasure of serving alongside the members for Bellarine, Shepparton, Kew, Narracan, Pascoe Vale and Tarneit – do not worry, it is a good thing. Over many months last year we spent a significant amount of time and our efforts in trying to understand the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users. Vulnerable road users include pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists, and this

cohort is less protected on our roads compared to those in motor vehicles and certainly less than those in vans and trucks. Our committee found that in 2022 vulnerable road users made up nearly half of the lives lost on roads in Victoria. This is a horrific statistic that increased by almost a quarter the following year. It is of course a cross-parliamentary aim to make our roads safer for Victorians no matter which mode of transport they use. That is why this bill is necessary, because for our state to continue to progress on our path to zero road deaths, we need to modernise and update our legislative framework.

As part of this government's transformative infrastructure agenda, the West Gate Tunnel is due to open in 2025, and this will benefit thousands of Victorians in getting to and from the city quicker. This project, however, is more than just reducing travel times. It is about improving health and livability outcomes for Victorians. Consequently, this bill is delivering on our commitments to introducing a 24-hour truck ban in the inner west, and this will result in some 9000 trucks being taken off local roads each day.

Katie Hall interjected.

John MULLAHY: The member for Footscray is very happy about it too. Cleaner air, improved health outcomes and reduced noise pollution are the benefits of this change, on top of making Victorian roads safer. It is self-explanatory as to why taking trucks off local roads provides better safety settings, especially for the vulnerable road users that I have been discussing.

This ban will be enforced in part thanks to the government's \$10.2 million investment into 24/7 camera enforcement. These cameras will detect noncompliant trucks. Amendments to the Road Safety Act 1986 made by this bill will enable images captured by these cameras to be admissible as evidence. These changes are in line with the findings of a report that the committee I served on delivered titled *Inquiry into the Impact of Road Safety Behaviours on Vulnerable Road Users*. Our committee investigated opportunities to improve road safety.

Expanding into the detail of this bill and the research conducted by the committee, it is important to acknowledge the context surrounding this complex issue. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic period, when the state went in and out of lockdowns, there was a logical decrease in the number of vehicles on the roads. This was evidenced by fuel sales falling by 26 per cent between March and July 2020, with a drop in kilometres travelled on Victorian roads. However, deaths did not fall in line with the drop in road users, as they only fell by 12 per cent. Considering there were no astronomical changes in road infrastructure or the variety of vehicles on the road, this suggests that the increase in lives lost was due to road users' poor behaviour. I am glad to see that this bill not only takes note of the deep-rooted problem but also actively seeks to address it.

We all understand that changing road users' behaviour is not simple. It is not a tick-box exercise or a matter of locking everyone up. It is a complicated issue which requires a sophisticated and multifaceted approach to deal with the various complexities which surround it. To effectively deal with such matters in a way whereby we are providing the best possible settings for safe road usage, legislative frameworks need to be modernised and updated.

In May of last year a successful trial was launched in Ballarat to provide residents with the option of carrying their drivers licence digitally. Now close to 1 million Victorians have signed up for their digital licence, as I have. I am guessing the member for Narracan has as well. Having your licence on your phone means that drivers are comfortable and have peace of mind on the roads as they are without the worry of leaving their licence at home. As a safeguarding measure, the privacy of Victorians will be protected by ensuring that electronic devices used for providing digital licences cannot be confiscated.

All the clarification and modernisation efforts contained in this bill are consistent with the government's steadfast commitment to drive down the road toll. Through important programs such as the Road to Zero initiative, we are implementing necessary cultural changes. We did hear from the Road to Zero organisation during a committee hearing. This free program targets students from year 9

onwards, the age at which many young adults start learning to drive. Adolescents at that age are particularly vulnerable, not only because of their inexperience but also because of their tendency to be influenced by those around them. Through peer pressure or content online, teenagers are often shaped by the content they consume or the environment around them. We unfortunately understand that on too many occasions this has a negative impact on them, and that is why this program seeks to correct that by educating young people about road safety from an early age to crucially shape their attitudes and perceptions. This is critical in ensuring they have a positive experience on Victoria's roads and that they and everyone else are safe.

Further, the Economy and Infrastructure Committee's report also found that the age, ability, location and cultural background of an individual can affect their vulnerability on roads. The proportion of Victorians over 60 losing their lives on our roads is increasing. Because of their reduced bone strength, slower reaction times and weakened fracture tolerance more elderly road users are at a greater risk. On the other hand, it is a horrifying statistic that road transport accidents are the leading cause of death in Australian children aged 1 to 14. As the father of a young daughter, I understand that young children are less physically and cognitively capable of assessing risk, and that is why this government is focused on educating our youth.

This bill introduces a prescribed minimum age in the Road Safety Act 1986 for the sale or transfer of RNRs, or registration number rights. This is part of a holistic change to the way in which custom plate services are delivered. We are always seeking to improve the processes through which Victorians can access custom plates, and the money raised from custom plates will be reinvested in modernising the systems and services that people rely on.

A bill as sophisticated and important as this requires extensive consultation, much like the process of a committee's inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users, and I am pleased to note that such consultation has occurred. In preparing this bill the Department of Justice and Community Safety, the Department of Government Services, Service Victoria and Victoria Police have all been consulted, and this is in conjunction with conversations with the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator regarding specific arrangements relating to the enforcement of no-truck zones. On this note, I would like to mention the pleasure of visiting Wilson transformers twice last week. It was great to join the Minister for Women at the launch of the program being funded by the Allan Labor government, the Apprentice to Leader program. I was back there again at 9:30 pm on Sunday night to witness a major operation in progress, including the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator working in conjunction with Wilson transformers and the Aries Group, where they were transporting a 167-tonne transformer from the heart of Glen Waverley to Queensland.

Additionally, minor changes will be made in the bill to the functions of the Secretary of the Department of Transport and Planning. The collection of transfer fees and registration number rights will be an additional power for the secretary.

And, finally, definitions will be updated to ensure that they are inclusive and fit for purpose for the 21st century. This is a microcosm of our commitment to championing equality and fairness, not just through words but with concrete actions. I am proud to be part of an Allan Labor government which is committed to improving road safety. Death and injuries on roads are heartbreaking. They not only unjustifiably rob individuals of their lives but also destroy dreams and families. These deaths have long-lasting and wideranging consequences. It is therefore incumbent on governments to meet the rightful expectations of the Victorian people to continue to provide the legislative frameworks for a path to zero deaths on our roads. This bill is part of the government's broad and extensive agenda to take strong and proactive action to protect vulnerable road users on Victoria's roads. By changing attitudes and educating our youth to have a positive relationship with our roads, we are systematically reforming the problematic behaviour patterns which are too often displayed in the community.

I am proud to support a bill which not only provides targeted and necessary measures to take trucks off our local roads, which improves safety and healthcare outcomes, but also modernises the laws

which govern Victoria's roads. I have confidence that this bill puts Victoria on the right path to zero deaths by 2050. It is of course not the full answer, but is a part of a multifaceted strategy to deal with a pressing issue. I would like to thank the minister and her team for all the efforts in making Victoria's roads safer, and I commend the bill to the house.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (17:22): I too rise this afternoon to talk about the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. This gift that has been wrapped up and presented here to the chamber this afternoon is in fact really not going to deliver very much at all that it is talking about there in road safety. We have had government members talking about this government's commitment to zero road deaths. The only thing this government has done in the last five or six years to make any dent in the spiralling road toll has been the COVID lockdowns. In 2019 our road toll was at a record high of 188. Then for the two or three years of the COVID restrictions stopping people getting out on the road, we actually saw a bit of a dip. Mind you, not much of a dip, but the biggest dip we have seen in road deaths and road trauma for quite some time. And, guess what, the minute everyone's life goes back to normal, not only does the road toll go back to where it was in 2019 but it continues to climb. As of today we are ahead of last year, which is well ahead of 2019. This government has been spectacularly unsuccessful at working on getting the road toll down here in the state of Victoria – spectacularly unsuccessful. We know why: because they just have not invested money where it matters into road safety.

My good friend the member for Narracan at the back there, similar electorate to mine, knows only too well that this government's only approach to road safety – they are not doing COVID lockdowns, which showed some success at saving lives – is to lower speed limits. So we have got 100-kilometre-an-hour, major, number one highways like the Princes Highway and other major state roads – they drop them from 100 to 80, they drop them from 80 to 60. In fact we have got some major roads that have gone from 60 to 40. You would think you were living in Richmond when you are living out in parts of my electorate. You would think you were living in Richmond, driving around at 40 kilometres an hour on a road that is supposed to be 100.

This government knows nothing about road safety. We have had, for example, for the whole time I have been in this chamber, for the last eight years or so, two main safety requirements in my part of the world. We have had the Princes Highway–Tomahawk Creek Road roundabout, which was funded by the feds – funded back in Scott Morrison's time. This government has failed spectacularly in getting that up. It just has not happened. The community has been calling for that roundabout for years. We have put up flashing lights, we have put up rumble strips, we have done all sorts of things. It is a dangerous intersection on a dangerous bend in the road. It has been identified as needing a roundabout and the roundabout has been funded, and this government, like with so many of its projects, cannot progress it. The other one would be known to many people also, the Winchelsea–Deans Marsh–Cape Otway roads intersection – a very, very busy piece of road, a road that has had way too many fatalities and other bad accidents on it. It too was funded, and it too has not been completed. These are basics for road safety.

It is all very well to bring a bill to the Parliament that is labelled road safety, but it does not deliver. This delivers some little tweaks around the corner in some inner city suburbs. It talks about people's numberplates, for heaven's sake. Numberplate registration transfer options do not reflect road safety. They are not going to be making people safer because you can give your favourite numberplates to your mum when you go on holidays or whatever. We are talking about road safety. We are talking about the fact that last week in the terrible windstorms we had a tragedy in my electorate. We had, sadly, an elderly couple killed by a falling tree on one of our roads. This is a growing concern in regional Victoria, as I am sure the member for Narracan will also vouch, when those sorts of accidents happen when people have been asking and asking for our road authorities to maintain the edges of our roads.

The member for Mordialloc mentioned before wire rope barriers. Yes, I will mention wire rope barriers again, because this government have an approach where if a tree is growing really, really close

to the road, in fact even in the gravel on the verge of the road, they will put the wire rope barrier around that tree rather than removing it and taking it clear of the roadway. It has become ridiculous and unsafe. Roadways, busy 100-kilometre-an-hour roadways –

Members interjecting.

Wayne Farnham: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I would just like to remind you that people that are not sitting in their appropriate seats can cease interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Mercurio): That is not a point of order.

Richard RIORDAN: Thank you for the protection there, member for Narracan. You are quite right, there are clearly members not sitting where they should, although the member for Mordialloc of course is trapped on the back bench. But we understand that he is feeling very comfortable there. It does not really worry him whether he is at that end of the back bench or that end of the back bench. But anyway, I will move on.

We are talking about road safety and this government's lack of commitment to it. Today, in the defence of this rather tawdry piece of legislation, we have heard members from the west of Melbourne quite rightly make the point that as the member for Polwarth I come in on the west, so I have a great interest in the improvement of the roads in the west. They talked a lot about the West Gate Tunnel, and let us just talk about the West Gate Tunnel, because that really highlights the lack of commitment this government has to getting good roads built in a timely, sensible, manageable fashion. The West Gate Tunnel – we have heard speaker after speaker this afternoon telling us that this is going to be just revolutionary for the people of the western suburbs and that in fact it will work hand in glove with some of the elements of road camera activity that are in this quoted legislation. Let us think about that for a minute: this West Gate Tunnel was promised to be finished in 2022. It is now 2024, and they are suggesting it is going to be sometime around 2025 or 2026 before we actually see the West Gate Tunnel open. With the West Gate Tunnel, the bit that upsets people in country Victoria most is when the then Andrews government said, 'We're going to build the West Gate Tunnel,' it was going to cost \$5 billion. It is now in excess of \$10 billion and it is no doubt still climbing, because as was revealed in May this year, with the West Gate Tunnel they got the amount of steel it required wrong, they got the tunnel bit wrong and they got the soil and the ground and the rock underneath it wrong.

We have not seen this road open, because what they have built cannot be guaranteed to actually work. So we will sit and wait with bated breath to see whether the truck-fining cameras that this piece of legislation is putting forward for the people of Victoria will actually make a difference. Because at this stage the West Gate Tunnel looks like it is getting finished – it looks a bit like a road – but it is a road that will be four to five years behind schedule. The question is, would we in fact need this legislation we have got today if the government had kept its promise to finish that road? But most importantly, people in country Victoria are going, 'Hang on a minute. You said that road was going to cost \$5 billion, and you've spent another \$5 billion to \$6 billion.' That \$5 billion to \$6 billion – the amount of road safety it would have delivered to regional Victoria is probably immeasurable. There would literally be tens if not hundreds of people still alive today if for the last five years we could have had that \$5 billion to \$6 billion spent on the safety of country roads. There is no doubt about the roundabouts that were cancelled, there is no doubt about the passing lanes that have not been built and there is no doubt about the epidemic that has now sprung up in country Victoria of road barriers and wire rope barriers that have been left with orange witches hats to protect them because the government has clearly run out of funds to repair them. Because now the drive back to Colac, back to Polwarth, is just one orange witches hat after another all the way down, with broken wire barriers that the government cannot afford to fix. One thing that this government does know, because we kept the pressure on them, is that a broken wire barrier is more dangerous on the side of the road broken than it is when it is properly secured.

This government, through its poor management of funds and its misallocation of vast resources of money on road spending, has actually worked to make country roads, city roads and the roads of Victoria more dangerous today than what they were. We know they are more dangerous because, as I said at the start of this speech today, the Victorian road toll, the deaths, the tragedies and the losses of life for people going about their daily business continue to climb in the state. This government has not managed at all to reverse the frightening trend of more dangerous roads, more scary roads and more roads that are just not fit to be driven on here in Victoria. I will finish today by saying every Victorian who goes interstate, whether it is to the footy in South Australia or up fishing into New South Wales, knows that Victoria's roads are the worst in the country. They are the most unsafe, and the Victorian road toll and the people of Victoria know it.

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (17:33): I am pleased to rise to contribute to the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The purpose of the bill is to deliver on the government's commitment to removing trucks from the inner west, facilitate the modernisation of drivers licences and learner permits, make improvements to the custom plate businesses and improve the clarity and operation of various transport legislation. The bill will achieve these purposes by making amendments to a range of acts within the transport portfolio, including the Road Safety Act 1986, the Road Safety Camera Commissioner Act 2011, the Melbourne City Link Act 1995, the EastLink Project Act 2004, the West Gate Tunnel (Truck Bans and Traffic Management) Act 2019, the North East Link Act 2020, and the Marine (Drug, Alcohol and Pollution Control) Act 1988.

It has been interesting to listen to the contributions on this bill this afternoon. I want to congratulate the member for Footscray, who I listened to earlier, who was extremely happy that she was delivering the trucks off those roads in her electorate, and of course the member for Williamstown. Obviously they are great members who advocated for their communities, listened to their constituents and have actually delivered fantastic outcomes for their communities. From what I understand, these have been long-term issues that those communities have had to endure with lots of residential growth. This will bring a lot less traffic, less pollution and cleaner air, and it will make such a significant difference to the community. So I congratulate those members who have acted to ensure that their constituents are listened to and that they deliver such a great outcome. I think any work to provide road safety strategies is really vital, and getting those trucks off that road obviously makes it safer for that local community.

I have to say, listening to the opposition constantly harp on about roads today, which is not even really about this bill, they have not addressed the bill that we are speaking on. In my region there is lots of work going on on our roads, to the point where there is a social media page complaining about the roadworks. So we are doing a fantastic job right across Victoria in improving our roads. We know that our road toll has grown in recent years. There is great concern, and I know the TAC are working hard on that and attempting to implement different strategies to improve that.

But I think for those communities in the west the no-truck zones will be declared once the West Gate Tunnel is open and in use, and this bill will enable the effective and efficient enforcement of no-truck zone offences by enabling new camera systems to be used to detect no-truck zone offences and for infringement notices to be issued. The no-truck zone offences detected by no-truck zone cameras will be operator-onus offences, which will ensure that there is always someone responsible. Registered operators will be presumed to be responsible unless they provide the identity of the driver of the vehicle or explain why they are unable to do so. These new enforcement measures will help to remove approximately 9000 trucks each day from the inner west. This will improve safety and air quality while reducing noise for residents. So again, congratulations to that community. I can imagine how excited they are about these changes.

I do want to talk about the accessible parking permit scheme, which plays an important role in the lives of Victorians, improving access to goods and services by enabling them to park in designated parking bays or for double the permitted length of time in other time-limited areas. I know how valuable those parking permits are and having those allocated bays for people with disability is. Many of my constituents rely on those parking bays. I would actually like to see many more. I think people

with disability have the right to be able to access everything in their community, whether it is shopping or going to the doctor or education or tourism. Whatever it might be, those bays provide a really important service to them.

The bill does actually modernise the language in the Road Safety Act 1986, which sets out the high-level framework for the scheme, in recognition that a person's disabilities do not define them, and outdated terms are being replaced by more inclusive ones. Far more respectful language is now being used, which is really important to people with disabilities. Phrases such as 'injured', 'an injured or disabled person' and 'parking permit for people with disabilities' are to be replaced with 'a person with an injury or a disability' and 'accessible parking permit' respectively.

Of course with modern technology we have certainly come a long way, and to have a digital licence now is really important for many in our communities, including mine. If we fast-forward over the decades, the piece of paper has now been replaced with a plastic card, and over the years additional security measures have been incorporated into the cards to reduce counterfeiting and fraudulent use. Use of plastic driver licence cards is common practice in most developed countries, including in Australia; however, as is the case with all technologies, licence cards are constantly evolving. As a government we are always looking for new and better ways of doing things; therefore we have taken the next step in the evolution of drivers licences and learners permits, which means we are going digital.

I think for a lot of people – and I heard the member for Monbulk speaking earlier about having to make sure your licence is in your wallet, that you are carting your bag around and all those things – it is far more convenient to have it on your phone. You can now have payment facilities on your phone, so us women really do not need to be carrying around handbags; we can carry around our mobile phones with all those things on them, including our licences. We do have a choice to do that. Not everybody is going to want to do that, but for many people in our community, particularly younger people, it is a real benefit. I know when my children were younger and got their licences they often lost their licences and would have to get them replaced. I know young people do lose their phones as well, but I think it is a real opportunity for young people to have everything on their phones and not have to continue to replace licences that they have lost. The security on those digital licences is worth noting as well.

In 2023 this government announced that Victorian motorists would have the option to carry their licences on their phones by 2024. A trial was completed in Ballarat, which was highly successful. I think over 1 million Victorians now have their licence data on their phones, and digital probationary licences and learners permits will be available from 2025. Digital drivers licences are available via the VicRoads app or the Service Victoria app, so they are easy to get. They contain advanced security features designed to prevent fraudulent use and a timed QR code that can be scanned by businesses and other authorities to verify their authenticity. To support the rollout of digital drivers licences and learners permits, this bill amends the Road Safety Act 1986 to put beyond doubt that digital drivers licences and learners permits are valid documents issued under the act.

These changes will benefit all Victorians, including those in my community. The feedback that I have had from my community, particularly about the digital licences, has been really positive, even from a lot of older people who have come in and asked about getting help to do it. It has been welcomed by many in our community. As I said, it is a choice, but it is an important one that people are able to make. I commend the bill to the house.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (17:43): I am pleased to rise today to contribute to the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The bill contains a number of elements, and these are the main points. It allows the enforcement of no-truck zones in the inner west of Melbourne through the use of new types of traffic cameras; clarifies the validity of a new digital drivers licence under the Road Safety Act 1986; makes changes to arrangements for custom plates, including allowing for an up-front fee or an ongoing periodical charge as well as transfer fees; makes minor amendments to the

administration of infringement notices under a range of acts; and makes other minor amendments about the use of language relating to accessible parking and permits.

We do not oppose this bill, but if we are going to talk about road safety and call it a road safety bill, then let us really talk about road safety. I can understand why the members for Footscray and Williamstown are excited. When I was in the building industry I had to go out that way quite a few times, and the trucks on the roads out there were very bad. Good on that community for getting those trucks off the roads eventually when the West Gate Tunnel actually opens up in 2036 or whenever it is going to be finished; I am not quite sure. It will get there eventually. We are not sure when it is going to open. It was meant to open in 2022, but it is still a little way away just yet. Unfortunately for the members for Footscray and Williamstown, they have still got a bit of a wait, but I do understand, having had to go to that side of Melbourne and pick up materials, that the amount of trucks on those roads is ridiculous. But I would hope that the government could have the same amount of respect for the people in the east as well, particularly in my electorate where we have log trucks, trucks carting rocks and trucks carting sand all over my electorate, and our roads are suffering because of it.

I have brought this up in this chamber before. The government like to talk about their legacy of Big Build projects, but the only legacy it is leaving in my area is roads ruined. It is as simple as that. You come out to Tynong North Road where the Tynong North quarry is that is carting rock into Melbourne, and our roads are absolutely trashed. If the government is going to talk about road safety, then make road safety a priority across the state, not just in Labor seats, which is what is happening here now. We just heard the member for Geelong say, 'My constituents complain about all the road construction.' Well, we do not see it in the east. We do not see it in the seats of Narracan or Morwell or Gippsland South or Gippsland East. Literally, if you go from basically Pakenham East right through to the border and you ask any constituent in that area about roads, road safety and road conditions, you will get a fairly negative response.

This is the problem. We see billions and billions of dollars spent in Melbourne, and we do not get that in regional Victoria on our roads. We get sick to the stomach when we hear about a \$5 billion blowout, and we beg for a pothole to be fixed. It is absolutely ridiculous. The disparity between city and country on roads is absolutely crazy. No wonder Labor cannot win a seat in regional Victoria, because they do not invest in regional Victoria. I have said this before: there is more to regional Victoria than Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong; there is more than that. But the problem we have got –

Members interjecting.

Wayne FARNHAM: I do not think she is in her right seat, to be honest.

Belinda Wilson interjected.

Wayne FARNHAM: Did you really just do that?

Here is the problem: when you do not invest in regional Victoria, regional Victoria will turn against you. If you go down the highway, the major highway, Princes Highway, from Pakenham East to Warragul, the highway itself is full of potholes. You go from a 100 zone to an 80 zone to a 70 zone, then you go to a 100 zone, then you go back to an 80 zone, then you go to a 100 zone, then back to an 80 zone, back to 100 and then to 110 – that many different speed zones in that section of road, which is about 15 kilometres long. Why is that? Because of the condition of the roads. It is that simple. The government is not investing in it.

You cannot continually blame rain. Yes, rain can contribute, but when you have an up flow in traffic movement across these roads, which we have down my way because we have been the fastest growing region in Australia over the last decade, that will cause deterioration of the roads. Plus there are the heavy vehicle movements coming back into Melbourne, carting the rock and carting the sand, all for Melbourne's Big Build – nothing in my electorate, just for Melbourne – which will contribute to the condition of the roads. This is where the government is getting it wrong. We actually heard in question

time today about advocating to the federal government to get our fair share of infrastructure funding. Great; I agree. Twenty-six per cent of the population – give us 26 per cent of the infrastructure funding. I agree. Twenty-five per cent of the population are in regional Victoria – give us 25 per cent of infrastructure funding. Be fair. That is what regional Victorians are asking for. They are asking for their fair share.

Ninety-one per cent of our roads across the state are in poor or very poor condition – 91 per cent. That is a staggering statistic for a government that says, ‘We’re investing for Victoria; we’re governing for all Victorians.’ The government is not doing that, not when you have a statistic of 91 per cent poor or very poor roads.

The member for Polwarth had a very good point earlier on. We just had horrific storms go through my electorate last week, and it was one of the worst hit in the state. He talked about trees on the sides of roads. It is probably not a problem in inner-city seats, but in regional Victoria when you have got big old trees sitting on the side of a road and big winds come through like they did last week, they come down. You want to talk about road safety – how about having a program that starts clearing dead old trees away from roadside verges so people are safe when they are driving home in storms, because as the member for Polwarth pointed out, there was an incident in his electorate. Thankfully nothing happened in my electorate, but what does happen is when the trees come down, especially in a township like Walhalla, they block the road. That town relies on tourism into its economy. If tourists cannot get through to the Walhalla goldfields, they lose income while that is down. So how about we have a plan? You want to talk about road safety; how about you get a plan to get rid of the trees off the sides of the road so people can drive home safely?

Just going back to Tynong North again, I was amazed. I actually got a bit excited. I saw a little bit of road maintenance, just a little bit. I thought, ‘Great, they’ll fix these potholes on the Tynong Road going into Tynong.’ I am not joking; these potholes are a half a tire deep. If someone hits that in the dark, it is an absolute rim buster. You have trashed your rim. That is a VicRoads road – no investment. I have put in complaint after complaint after complaint. I do not know how many times I have spoken to the minister about roads in this place.

When we talk about the truck movements, Drouin has trucks – semi trucks and B-doubles – going through the township day after day after day. It takes you 20 minutes to get through the town, so why is Drouin less important than Footscray or Williamstown? I asked the Treasurer face to face for \$3 million for a road study. Three million dollars is not even half a day’s interest in this state, and it got ignored totally in the budget. Three million dollars for a 100-year-old road system in the fastest growing areas in Victoria, and it got ignored by this government. Why is it good enough for the west but it is not good enough for the east? Why do the people of Drouin have to suffer because Labor just want to focus on Labor seats? When are they going to start doing what they said they were going to do? When are they going to start to govern for all Victorians? They are not investing in regional Victoria. There are not investing in our roads, and if you come down to my electorate and you talk about road safety and how good this bill is, you deserve to get laughed at.

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (17:53): I rise to support the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The bill makes important changes to deliver on the government’s commitment to remove trucks from inner west streets following the opening of the West Gate Tunnel, recognises digital drivers licences in the Road Safety Act 1986, makes improvements to the custom plates business and improves the clarity and operation of transport legislation.

The West Gate Tunnel Project is an exciting infrastructure project for Victorians. It creates a second river crossing and will reduce travel times from the west and for those travelling to the west. I am sure all of us in this place have spent some time admiring the view off the West Gate Bridge while sitting in traffic at some point. It will make the west more livable and connected and will remove trucks from local streets. Importantly, once the West Gate Tunnel opens next year it will have a dedicated route to the Port of Melbourne and will offer easier access for the trucks servicing the port and divert them

from local roads to the West Gate Bridge. The Port of Melbourne is Australia's busiest container port, handling more than a third of Australia's container trade. It is an impressive sight heading over the Bolte Bridge, and it is a vital element of our local economy.

Victoria remains Australia's freight and logistics capital. Our \$36 billion freight sector employs 260,000 Victorians. I take this opportunity to give a shout-out to those 260,000 Victorians who work day and night to make sure we have the goods we need across the state, and a shout-out to the mighty Transport Workers' Union, who represent them so strongly.

Having a busy port so close to the city brings trucks closer to residential streets, and while trucks and freight serve a critical role in our cities they also bring noise and reduced air quality. Many local streets designed for smaller vehicles and loads are just not suitable for larger vehicles. The West Gate Tunnel Project will greatly benefit the freight industry, with travel time savings for freight delivery and toll discounts and caps. But even with shorter travel times and discounted tolls, it is inevitable that there will be those that try to avoid the toll and will continue to drive along the residential streets.

The Allan Labor government announced it would introduce 24-hour truck bans in 2017 as part of the delivery of the West Gate Tunnel Project. This bill makes steps to make sure those bans are enforced. Trucks will be banned along sections or the entire length of the following inner-west roads: Francis Street, Somerville Road, Buckley Street, Moore Street, Blackshaws Road and Hudsons Road. They are all residential roads where people live, where kids play and where they travel to school. I can distinctly remember my youth when trucks almost disappeared overnight off Pascoe Vale Road after the ring-road opened in 1992. Before that, shopping in Glenroy was loud, dirty and frightening, and the simple task of crossing the road was very stressful. It was immediately more pleasant with the reduction of heavy vehicles, and this is what we are delivering for the residents of the inner west so that they can enjoy talking to each other while they are shopping or walking to school, so they do not have to brace themselves and snatch their children's hands when a truck goes by and so that they will be able to sleep soundly at night. Residents and kids will remember when the trucks leave, and this Labor government through this legislation will leave a fabulous legacy.

I thank the member for Footscray and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety for their continued advocacy on this important issue, and I also thank the many hundreds of residents who have worked hard to see this result. My cousin Rebecca Commadeur has been part of this community advocacy, and she continues a family legacy of contributing to her community. Her parents Anne and Adrian Commadeur fostered over 100 children in their lifetime, giving these kids a stable and loving home for when they needed it most.

This government is making the inner west a better place to live and is backing that commitment with \$10.2 million in the 2024–25 budget to fund these no-truck zones and their enforcement. Enforcement will be backed by new camera technology, technology we have developed over the last 18 months with smart-camera trials that have learned to distinguish between cars and trucks to a high degree of accuracy. The use of technology will mean no longer relying on National Heavy Vehicle Regulator officers being at the right place at the right time to administer enforcement of the no-truck zones. These cameras will catch offenders even if they try to avoid detection and just duck down a local street. This bill will allow the implementation of the camera technology, allowing the evidence gathered by the cameras to be used in court and to have proper certification processes in place.

This bill is not all about enforcement, though. The Road Safety Act 1986 already provides exceptions to no-truck-zone offences for specified heavy vehicles and those being driven for specific purposes, for example, buses and trucks delivering goods to local businesses and residents. This bill provides additional purposes for vehicles to lawfully enter the no-truck zone to be included in the regulations. This will give flexibility to make sure those vehicles that genuinely need to be on the no-truck-zone roads will be able to access these areas without penalty.

The Allan Labor government is further investing in infrastructure and opportunities to support and develop our freight industry through the opening of the West Gate Tunnel Project. The recent announcement of the 42-year lease with the Port of Melbourne will get more trucks off local roads across the west and inject millions into the economy. Minister for Ports and Freight Melissa Horne announced a 29-hectare former Melbourne market site will be leased to the Port of Melbourne until 2066. The site has the potential to further increase the port's capacity by an additional 1 million 20-foot containers annually. Currently shipping companies store their containers at small sites across the west. With a new site, this will mean companies can store their containers right next to the port, helping to minimise truck trips through suburbs in Melbourne's inner west. The site will also better support truck drivers by providing a dedicated space for them to re-energise and take a break, which is really important for their wellbeing, and well-rested drivers are critical for the safety of everyone on our roads.

Another of the stand-out features of the bill is recognising digital driver licences in the Road Safety Act. Digital driver licences have been available to Victorians on their full licence since May this year, and they are really simple and easy to use. Already over 1 million digital driver licences have been accessed through both the myVicRoads and Service Victoria apps, which represent a little over 20 per cent of eligible drivers. These updates to the bill are needed because the Road Safety Act currently regulates that driver licences and learner permits are in physical form. Technology is increasingly making life more convenient and easier. Smartphones are now effectively your bank account, your email, your camera, your work, your Myki card, your calendar, your connection to the kids' school and to family and friends, your netball fixture, your step counter, your newspaper, your Melway, your personal trainer, your shopping list, your photo album, and now they can be your drivers licence. When I first had kids I could not leave the house without a backpack full of stuff – nappies, change mats, wipes, snacks, bibs, blankets, bottles, hat, sunscreen, water jacket, a change of clothes and sometimes even a pair of gumboots. Now thankfully I can pretty much leave the house with just a phone, a few cards and a key, but I still cannot get my phone cover to close most of the time, so I will be pretty happy when I can get rid of my actual drivers licence.

The digital drivers licence contains advanced security features designed to prevent fraudulent use and a timed QR code that can be scanned by businesses and other authorities to ensure that you are authenticated. The digital drivers licences are also able to be updated in real time – no more waiting for your little green sticker to arrive each time you change your address and no more waiting for the post to arrive with your shiny new card if you lose it or need to have a new licence issued. My photo was completely rubbed off, so now I will not even have to find out how to fix that.

Any driver whose licence or permit is suspended or cancelled will also have this reflected in real time in their digital version. The additional benefit of the digital drivers licence is that if a person's licence expires or is suspended or cancelled, they will still be able to use a digital drivers licence or permit solely for proof of age or identity for a prescribed period before access is eventually removed. At 70 points out of 100 in most proof-of-ID procedures, a drivers licence is an invaluable piece of identification even if you are not allowed to drive on the roads.

The addition of learners permits and probationary licences to the digital scheme as of 2025 will mean that our most technically adept generation will have the opportunity to be included. My eldest daughter is studying for her learners permit currently. She is very rarely without her phone glued to her side but does not carry a wallet or purse. To have to carry a physical licence with her at all times would be quite inconvenient for her.

The Allan Labor government has supported new drivers and their families since 2022 with the abolition of learners permit and probationary licence fees and online testing fees. This represents a saving of up to \$51.40 in licence and online testing fees for aspiring L-platers. Learner drivers going for their P-plates will save up to \$133.30 in licence and online hazard perception tests. The over 138,000 Victorians who get their Ls every year and 121,000 who get their Ps will have more money in their pockets and reduced cost-of-living expenses thanks to these changes.

The introduction of online learners permit and hazard perception tests in 2021 provided more options and greater flexibility for aspiring drivers to achieve their driving goals. With more than 90 per cent of customers choosing this option since its introduction, it just shows how technology is rapidly becoming the preferred choice for road users. With no cost associated with a first-time pass for the learners permit test, it is a further saving for our new drivers entering their journey of learning to drive safely on our roads. My daughter and all of her friends have used the online platform. With multiple interactive modules, it is really a great way to learn and a fabulous advancement from the old booklet we used to get from the newsagents back in the old days. These changes build on other initiatives from the Labor government, and I commend the bill to the house.

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (18:03): We are looking at this bill today. First of all, it contains a number of elements, including the enforcement of no-truck zones in the inner west of Melbourne through the use of new types of traffic cameras. This is obviously a positive change. Residents have been asking for this for years. The bill also clarifies the validity of new digital drivers licences under the Road Safety Act 1986. New South Wales got theirs in 2019 under the Liberal Berejiklian government, and it is good to see that we are finally catching up many years later. Additionally, what it does is it makes changes to arrangements for custom numberplates, including allowing for an up-front fee or ongoing periodical charge as well as transfer fees. This bill has no indication unfortunately of the size of those fees. That is just an overview of the bill that we have all spoken about today.

I thank all the members for their contributions, but I want to turn to the bill at hand where it pertains to our local community. When we look at the changes for arrangements to the custom numberplates, including allowing for an up-front fee or an ongoing periodical charge as well as transfer fees, I find this really interesting. We all know that the Allan Labor government loves nothing more than a new or increased tax. In fact I think we are up to our 55th this time around, even though on the eve of the election in 2014 Daniel Andrews, the then opposition leader, made a pledge on national TV to say that there would be no increased or new taxes under his government. Well, 55 later here is a different one on custom numberplates.

There are around 1.35 million custom numberplates in Victoria, with about 250,000 sold every year. Under this bill the government not only want to increase fees for getting a custom numberplate but also want the ability to charge recurring fees for the numberplate. What is that? It is a subscription for your numberplate, essentially. Every month when you pay your Netflix bill or your phone bill or your rent or your electricity bill or gas bill – which of course keeps going up under this Allan Labor government – you must not forget to pay your numberplate bill, this recurring bill. You might have got that licence plate as a gift for your 18th birthday, you might have inherited it from a family member or it might be a gift from a significant other just to show how special you are to them – that would be a lovely thought, really – but every time you think of it now, you have to not forget to pay up. This government want to tax you not just once but over and over and over again.

When we talk about roads, it is hard to ignore the many roads in my electorate that are in dire need of repair. We have heard from members across this place today about the state of our roads, about the need for repairs. For me in my electorate there is the intersection of Warranwood Road, Kalinda Road, Bemboka Road and Plymouth Road. Why is it that at this intersection of roads the roundabout sits in disrepair? My constituents have written to me asking time and again why traffic islands at this intersection sit there damaged and broken and why it is that leading up to this intersection Warranwood Road has sat riddled with potholes for months. Similarly, on Jumping Creek Road there are over a dozen major potholes along a 3-kilometre stretch, causing a serious safety issue given the high speed that people travel along this road.

Sadly, this is an experience we hear from people all across our state, and this is because the government has failed when it comes to maintaining suburban and regional Victorian roads, and we have heard that time and again in this place today. According to the government's very own survey, 91 per cent of our state's roads are rated poor or very poor. I will say that again: according to the government's own survey, 91 per cent of our state's roads are rated poor or very poor. This year's budget for road

maintenance, as a response to that, is 16 per cent less now than it was in 2020, and our roads continue to get worse as a consequence of that. The sad truth is that the Allan Labor government not only cannot manage money but cannot manage our local roads, and everyday Victorians are paying the price.

Another example of this government's mismanagement is the dangerous intersection of Tortice Drive and Ringwood-Warrandyte Road in Ringwood North. I have constituents raise this with me all of the time. There was a crash there only two weeks ago. A local mum from Ringwood North wrote to me about how she drives through that intersection every single day to take her kids to school. She said that she is so scared to try to do a right-hand turn at this intersection in the morning anytime after 7:45 she is forced to turn left and take a detour in order to get her kids to school. When motorists are scared to use intersections in the local community it shows that something needs to change. The truth is that this intersection would have been fixed by now if federal Labor had not pulled the funding for it against the community's wishes. Just because the federal Labor government is being tone-deaf to the community does not mean that the state Labor government has to be as well – I guess we can hope.

Another example of a road in dire need of repair is Marbert Court, and that is my question: when will the government fix the dangerous intersection of Marbert Court and Kangaroo Ground-Warrandyte Road? Two people were killed in an accident in May this year despite locals on Marbert Court warning for years about how a crash was inevitable because of the danger of the intersection unless the intersection was fixed. This is a matter of safety and of life and death.

Of course I do not know how I could speak about roads without speaking about the number one road issue in my electorate, which I have spoken about day in, day out in this place from the very first day and my maiden speech, and that is Five Ways intersection in Warrandyte South, which the government has still not fixed. This is a priority to my community. It was raised with me all throughout my by-election, and to this day, no matter where I go, whether it is schools or events or footy clubs, people will ask me, 'Nicole, when will the government finally fix Five Ways intersection?' What do I tell them? Do I tell them the government is too stubborn, too lazy and too broke to fix it? The truth is that is the response I keep getting from the government and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, aka the minister for copy and paste, who time and again sends me the same old response. In fact I have lost count of how many times I have raised Five Ways intersection in Parliament – it must be the eighth or ninth or 10th time by now – and the truth is I will not stop fighting or advocating for our local community and for the safety of our residents and I will not stop fighting until Five Ways intersection is finally fixed.

Finally, Acting Speaker, if you will indulge me, in light of this bill I would like to highlight a legend in our local community who helps keep our roads safe. If you have driven through Warrandyte in the past 21 years you have likely seen Ian Hook in his hi-vis uniform as a school crossing supervisor. Ian began his role at Warrandyte High School in 2003 and now staffs the Yarra Street crossing, having become a beloved figure in the community. His dedication to pedestrian safety was recognised in July when he was named Victoria's school crossing supervisor of the year. After winning the region 2 – Manningham – award, Ian went on to claim the top state honour. Known for his professionalism, punctuality and kindness, Ian's presence has made a significant impact on local safety. I wanted to take a moment to congratulate him and thank him for that in Parliament today. Beyond his role as a supervisor, Ian has also been a key contributor to the Warrandyte Football Club for over 60 years. What a legend you are, Ian. Thank you for your long service.

Finally, the road issues that I have raised today are just the tip of the iceberg of the many, many road issues that we know exist in our state. In fact we have had member after member after member list a laundry list of issues in their local electorate, because that is the truth of the state of our roads. In the government's survey they themselves have said that 91 per cent of our roads are in a state of disrepair – in a poor state or a very poor state.

In speaking to this bill, of course there are specific issues that we are addressing here, but it does not address the overarching and bigger, pressing issue: that there is work to be done across our state to

finally fix the roads so that we have safe roads for Victorians that are travelling on them every single day. The way that the government has spent money on every other thing except for priorities like this, every other thing except for priorities like Five Ways intersection, is deplorable. Whilst this bill addresses a few different issues, it does not address these main issues. Again we are here calling on the government to be better and do better for the sake of the Victorian people.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (18:13): I am really pleased to rise and speak on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. As I came to familiarise myself with this bill and the changes it is going to make, it stood out to me that this bill includes two really strong indicators of how times are changing, and those two indicators that we can see are the introduction of digital licences and the changing of words or terminology we use around disability. I felt they were two really great symbols of how our community has progressed and also of what this government champions.

These changes come about through technology, through changes in understanding, through increased sophistication and through better technology. This amendment bill amends the original Road Safety Act 1986. I think, Acting Speaker Mullahy, you and I would have been four when the roads act was passed. I thought: ‘What was happening when they first passed this roads act?’ 1986 is when the first laptop was produced by IBM. Those in the chamber would be interested to know that the first email list management software also came about in 1986, and I am sure it was a lot cheaper than what we have today. Sadly, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster was also in 1986. Those opposite seem to want to take us back there to those times of nuclear catastrophe.

Times have changed a lot since this roads bill was first developed. Since then, for example, one of the main ones we are talking about is licences. We started out with cardboard licences. They progressed to plastic, to polymer and now to digital. I used my digital licence recently to get into the Whittlesea Bowls Club. There are no dramas with that at all. This digital licence makes life easier for people. For families who use different cars and swap around, the kids are in your wallet and whatnot; you are able to demonstrate your identity no matter where you are, because we always have our phones with us. This advancement in technology and in sophistication has come about because we are a government that is always looking for ways to do things better and to make life easier for families. Basically it was a promise that we are delivering on to modernise our systems. The response has been overwhelming, actually. There are already over 1 million people who are on board with the digital licences. When I got my digital licence it was really quick and easy. It only took a few minutes, and I was ready to go.

The other area where this bill demonstrates that times are changing and that we are progressing and becoming more sophisticated is in the use of language. Within this bill we will see a change to the way that people with disability are referred to. There is going to be more inclusive language used. Instead of saying, ‘a disabled person’, it will be replaced with ‘a person with an injury or disability’, to reflect dignity and respect. That is something which I 100 per cent support. I just recently counselled my staff to put the person first and the impairment or disability second when they are speaking about people.

I know that there are a lot of people in this chamber who have a particular interest and passion for disability, and I know that they will absolutely agree with me when I say that words matter. We are seeing changes around the way that we refer to people with disability pop up in a roads bill, but it is something that we are integrating all the way across government. In every different aspect of the work of this government we are making sure that people with disability are treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve, as full and equal members of the community who have the same rights as everybody else.

We have just had the launch of the *Victorian Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy*, and I was keenly looking forward to the release of that regarding the inclusion of people with neurodiversity. I have had a constituent in my area whose son has autism and has attempted suicide, and she really shared with me and I was able to share with the minister the gaps and the particular needs of people with neurodiversity when it comes to suicide prevention and response activities. That is the second indicator of times changing.

As I said, words matter. In the case of disability they matter because they impact attitudes, and we know that attitudes are one of the biggest barriers that people with disability face in the community. It is the most pervasive barrier, and it is a barrier that needs to be removed first before you can seek to tackle systemic, institutionalised barriers, communication barriers, accessibility or infrastructure barriers and the like. Attitudinal barriers are the foundational issue that needs to be addressed for people with disability to have access to full and equal participation in our community – so words matter.

I know that on this side of the house we strongly believe that words matter, but those opposite are really playing loose with their words. They do not seem to hold the same weight to those opposite. How easily they bandy about this statistic of 91 per cent in this fantastically misleading way, because the survey that they refer to about 91 per cent of roads being in poor condition was a survey that was specifically undertaken on flood-affected roads. Specifically looking at flood-affected roads, they found – surprise – that 91 per cent of them were in poor condition. I guess that is why the government has spent so much money on repairing those roads.

I have been doing a bit of a ‘then and now’, and I think it is only fair to compare time periods here. So for us here on this side our average yearly spend on road maintenance has been \$736 million, whereas for those opposite their average annual spend on road maintenance was \$493 million – hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars less a year spent on road maintenance. That they would take flood-affected communities and use them for the benefit of political weasel words and coming up with ways to make cases that are not real – their own flood-affected communities in the west and the east – that is pretty poor, because words matter. I guess we could say that even more than words, actions matter, so when you look at the actions, when you see what our government has delivered compared to those opposite, we only have to look at the period they were in government in my electorate to see that was zero dollars invested in our roads and in our infrastructure – literally zero dollars invested compared to now. Just yesterday we were able to announce the early completion of the Bridge Inn Road upgrade, which will be ready for Christmas, six months early – a lovely Christmas present for the people of Mernda. Words matter, actions matter; this side of the house takes it seriously, and we deliver on our words.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (18:23): The member for Yan Yean is correct; words do matter. So when we hear words like, ‘We’ve invested X amount in this and we’ve invested X amount in that,’ I will show you the roads. There are so many potholes over 8 centimetres deep on roads that are less than 3 metres wide, and I bang on about this all the time. They are state roads: the Sunraysia Highway, the Calder Freeway. I have got a list of things here, but let me get to the bill first, the Roads and Road Safety Amendment Bill 2024.

There is nothing about road maintenance in this; it is about the digital drivers licence that was brought in earlier this year. This bill, belatedly perhaps, will make it finally legal; that is convenient. And of course the no-truck zones, and reading through the second-reading speech and bill reports and different commentary on this bill and talking about taking trucks off the road, again, this is something I bang on about in this place all the time. Those roads that are very, very narrow with drop-offs that are very, very deep and potholes that are very, very deep, taking trucks off those roads I would think would be very important. Not only maintaining the roads so they are truck and car worthy, but taking those off to make sure – a simple rail freight network that actually works would be nice. There is a little bit missing from that Murray Basin rail project to actually help trains run efficiently.

When the member for Yan Yean talks about the survey that was done indicating that 91 per cent of our roads are in poor or very poor condition, that was the government’s own survey undertaken by the National Transport Research Organisation in 2023. If that is not credible, if that is not worth listening to, then what is? Honestly. Maybe – just maybe – it is some community commentary on the state of our roads and road maintenance. I have an electorate of 37,500 square kilometres. It is almost 20 per cent of the state; it is quite large. I drive on a variety of different roads: national highways, state roads and council roads. Councils, particularly out in my region, are finding it very, very hard to maintain

their roads because of the axing of the country roads and bridges program, for example, and the lack of investment, which gets spoken about all of the time, in local roads maintenance. It is getting harder to maintain roads for councils because there does not seem to be much accountability. If a third-party contractor who is going out to do maintenance or fill a pothole says, 'That square metre wide pothole will cost you \$15,000 to fix,' who is going, 'Hang on a minute, that's too much. That shouldn't cost \$15,000 to fix,' or if someone has been quoted 20 grand or whatever it might be. There does not seem to be anybody going, 'Hmm, that doesn't sound right.'

There was \$10 million promised a few years ago for Robinvale-Sea Lake Road. There have been four patches of that road that have not been reconstructed – they have been resheeted. If that is what \$10 million gets you in road maintenance, we have got a real problem here. Who is looking into this kind of stuff? Who is holding these contractors to account? Particularly when it gets over 30 degrees and a B-quad truck goes over it and takes the road with it – who is responsible for that? Spending \$10 million of taxpayer money to not be any better off; that is insanity to me. And they keep doing it, but that is the very definition of 'insanity', isn't it?

When I talk about let us listen to the community with regard to our roads, words are important. This is some of the feedback that has come through my office about roads around the electorate of Mildura, which spans from Neds Corner near the New South Wales–South Australia border down to Coonooer Bridge in central Victoria. There are a lot of roads. I got this this week, and I did have to giggle to myself, but it is no laughing matter. This comes from David and Di Whitelaw:

The road from Wycheproof heading towards St Arnaud is so bad and you get so Airbourne that our smart watches said that we were on elliptical trainers.

It is pretty bad when your Apple Watch goes off and says, 'Are you on an elliptical trainer? Do you want to track this workout?' In relation to the Eleventh Street intersection at Riverside Avenue this was said:

The number of vehicles who disregard the Stop signs and roll through this intersection is also increasing adding to the risks to pedestrians and road users of this intersection.

That one came from Russell Cox. On the Calder Highway between Bendigo and Mildura there is a large pothole near Nullawil. There is a beautiful painted silo, one of the OG painted silos, there – it is lovely; you should go and have a look at it. This person hit a pothole that:

... absolutely scared me to the point I thought I had hit something as it was dark and at the time a truck was heading towards me –

this is what creates this incredible danger –

I pulled over and check my left front wheel etc. I then realised it was a large pot hole and took photos. Very dangerous situation when you are travelling at 110km.

That one is from Jamey Mullen. I hit that very same pothole leaving this place two weeks ago. I thought the same thing, because of the visibility, particularly if you have got trucks, and it is a main thoroughfare for trucks between Mildura and Melbourne. If you have got a truck coming the opposite way and you cannot use high beams or your driving lights – if you are lucky enough to have them, and you do need them out there, believe me, it is not just to put off other drivers – when you hit those potholes it will really shake you up, because you do think you have hit something. I hit that same one the other day. Mind you, I did not stop to check because I just figured, knowing the state of the roads, obviously I hit a pothole.

Irymple Secondary College has been asking for a green arrow at Koorlong Avenue. They have had two near misses. There have been a couple students who have been hit by cars at the lights at the intersection of Fifteenth Street and Karadoc Avenue. There is a wombat crossing between the school, the oval and the Irymple Community Leisure Centre, but cars fly down this road. The school has been begging for some signage for years now. It has been approved. The department are yet to do anything, even though I have had a word to the minister, we have written letters, et cetera. We will keep waiting.

There is another issue that we have on our state highways and in fact our national highways. We see this with the increased number of caravans on our roads. This piece of feedback came from Peter Rhoden, and it is very, very valid. I have to travel through outback New South Wales to get to work every day. I know, it is crazy. It is hard to get your head around it, but I do. On the Sturt Highway there are no overtaking lanes, so if you get tandem travelling caravans and you have also got road train, road train, road train, road train trying to overtake caravans travelling at 80 kilometres an hour when the speed limit is 110 kilometres an hour, not to mention the 15 cars that are stuck behind, that leads to driver impatience, which leads to trying to overtake in dangerous situations. This is not okay. Peter raised these overtaking and passing lanes along the 130-kilometre stretch of road between Merbein South and Paringa. I know exactly where he is talking about. It is a very, very valid piece of feedback.

Then we have the other side of the coin, with the changed speed limits. This comes from Nathan Direen regarding the changed speed limit between Irymple and Red Cliffs, with VicRoads providing no notice or explanation before the move in 2022 from 100 kilometres per hour to 80 kilometres per hour. There would be arguments for and against this, but Nathan says:

... I can only guess that it was VicRoads' attempt to make the notorious intersection of Belar Avenue and the Calder Highway safer.

Because of course these intersections get forgotten about, I can only assume. Sixteenth Street and Deakin Avenue is another example of this. People get impatient. There are no traffic lights. There is no safe way to cross major highways. Dropping the speed limit is not the way to go about it. The same thing happens in Mittyack. I know you know where Mittyack is, Acting Speaker Mullahy; it is in the middle of nowhere, but I went out there and had one of the best morning teas I have ever had because there were some concerned constituents out there who were concerned about the rail crossing signs that are on that part of the Calder Highway. There is no rail crossing there. There has not been a rail crossing there for years. In fact, it has been completely tarred over. There is a dirt road. The speed limit drops to 80 kilometres per hour with these rail crossing lines, so I get phone calls from tourists often saying, 'Why on earth is the speed limit dropped to 80?' It does not make any sense.

All we are asking for when it comes to roads and road maintenance is our fair share. The floods were a long time ago. We have not had any rain. I do not know if you have noticed, but broadacre farmers are hurting at the moment because there has been no winter rain. So do not use that as an excuse for why the roads have not been fixed. It is invalid. There has been no rain. There is a green drought, whatever that means, down in the south. Rain is not an excuse. The floodwaters have been gone for years. If we are going to talk about investment, actually do something about it.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (18:33): It is a delight to rise to speak on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. It is quite a broad bill talking about a variety of different amendments to the Road Safety Act 1986. I would like to talk a lot about the digital drivers licence, but before I start, one of the early contributors from the opposition said that the Andrews and Allan government had made no investment to deal with congestion. I was thinking about this, and I thought nothing could be further from the truth. I do not think that there has been any government in the history of Victoria or of any other jurisdiction in this country that has done more to invest in our transport network to deal with congestion.

Looking at the Big Build website, I can just see how much we have actually invested over the last 10 years. We have had upgrades to the M80. We have had the CityLink tunnel widening and the Monash Freeway upgrade. Obviously, the Metro Tunnel is being built at the moment. In the regions we have had upgrades on the Western Highway and on the Princes Highway. And of course there are our level crossings. As of last month we had removed 84 level crossings out of the 110 that have been committed. There has been just a huge amount of work certainly across the entire metropolitan area, but also, as I mentioned, there have been regional projects as well, and the projects are continuing.

We are building the West Gate Tunnel to provide a second river crossing specifically to improve the congestion in the west, and this is where it particularly relates to this bill about the truck bans that are going to be implemented in some of those inner western areas around Footscray, Newport and Spotswood. I know how busy those areas get with the freight traffic and how important an issue it is for the local members there, the great local members in Footscray and Williamstown. It has been a commitment for a long time to try and get these trucks off residential streets in those areas. Those streets are narrow. The trucks are running down these streets. Hundreds if not thousands of trucks a day are close to residential homes, and that is why projects such as these are so important. Not only are they reducing congestion and improving efficiency, but they are also enabling trucks to get off the residential streets. It is terrific that not only are we building that vital infrastructure for the western suburbs but we are enabling the infrastructure and the compliance regime that will enable us to put in and enforce the truck bans in those residential areas.

Of course the North East Link Program as well is a project that will be very close to the Box Hill electorate and is going to help. It is not just going to help residents in my electorate in Box Hill but also people right around the perimeter of the metropolitan area and also those in regional areas. I remember when I was working back quite a while ago now, a decade or so ago, in the freight area in the Department of Transport, this was a really key project for the freight forwarders in the Gippsland region. I notice the member for Morwell is in the chamber, and I presume that he might be up on his feet next. Perhaps he will be able to talk about how important the North East Link is going to be for his local businesses. Many freight operators and other businesses in the Gippsland region know that if they need to get their goods to the north of Melbourne or off to Sydney, that is the route they need to take because otherwise they are stuck on the Monash Freeway and going through the city. I welcome any opportunity to talk about the investment that this government has made in our infrastructure and in our roads to reduce congestion, improve the efficiency of our transport network and make sure that our goods can be delivered as efficiently and as quickly as possible.

In terms of the particular legislation that we are talking about today, there are three key reforms. One of them is enabling the truck bans, which I talked about briefly already. Another one is the digital drivers licence. More than 1 million Victorian drivers have already signed up for a digital licence, and I am one of them. I have not needed to show my licence. It has been a while since I have needed to show my licence at any venue, but I do say it makes it a lot handier. Many people do not like their photo on their licence, and unfortunately the digital licence does not actually improve the quality of the photo or of the person in the photo – let us say that – but it does give you a really flexible option of being able to carry your licence as part of your digital wallet. We see now with all of the phones, you can carry all manner of your cards, you can do your banking – you can do all of your stuff on your mobile phone. There are many retail premises that do not even want to accept cash anymore and they want to accept cards. It is only natural that we should have our cards, our identification, also keep up with the times and be part of the digital world.

It is not only convenient and accessible, it also can enable enhanced security, because people might feel comfortable in having a hard card – and that is obviously still an option for people to have – but digital licences can incorporate advanced security features, such as encryption and biometric authentication, and that reduces the risk of identity theft and fraud. Unlike physical cards, which can easily be lost or stolen, digital licences offer a much more secure alternative. This is also important so that if you are asked for ID or if there is a situation where potentially you might be questioned by police, they have the opportunity to verify your identity in a reasonable manner and confirm that you are the individual who they are looking for.

The digital licence has gone through a long pilot program. It was run in Ballarat, and that trial used about 15,000 Ballarat residents to trial the technology, see how it would work and see how it would operate in real life. I want to thank everybody who participated in the trial, because I think going into a new trial can be a little bit scary at times for some people, but without having that trial to really understand how safe the technology is and the benefits that it actually provides, we would not be able

to have the rollout. I hope that this model serves as an opportunity to look at other service areas of government where we can advance into the digital age. I think we do need to recognise that so many of us now carry smartphones. So many of us have access to that capability that we should be looking to utilise that technology more and more.

I only have a very brief amount of time left, but the legislation also reforms the system around custom plates. Always with the custom plates I am fascinated by those who get the AFL custom plates, and I am looking to have 'HAWKS14' for their 14th premiership in two weeks time.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (18:43): I would like to commend the member for Box Hill on hopefully getting those numberplates, as a fellow Hawks supporter. We do look forward to Friday night over in Adelaide. He might be one step closer to getting those numberplates after Friday night.

I too rise to speak on the Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, and I thank the member for Gippsland South for his lead on this. There are three parts to the safety legislation that we have under the roads and road safety amendment bill. There are a number of issues in the roads portfolio, most notably digital drivers licences and enforcement, and no-truck zones in Melbourne's inner west – and you can see merit in all of that. With the digital licences, I know that they have rolled it out in a few places across Victoria, and it will be something that I think people will take up to be able to have on their phones. It is something that I think the younger generation moves towards. They do not like a hard copy of anything, whether it be drivers licences or credit cards. They all need to be on their phones. God help them if they ever lose their phone, because all their stuff is up on that.

In the enforcement of the no-truck zones there is really good merit. I know that on our country roads trying to pass trucks at stages is bad enough, but when it is in a built-up area it is nearly impossible to be able to do it. We can see that protecting the residents around these truck zones as they travel through built-up areas needs to be done.

I do note that the member for Box Hill was talking about how the trucks coming out of Gippsland will use the link to not have to drive down the Monash to save time. But the issue that we have is actually getting onto those new roads that are being built, because we do have issues on country roads. The issues have been highlighted by a lot of the members on our side especially that are regional MPs but those on the other side too who do have to travel on these country roads on the way home.

I have been speaking to the trucking fraternity. Gino Tripodi is a guy in Traralgon who has a family business; his father had the business. They run up and down carrying our fruit and veg up from Melbourne back down to Gippsland. Talking with him, I heard about the uptake of more maintenance and more cost on him to keep the trucks roadworthy and up to standard, so when they do get audited by VicRoads – they pull them up on the side of the road – they have actually made a concerted effort to make sure their truck is safe, which is fair enough; we need to have safe trucks on the roads. But they are finding that their trucks have to be off the road more often because they are hitting potholes and they are hitting rough patches of road and it is causing terrible issues to the rims of their tyres and blowing tyres but also to the suspension and axles underneath the trucks, so they are forever monitoring them. I just touched base with Gino earlier today to say, 'Look, I may be getting up on this bill,' and he said, 'Well, it just so happens that we're lying under the truck at the moment doing more maintenance.' They are off the road once again making sure that they are ticking all the boxes that are required to make sure that when they are on the road, their trucks are safe. It is costing them money to do that, and at the end of the day they are passing it on to us, the consumer. So that is why we do have issues with cost of living. That transport that is going from far East Gippsland all the way through to Melbourne and then back again is costing more. It is costing more in fuel but is also costing more in the maintenance of the trucks.

Willaton Transport is another one. They are a huge haulage group out of Morwell. They have a lot of trucks that run all over Australia, and without a doubt, talking to Bernie, the worst regional roads around Australia are ours that we have here in country Victoria. It is a shame that that is the case,

because our people in our trucking and haulage fraternity do an amazing job to make sure that our supermarkets are full. Going home from here on a Thursday night after a sitting week or on a Friday morning, you see all the supermarket trucks and the petrol tankers heading out to make sure that there is fuel in our service stations and food in the supermarkets. They have got to negotiate these roads, and along with that we have our cars on the road which are trying to negotiate the potholes. When I travel home, the Monash has deteriorated to a point now where you have really got to be alert for potholes that are there. That never used to be the case 18 months ago when I first was elected and was coming down; the Monash was okay. But now, as we come through Pakenham and into Melbourne, the roads are definitely deteriorating, and it does not seem that the road maintenance is able keep up with it with the extra traffic that is on the freeway. We have bigger haulage trucks, so they are heavier and they cause more damage.

Out in the country areas – and the member for Mildura raised it before – when we get to a certain temperature, if it is 30-plus degrees, our roads virtually disintegrate under some of these heavy trucks. Trying to liaise with councils and also Regional Roads Victoria to work out which road is which, who is in charge of which road, does take a bit of time because they are quick to point the finger at each other: ‘It’s not our road, it’s their road.’

But at the end of the day all we want is a maintenance program on our roads to make our roads safe. Heading home out of here, once I get past Pakenham I do not normally drive in the left-hand lane of the dual lanes. It is dual lane all the way to Traralgon. I try not to be in the left-hand lane, because the potholes on the side of the road are no longer potholes; they are becoming worse than that. It is nothing to see a car pulled up on the side of the road with the RACV behind them or another car and they are changing tyres. It is not, I do not think, because of the lack of maintenance on the tyre; it is all put down to the lack of road maintenance. I have got a couple of friends that are avid bike-riding enthusiasts that love getting on their lycra and riding out on a weekend, and they are all starting to complain now. They are meant to be on the shoulder of the road with the cars giving them a metre of space as they go around, but the roads are that poor in regional areas that they are coming out onto the carriageway, which of course is pushing the cars over virtually into oncoming traffic. So there is another thing that needs to be dealt with as they go past.

The thing that we have also noticed in regional Victoria with the lack of maintenance is that, for the government to get around these issues on roads that used to be 100 kilometres an hour or 80 kilometres an hour or even 60 kilometres an hour, the speed limits are dropping. Not by much, but we have got 100-kilometre zones on our country roads that have gone from 100 to 90 to 80 to 70, and now some are 60 kilometres an hour. That tells me that the people that are maintaining the roads and making these decisions know that there is an issue.

There is an issue with country roads right throughout regional Victoria, and it is slowly starting to encroach on metropolitan Melbourne. With the Big Build, which the government keeps banging on about – how great it is going to be for Victorians and how all Victorians have voted for it – the offshoot is that regional Victorians have been forgotten about with our road safety. Country people die on country roads. That is one thing that is for certain. Rather than sometimes people just driving off the road or having an accident, we also have other influences from potholes and the non-maintenance of our regional roads, with heavy haulage trucks on there, with cars on there and with, as I said, bike riders also using them. The balance needs to be restored to our country communities.

The ACTING SPEAKER (John Mullahy): I call the member for Point Cook.

Matt Fregon interjected.

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (18:53): I am not sure if the Deputy Speaker will be ‘Hear, hearing’ me in a moment, because I am following on from two Hawks. It is a little bit of a confusing situation to see so many Hawks in the building, but everybody is up and about come grand final time. The member for Box Hill quite helpfully talked about one of those matters that I would like to talk

about, which is custom plates. 'HAWKS14' seems a bit over the top, a little bit premature and something that may not come to fruition. I do not know if we are all going for Geelong in Melbourne this year. I think the Acting Speaker is saying that this is a great idea.

One of the great things about this piece of legislation is of course the opportunity to have custom plates. One of the custom plates that I think would have a really red-hot go at the moment is 'OPPOSITION1'. Of course 'OPPOSITION1' is one of those plates that I think would be well sought after at the moment.

A member interjected.

Mathew HILAKARI: No, not 'HAWKS14', 'OPPOSITION1'. But unfortunately for those opposite it is too long. It is just too long, so we have got to get down to 'OPPOSE1'. But it is going to still be equally well sought after. One of the things that the government has wisely undertaken is that these new custom plates can be sold at auction or on a subscription basis. Selling it at auction is a very good idea for the Victorian government to make a nice little bit of coin, because there are so many potential bidders for 'OPPOSE1'.

We have got of course the member for Hawthorn; he might have his hand in his pocket. He has got his hand in his pocket a fair bit at the moment, just thinking about some of those legal bills that are coming down the line. There is always the former Premier to assist, though, so that is good. They might even go for a bit of a consortium and share it around from time to time. I know the member for Berwick will be happy to dip in; he has had a few cracks before at trying to win this little auction. The member for Bulleen might even go for 'OPPOSE3', because it would be the third time around, the lucky guy. You know, the third time is the charm, so we look forward to that. But he can go for 'OPPOSE1' as well. Maybe even the member for Nepean – he turned his arm over recently and just took a bit of time in the winter period to have a little bit of a dip and see how he would go in that. So he might put his hand in his pocket and have a bit of a swing at it as well. It will not be a double fault; he will get his hand in the air in time.

It can be done of course on an auction basis if the department thinks that this is really one of those numberplates that will be well sought after, and I think it is. But I think a much fairer model for 'OPPOSE1' numberplates is to sell them on the subscription model. That way they can be quite easily handed over every three to six months, and everybody can have an opportunity to pass them around. Maybe the member for South-West Coast and others might also have a dip at a certain point in time. We will just see.

The member for Lowan – of course it is a wideranging speech, but I did not think I would see the day when I would hear Milli Vanilli being quoted and brought to the chamber. I thought that was an extraordinary contribution and in line with previous contributions from the member for Lowan, and it was great to hear about some of the favourite fruits and some of the other produce from the electorate that the member for Lowan represents.

It was great to hear from the member for Melton, who has the 'one million and one' electronic drivers licence. Considering the member for Melton has come forward from the time when drivers licences were on paper to the digital age, it just speaks to how far we have come and the willingness and ability for members of Parliament to adjust to the times.

Emma Vulin interjected.

Mathew HILAKARI: No, no, I never said that. I never said that. No, no, I would not do that, member for Pakenham. The member for Melton is forever young for me.

The member for Laverton quite rightly talked about just how important the West Gate is and the West Gate Tunnel for people in Melbourne's west, including the community that I represent. For those who have not had the chance to look at the West Gate Tunnel already, it is an amazing piece of infrastructure, some world-leading infrastructure. The reason I say this is because of the way they have

constructed the road. Unlike other tunnels across the state, the cavity below the road is not actually filled in, it is left open. It is left open so that people can deal with the services – so the water, the electricity – making sure that all those services can be covered off when there is a breakdown. So you do not need maintenance crews going inside the tunnel; the maintenance crews will be under the tunnel. In an emergency an ambulance can roll under the tunnel, not through the tunnel.

There are some really great technological pieces that are occurring across our tunnel and across the state. Not only will you see a magnificent tunnel that will take trucks off the roads in Melbourne's west, but you will see a great piece of technology that will be rolled out in other places around the world, because one of the great things that we heard from the boring machine operators, when we were having a tour of the tunnel, was that they were going from apprenticeship all the way through to their career. We were not importing this labour anymore because we had so many jobs to do.

A couple of jobs – in the very short time that I have got until we get to the adjournment – that I want to talk about are on Point Cook Road. They are important for the community that I represent. Some people have been saying that we have not been doing the infrastructure programs that we need to, but we are doing two great jobs on Point Cook Road. We are in the middle of finalising Sneydes Road and Point Cook Road, putting in an important set of traffic lights at that intersection that so many people in my community avoided because it was so dangerous. That will be finished by the end of this year, subject to the weather – something we talked about a lot today. Point Cook Road and Central Avenue is the next great piece of infrastructure that we are building – also traffic lights, taking out 1½ roundabouts. I know you do not believe me when I say there are 1½ roundabouts, but there are 1½ roundabouts there, and we are getting rid of them.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Electricity infrastructure

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (19:00): (821) My adjournment item tonight is for the Premier. I would like the Premier to please intervene and extend the public consultation time for Transmission Company Victoria, or TCV as it is known, for their application to the Essential Services Commission to get an electricity transmission licence. The reason I want that extension is that the public consultation period ends on 21 October. As you would be well aware, councils are now going into caretaker mode and the council elections will not be held and final results announced before 21 October, so councillors cannot be part of any submissions to the Essential Services Commission around that granting or not granting of a licence to TCV. Given that VNI West is such a contentious project that runs through my electorate, through the electorate of Mildura, down through Ripon and through some of the electorate of Lowan, we are speaking on behalf of the councillors that are going to be elected and that after the election will want to have a say on that particular submission. So I would ask the Premier to please intervene and extend that consultation period, I would suggest for a month, so that the councillors can be elected, can be sworn in and can actually have an opportunity to put a submission in to the Essential Services Commission.

I do not know if the media that you get in the city covers much on VNI West, but for those of us that live in that area it is probably the hottest issue in town and has been for quite a while now. It is running through farmland, and most of the farmers there are violently opposed to having this huge transmission line going through their properties. Their local councils and their elected representatives have the resources to put submissions in. We have encouraged all the people that are along this route to put submissions in, but I think it is very, very important that the shires put submissions in as well, because we do not want to see good, productive farmland taken up with these powerlines. We do not want to see it forced onto people. There are multigenerational farms there where farmers are going to be

looking out their kitchen windows in the future at a huge 500 kilovolt-amp powerline running through their property. They are extremely stressed about this. That is the least I can say. They are angry. They are just really, really peeved off with the current government and what is going on there. They want to make sure they have their say and they want to make sure their local councils have their say as well, so I would ask the Premier to please intervene and extend that consultation time so that councils can put a submission in about Transmission Company Victoria's application to the Essential Services Commission to become an electricity transmission licence holder.

Suicide prevention

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (19:03): (822) Tonight I rise to provide an adjournment matter to the Minister for Mental Health, and the action I seek is for the minister to update my community on the next stages of the *Victorian Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy* and its implementation and impact on the constituents I represent in the Mordialloc electorate. Today is World Suicide Prevention Day, and it is a time to reflect on the people that are lost to suicide each and every year. Last year 801 Victorians, sadly, took their own lives. That is more than two Victorians each and every day. We know that hundreds of people can be affected by someone taking their life in our local community, so this year's narrative around suicide prevention is to change the narrative. It is to break down the stigmas and barriers that still exist in suicide prevention and encourage the help seeking that we hope for in our community for so many people.

The majority of people that we lose to suicide sadly have not interacted with a mental health service before. We know that 70 per cent of people that we lose are men and boys. When I have connected with Lifeline services and the work that they do, they tell me that two-thirds of help seekers are women and the overwhelming majority of their volunteers are women and girls. We need to change the narrative around the impact of suicide on our communities and the compassion that people show in our community, and particularly when we think of men and boys in our community. The compassion and love that people show for a mate in the community – if you ask someone to step up to help someone in their community, most people would not hesitate for a moment, but we need to show the same love and compassion for self so that when people are out in the community and struggling they get the services and support they need when they need it most.

Suicide, we know, in our community touches so many, and each and every one of us would have an understanding of the impact and the toll that that has and the visceral trauma that exists when people are impacted. So a strategy like this that sets out a 10-year agenda – I am really proud of this document, because it is on the back of a huge amount of engagement with lived and living experience, and I want to give a big shout-out to the Minister for Mental Health, who has been an outstanding advocate in this space; to the Department of Health; to clinicians; and to lived experience people across our community who have been impacted by suicide. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the work you have done to put into the strategy. It has teeth, it has accountability, it drives outcomes and it is a really aspirational document. In the words of people who participated in the launch today and the panel discussion, it is something that we can all be proud of. Through the despairs and impact of suicide in our community we can have hope, we can strive for a future of lowering the impact of suicide and the impact and the trauma that has on communities and we can live in the hope of a future that is not impacted by suicide, so I would love an update from the minister for my community

Princes Highway West

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (19:06): (823) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is for the minister to formally publish how the previously allocated funding for the Princes Highway West has been spent. In a recent news article the minister was quoted claiming the Princes Highway does not fall within her jurisdiction but that she will continue to advocate for much-needed funding. I want to speak today to set the record straight because that is simply not true. The Princes Highway is absolutely within the minister's jurisdiction, and the minister has had more than enough time and opportunity to do something about the appalling

condition of the road; instead the minister is trying to dodge responsibility by misleading the public, and it is downright unacceptable.

The Princes Highway is defined as a National Land Transport Network road and as such receives joint funding from both the state and the federal governments where the state government is responsible for maintaining the road to an appropriate standard. Back in 2019 the federal Liberal government allocated \$60 million to upgrade the Port Fairy to Warrnambool section of the Princes Highway, with an additional \$80 million committed to further improvements along the Princes Highway West. The federal Liberal government committed 80 per cent of this money, leaving the state with just 20 per cent of funding responsibility. It was only after relentless advocacy from me and the local community that the state Labor government finally agreed to contribute their share, and so the money for the upgrades was finally allocated. However, the question remains: where exactly has this money gone? While there have been some bridges strengthened in Dennington to increase the capacity for heavy vehicles, the appalling state of the road in places like Illowa makes it hard to understand where exactly the millions of promised dollars to upgrade the road have been spent.

The road conditions remain dangerous and unacceptable, and the improvements we were promised by this state Labor government are nowhere to be seen. It is difficult to escape the suspicion that this money may have been diverted elsewhere, likely to major blowout projects like the Suburban Rail Loop in Melbourne, rather than addressing the needs of regional Victoria. For the Labor state Minister for Roads and Road Safety to claim that fixing the Princes Highway is not her responsibility is a disgrace and outright misleading. She has had \$140 million in funds from the federal Liberal government and 20 per cent from the state, which is a total of \$168 million, to fix the road, so the minister has had both the funds and the authority to act. The community deserves better, and the taxpayers deserve to know where their money is being spent. Passing the buck on such crucial issues is not only misleading but an insult to the people who rely on this road for their daily lives and their livelihoods.

Norlane Community Centre

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (19:09): (824) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Carers and Volunteers, and the action that I seek from the minister is to visit the volunteers at the Norlane Community Centre and see the work that they are doing to support the Norlane community. Norlane Community Centre provides opportunities for locals to connect with, learn from and contribute to their local community. Esther, Bec and the hardworking team of volunteers do a power of work ensuring that they provide services that benefit the community. Whether it is a free community meal on a Tuesday, Food Share on Thursdays, their famous winter solstice event, conversational English classes, tai chi, art classes, the toolshed or the community garden, they are always a thriving hub of activity. It would be wonderful to have the minister visit Norlane Community Centre and see the important work they are doing, and I look forward to hosting her.

Great Ocean Road traffic management

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (19:09): (825) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek from the minister is to replace the temporary traffic lights on the Great Ocean Road that are helping manage traffic at the reconstruction of the Spout Creek bridge. The reason this is important is we are now starting to move into heavy traffic and event traffic along the Great Ocean Road. We have got school holidays coming up, and Amy's Gran Fondo is coming up this weekend. Last weekend people were queueing for nearly an hour in order to get through to Lorne, and unfortunately in the opposite direction there was no-one waiting. So what the locals are finding is that at peak times – Fridays, weekends, Sunday afternoons – they need to replace the traffic lights with manual traffic control operators to make sure they get the flow right, because it is going to damage tourism on the Great Ocean Road. This blockage at Spout Creek is estimated to be there well into next year – probably Easter or so next year. It is a very long time to be scaring visitors and tourists away from the Great Ocean Road.

So the ask is quite simple: we need a better system to manage the flow of traffic so that we can let traffic go in a more organised way and a more sensible way. This would bring great relief to the many people that work each side of the broken bridge. Those in Anglesea and Aireys Inlet that are having to commute to Lorne for work will be able to get there in a timely fashion, but also for our much-needed visitor economy we do not want people missing their weddings and we do not want people not getting to their restaurant booking on time. We do not want people missing the many events that are held in Lorne now, and not only Lorne but Apollo Bay and other communities along the Great Ocean Road. So this is an important issue. It is a simple fix. The community understands that you cannot magic a bridge up in a day or a weekend; it is going to take some time, but the community needs better support here. It needs a little bit of extra common sense applied so that we can get the road as functional as is practically possible.

Committee for Wyndham

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (19:12): (826) My adjournment is for the Minister for Small Business, and the action I seek is that the minister join me for an introductory meeting with the new fantastic executive team at Committee for Wyndham. As the minister knows, Committee for Wyndham is one of the peak advocacy bodies for small businesses in the Wyndham local government area, including my electorate of Laverton. Quite recently I had the pleasure of meeting their new CEO Leanne Down, and I have to say I was thoroughly impressed by her passionate advocacy for our local community. It is clear that the committee is taking a new focus on newer parts of Wyndham and is keen to engage with folks and businesses in newer suburbs like Truganina and Williams Landing. I was very pleased to hear that they have reached out to and are working with our new local business associations, Tarneit Business Association and Truganina Business Association, both of which I have had the privilege of working alongside and helping to set up during my time in this place. It is clear to me that we are very much on the same page about working towards what is best for our shared community in the Laverton electorate. That is why I think it would be absolutely fantastic for the minister to join me in sitting down with Leanne and her new team to discuss how our government can better support local businesses in Wyndham.

Shepparton electorate ambulance services

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (19:13): (827) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Ambulance Services, and the action I seek is the establishment of a mobile intensive care ambulance, MICA, unit in the Shepparton district. Despite numerous business cases and requests from local paramedic team managers, the Shepparton region is the only region within the state without a fully funded MICA unit. The Shepparton region has continually been overlooked for funding from the state government's resourcing of a MICA unit. At the moment we only have a single-responder unit, SRU, which means there is only one MICA paramedic in a sedan. This set-up has limitations, unlike a full MICA unit, which has two paramedics and can transport patients with a stretcher vehicle. The SRU is not an ideal platform, and some patient management is an opt-out due to the paramedic being alone. The SRU model was introduced back in 2011 and is no longer suitable for what is required today. The Shepparton region has not seen any increase in MICA resourcing for over 20 years, despite numerous requests submitted by local paramedics. Paramedics are dealing with a heavy medical workload, often having to transport patients long distances because the specialised care they need is not available locally. A paramedic that I met with raised that the Greater Shepparton LGA had the highest fatality statistics in 2023. He also raised his serious concerns with not being able to provide patient care locally and the risks of transporting patients long distances when they are critically ill. The travel time is also reducing available paramedics in the community. The Shepparton region should not be denied the best available care, being a dual MICA crew, that has been funded for every other region in the state.

South Melbourne Primary School

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (19:15): (828) My adjournment is for the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the Minister for Education to visit South Melbourne Primary School to discuss with principal Noel Creece their experiences – that is, of the school – with explicit instruction and phonics. The phonics reforms announced by the minister have been widely welcomed across the community and are backed by evidence that shows phonics instruction is the most effective approach to teaching reading. They will ensure that every student will have a solid foundation and understanding of literacy as they progress through their education. I recently visited South Melbourne Primary School, the first vertical school in Victoria, built back in 2018, and it was wonderful to speak to the original students now approaching their graduation. This is a fantastic school in my electorate that is leading the way in explicit teaching and phonics instruction, with these techniques already well established in the school. As part of the phonics-in-schools rollout, listening to schools sharing their positive experiences will provide valuable peer-to-peer engagement and promote best practice amongst schools.

Mental health and wellbeing locals

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (19:16): (829) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Mental Health. The action I seek is for the minister to provide a revised timeframe for the rollout of mental health locals across the state. It is a point of seriousness today. Today is national suicide awareness day. I know that many people in this chamber have a loved one or a friend or someone who they were very close to who is no longer here because they have taken their own life. Suicide is something that we can address. It is something that we can do so much around if we ensure that the right mental health supports are in place, that we have communities that are empowered to support their loved ones, that people know the flags and are willing to reach out and feel comfortable in doing so but also that we give people hope that there are not people in a more urgent situation than them, that they are worth it and that they are not taking up time in our mental health system by reaching out for help and assistance. On national suicide awareness day I do pay my respects to those Victorians in particular who we have lost this year, to the friends who I have lost to suicide over my life and also just to all of the loved ones who are left behind wondering what more they could have done to be able to make a life longer lived than what it was. I would also like to acknowledge the mental health workers, who do an exceptional job.

Regarding my adjournment matter, one of the commitments of the royal commission was to roll out mental health locals across the state, and this was very, very important in that it was about providing front-facing services that were largely directed and managed by regional boards. Now we have seen in this year's budget that all of the budgets have been cut for the future rollout of mental health locals. The mental health sector is very, very concerned about this because it is having an impact on the ability to recruit people to a mental health sector where they can see a strong pathway in their career but also see a direct way that they can support people in their community to improve their mental health. There is great uncertainty around this given it has been cut from the budget, particularly around when this might be happening or whether it is on the shelf altogether.

I do ask the minister to provide that revised timeframe for the rollout of mental health locals, particularly for my community. There were mental health locals promised for Horsham, for Stawell and also for Hamilton. Our local area deserves to have mental health supports. Our people deserve to be able to reach out for support and actually get it when they need it. This has to be one of the most important things to ensure the mental health of our people is strong. I urge the minister to provide that rollout and to ensure that my mental health locals are top of the list.

Marnebek School

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (19:19): (830) My adjournment is to the Deputy Premier in his capacity as Minister for Education. The action I seek is that the minister update the house on the impact the refurbishment of Marnebek School will have on the Cranbourne community and the greater

south-east of Melbourne. Marnebek is a terrific special development school in the centre of Cranbourne. When I called the principal at the time Jenny Hamilton to let her know about our decision to refurbish the school back in 2020 she cried, and now what a difference this has made to our community. They were allocated over \$30 million and have upgraded the school with new state-of-the-art facilities: a two-storey learning neighbourhood and a new playground and basketball court at their Holland Drive campus, and at their Corrigans Road campus they have new double-storey neighbourhoods, a cafe and a STEM and arts space. I know acting principal Chris Murray is doing a fantastic job leading the school and assistant principals and campus heads Luke Bennett and Liam Mara are top-notch educators and are eager to demonstrate why this school is so important. I look forward to the minister providing these updates.

Responses

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (19:20): I would like to thank the member for Lara for her adjournment tonight and for her advocacy for neighbourhood houses in her community. We all know that neighbourhood houses are so very important. They provide that place-based social infrastructure where, as the member mentioned, people come to learn, to contribute and to connect with their community, and it sounds like this is especially the case at Norlane Community Centre, with those wonderful volunteers, including Esther and Bec, and the excellent programs on offer, including the food relief through community meals; English, tai chi and art classes; and the important toolshed and community garden. There is certainly a lot going on there. These programs and their importance are why the Allan Labor government provides really strong support for neighbourhood houses across the state, with \$43 million in funding each year to support them through the neighbourhood house coordination program. I really want to thank the member for Lara for her invitation to visit Norlane Community Centre. I look forward to doing so to meet those wonderful volunteers and see firsthand those really important programs that they are offering. I look forward to the visit, and again I thank the member for her advocacy and her support for Norlane Community Centre and its volunteers.

Moving to other adjournment matters raised tonight, the member for Murray Plains raised a matter for the Premier. The action being sought was for the Premier to intervene and provide an extension of time for submissions for an electricity transmission licence, as these close on 21 October and given the current council elections this would give an opportunity for local councillors, once elected, to make submissions. The member for Mordialloc raised a matter for the Minister for Mental Health. The action being sought was for the minister to provide information to his community on the *Victorian Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy* and its implementation and impact on constituents in the Mordialloc electorate. The member for South-West Coast raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action being sought was for the minister to formally publish how the previously allocated funding for Princes Highway West has been spent.

The member for Polwarth also raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action being sought was for the minister to replace the temporary traffic lights on the Great Ocean Road at the Spout Creek bridge upgrade to improve traffic movement. The member for Laverton raised a matter for the Minister for Small Business. The action being sought was for the minister to join her for an introductory meeting with the new executive team at the Committee for Wyndham. The member for Shepparton raised a matter for the Minister for Ambulance Services. The action being sought was for the minister to establish a new MICA unit in the Shepparton region. The member for Albert Park raised a matter for the Deputy Premier in his capacity as Minister for Education. The action being sought was for the minister to join her to visit the South Melbourne Primary School and see how well they are doing in leading the way with phonics.

The member for Lowan raised a matter for the Minister for Mental Health, and the action being sought was for the minister to provide a revised timeframe for the rollout of mental health locals across the state, particularly in her community – those mental health locals that were recommended by the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. And finally, the member for Cranbourne also

ADJOURNMENT

3496

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday 10 September 2024

raised a matter for the Deputy Premier in his capacity as Minister for Education, and the action being sought was for the minister to provide the member with an update on the benefits of the refurbishment at Marnebek School and to go over the wonderful benefits that this will have not only for the school but for the broader community. I will refer these matters to the appropriate ministers for action.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Go Hawks! The house stands adjourned until tomorrow morning.

House adjourned 7:24 pm.