



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

60th Parliament

Tuesday 13 August 2024

Members of the Legislative Council

60th Parliament

President

Shaun Leane

Deputy President

Wendy Lovell

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Jaclyn Symes

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Lizzie Blandthorn

Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council

Georgie Crozier

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council

Evan Mulholland (from 31 August 2023)

Matthew Bach (to 31 August 2023)

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Bach, Matthew ¹	North-Eastern Metropolitan	Lib	Luu, Trung	Western Metropolitan	Lib
Batchelor, Ryan	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Mansfield, Sarah	Western Victoria	Greens
Bath, Melina	Eastern Victoria	Nat	McArthur, Bev	Western Victoria	Lib
Berger, John	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	McCracken, Joe	Western Victoria	Lib
Blandthorn, Lizzie	Western Metropolitan	ALP	McGowan, Nick	North-Eastern Metropolitan	Lib
Bourman, Jeff	Eastern Victoria	SFFP	McIntosh, Tom	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Broad, Gaele	Northern Victoria	Nat	Mulholland, Evan	Northern Metropolitan	Lib
Copsey, Katherine	Southern Metropolitan	Greens	Payne, Rachel	South-Eastern Metropolitan	LCV
Crozier, Georgie	Southern Metropolitan	Lib	Puglielli, Aiv	North-Eastern Metropolitan	Greens
Davis, David	Southern Metropolitan	Lib	Purcell, Georgie	Northern Victoria	AJP
Deeming, Moira ²	Western Metropolitan	IndLib	Ratnam, Samantha ⁵	Northern Metropolitan	Greens
Erdogan, Enver	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Shing, Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Ermacora, Jacinta	Western Victoria	ALP	Somyurek, Adem	Northern Metropolitan	DLP
Ettershank, David	Western Metropolitan	LCV	Stitt, Ingrid	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Galea, Michael	South-Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Symes, Jaclyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Gray-Barberio, Anasina ³	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Tarlamis, Lee	South-Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Heath, Renee	Eastern Victoria	Lib	Terpstra, Sonja	North-Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Hermans, Ann-Marie	South-Eastern Metropolitan	Lib	Tierney, Gayle	Western Victoria	ALP
Leane, Shaun	North-Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tyrrell, Rikkie-Lee	Northern Victoria	PHON
Limbrick, David ⁴	South-Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Watt, Sheena	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Lovell, Wendy	Northern Victoria	Lib	Welch, Richard ⁶	North-Eastern Metropolitan	Lib

¹ Resigned 7 December 2023

² Lib until 27 March 2023

³ Appointed 14 November 2024

⁴ LDP until 26 July 2023

⁵ Resigned 8 November 2024

⁶ Appointed 7 February 2024

Party abbreviations

AJP – Animal Justice Party; ALP – Australian Labor Party; DLP – Democratic Labour Party;

Greens – Australian Greens; IndLib – Independent Liberal; LCV – Legalise Cannabis Victoria;

LDP – Liberal Democratic Party; Lib – Liberal Party of Australia; LP – Libertarian Party;

Nat – National Party of Australia; PHON – Pauline Hanson's One Nation; SFFP – Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party

CONTENTS

BILLS	
Confiscation Amendment (Unexplained Wealth) Bill 2024	2653
Royal assent	2653
COMMITTEES	
Legal and Social Issues Committee	2653
Membership	2653
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE AND MINISTERS STATEMENTS	
Victims of crime	2653
Housing.....	2654
Ministers statements: Swinburne University	2656
Health workforce	2657
Prisoner phone calls.....	2658
Ministers statements: aged care.....	2659
Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union.....	2659
Dhurringile Prison	2660
Ministers statements: Eastern Community Legal Centre	2661
Kindergarten funding	2662
Age of criminal responsibility.....	2663
Ministers statements: kindergarten funding	2665
CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS	
Northern Victoria Region	2665
Northern Victoria Region	2666
South-Eastern Metropolitan Region	2666
Northern Metropolitan Region	2666
North-Eastern Metropolitan Region	2666
Western Metropolitan Region	2667
Northern Victoria Region	2667
North-Eastern Metropolitan Region	2667
Western Victoria Region	2667
Western Metropolitan Region	2668
Eastern Victoria Region	2668
Eastern Victoria Region	2668
Western Victoria Region	2668
Southern Metropolitan Region	2669
North-Eastern Metropolitan Region	2669
BILLS	
Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Bill 2024.....	2669
Council's amendments.....	2669
PETITIONS	
Point Lonsdale	2669
BILLS	
Health Services Amendment (Saving the Royal Children's Hospital) Bill 2024	2670
Introduction and first reading	2670
COMMITTEES	
Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee	2670
Alert Digest No. 10	2670
PAPERS	
Papers.....	2671
PETITIONS	
Housing.....	2672
Medicinal cannabis.....	2672
Responses	2672
PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS	
Kangaroo control	2672
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
Notices	2672
General business	2673
MOTIONS	
Middle East conflict	2673
MEMBERS STATEMENTS	

CONTENTS

School breakfast clubs.....	2673
Cyril Callister Museum.....	2674
Asylum seekers.....	2674
Jude Perera	2674
Inga Peulich.....	2674
Small business support.....	2675
Assyrian Church of the East.....	2675
Sarv Samaj Seva Samiti.....	2675
Victorian Lebanese Community Council.....	2675
Victorian Maronite community.....	2675
Ringwood East train station.....	2675
Dustin Martin.....	2676
Monash Business Awards.....	2676
Bundoorra Bulls Junior Football Club.....	2676
Health services.....	2677
Inga Peulich.....	2677
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
Notices of motion and orders of the day	2677
BILLS	
State Sporting Legislation Amendment Bill 2024	2677
Second reading.....	2677
Committee.....	2704
Third reading.....	2706
Youth Justice Bill 2024.....	2706
Second reading.....	2706
ADJOURNMENT	
Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union.....	2727
Maternity services.....	2727
Electoral reform.....	2728
Broadmeadows train station	2728
Wildlife crime	2729
Energy policy	2730
Health services	2730
Hospital security	2730
Energy policy	2731
Commonwealth Games.....	2732
Epsom Primary School	2732
Health services	2733
Community Abundance.....	2734
Responses	2734

Tuesday 13 August 2024

The PRESIDENT (Shaun Leane) took the chair at 12:03 pm, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.

Bills

Confiscation Amendment (Unexplained Wealth) Bill 2024

Royal assent

The PRESIDENT (12:04): I have a message from the Governor, dated 6 August:

The Governor informs the Legislative Council that she has, on this day, given the Royal Assent to the undermentioned Act of the present Session presented to Her by the Clerk of the Parliaments:

26/2024 Confiscation Amendment (Unexplained Wealth) Act 2024

Committees

Legal and Social Issues Committee

Membership

The PRESIDENT (12:05): I advise the chamber that I have received a letter from Mrs Deeming, resigning as a participating member of the Legal and Social Issues Committee effective Wednesday 7 August 2024.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Victims of crime

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:05): (605) My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, the Lawyer X scandal has led to wrongful convictions being overturned and a royal commission exposing serious misconduct. So I ask: how do you justify blocking compensation claims for victims?

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:06): I thank Ms Crozier for her question. As I have announced today, it is the government's intention to bring a piece of legislation for the Parliament's consideration which is all about bringing a very dark chapter in the legal system's history to a close as much as possible. The royal commission, which was brought about by the Labor government, referred inappropriate behaviour and referred the misuse of police informants to an inquiry that was very thorough and very expensive and determined a series of recommendations that we have been systematically implementing. We do not want this type of behaviour to happen again.

It has been an incredibly expensive endeavour. We had the royal commission. We have the implementation monitor Sir David Carruthers and the good work that he is doing in helping to guide those recommendations. We had the special investigator do their work to wrap up the further work that the royal commission asked to be done and to be referred to the DPP in relation to those matters. It is the government's contention – and I hope to receive support from non-government members – that taxpayers have paid enough. I want to bring a close to the expense of this saga. I think that, in the public interest, people want us spending money on hospitals and schools, and in that respect I look forward to –

Members interjecting.

Jaclyn SYMES: Those who seek to frustrate the passage of that bill this week obviously do not share the priorities of Victorians that I do.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:08): It just shows how chaotic and dysfunctional this government is. Attorney, given the actions the government is taking to strip away the rights of victims of government misconduct, can you guarantee that no other class of Victorian, such as victims of historical child sexual abuse in government schools, will also have their rights taken away?

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:08): I will take the opportunity, Ms Crozier, to let you know that your Shadow Attorney-General has all of the information that pertains to the specific –

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: Order! It is impossible to hear the minister's answer. It is impossible. The question was asked. I think if you want to hear the answer, then maybe keep the noise down.

Jaclyn SYMES: The legislation was summarised a couple of days ago for the Shadow Attorney-General, as is my practice. If you would like to inform me of a different practice the opposition would like me to proceed with for my policy matters in the future, that is fine. He might like to table the correspondence he has received. You may like to receive that. But the way you have characterised your supplementary question – I want to confirm this is a very confined bill. And on what you are seeking to achieve in the way you have asked your question, it is a guarantee that this bill is confined to matters that were relevant to the royal commission into police informants.

Housing

Samantha RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (12:10): (606) My question is for the Minister for Housing. Recent reports in the *Age* confirmed that your government has recently signed a \$100 million contract with John Holland for the demolition of public housing towers in North Melbourne and Flemington. This is despite hundreds of residents still living in these homes and growing community opposition to your plans to demolish and privatise these estates. Recently a group of residents from Flemington and North Melbourne wrote to you and said:

The impact of relocation extends far beyond housing. These high-rise buildings are not just structures; they are the heart of our lives where we have forged friendships, built support networks, and cultivated a sense of belonging. Moving us from this community will sever these vital connections, leaving families isolated and vulnerable, especially our elderly who already struggle with language barriers and rely heavily on local community support.

Your government has previously used demolition contracts to evict residents and drag them through VCAT to force from their homes. Minister, is Labor again planning to use demolition contracts to begin mass evictions of residents at these public housing sites so that you can privatise them?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality) (12:11): Dr Ratnam, thank you, yet again, for another question on the towers redevelopment sites in tranche 1 of the work that we are doing. I would just like to, yet again, invite you to a briefing on social housing and what the Big Housing Build is delivering and what the housing statement is delivering, because again, Dr Ratnam, you have failed to take up all of my constant invitations to you for –

Samantha Ratnam: Where's the invitation? Send me an email.

Harriet SHING: Ask, Dr Ratnam, and ye shall receive. I would in fact invite you, Dr Ratnam, to go to some of the correspondence that I have sent back to you inviting you expressly to take up an offer of a briefing. I have reiterated that invitation several times in this place. I have reiterated it publicly. Dr Ratnam, if your intestinal fortitude amounts to the sort of gravitas that you would seek to have it represent in the broader world, you might seek to actually ask for the information that you say is so important to you that it cannot wait.

Samantha Ratnam: On a point of order, President, my question was not about a briefing, it was about demolition contracts. It is a point of order on the relevance of the minister's response to the precise question that I asked.

The PRESIDENT: I will uphold the point of order and call the minister to the question.

Harriet SHING: Thank you. Dr Ratnam, I look forward to being heard without interjection, because it was on that basis that I was giving you the further information. At the heart of the work that we are doing on the high-rise relocation programs is tenant voice. The work that we are doing as part of the resident- and community-first approach is about household relocations that are aimed to develop a really deep understanding of each renter's circumstances – their aspirations and the needs that they have for specific configurations in the housing that will meet their needs and the social supports that are also of crucial importance, which you have also identified in the extensive preamble to your question. Connecting people with pride of place is of essential importance in recognising not only the impact of the places that people have called home for generations but also what the impact of relocations will look like.

Homes Victoria has had individual meetings with 98 per cent of the 484 households that were residing at the North Melbourne and Flemington towers. As of 9 August, 96 per cent of all households have submitted a housing application to outline what their housing needs are, and 70 per cent of those households have expressed a preference to remain within their community and the immediate area. This is where the neighbourhood approach is of especial importance, and again, I am really happy to brief you on that process. As of 3 August 2024, 124 households have moved, with a further 106 households being matched to an alternative property or having accepted a property that meets their household eligibility and need requirements. Eighty-eight households have relocated into the new homes in the immediate area at Victoria Street, Flemington, managed by Community Housing Limited.

Samantha RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (12:14): Thank you for your response, Minister. I think it is really important that we ask and furnish these questions in public on behalf of the thousands of residents your plans for demolition and privatisation impact, and I will continue to ask through this chamber questions that are matters of public importance. Residents from these towers have made it abundantly clear that they do not want the demolition plans to proceed without meaningful consultation and a right to return to public housing at these sites. Recently a resident said:

We were initially assured that relocation would consider our needs and preferences, including moving with family and friends. However, recent interactions with relocation officers have contradicted these assurances, leaving us feeling coerced into accepting inadequate housing offers.

This is simply unacceptable behaviour by the government, Minister. Minister, will you guarantee that no resident will be forcibly evicted from their public home at Flemington and North Melbourne?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality) (12:15): Dr Ratnam, what a shame that you have not actually sought to provide details of these renters who you have just put on the record as feeling coerced to accept particular offers.

Samantha Ratnam: On a point of order, President, I did mention in my main question that this was a letter that the minister had also received from residents.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order. The minister is 10 seconds into her answer.

Harriet SHING: Yes, you have referred to multiple residents, Dr Ratnam. If you have got examples, bring them to me. When we do talk about the impact of a relocation on residents, we are dealing with and engaging with and respecting the views of residents about what their needs and their aspirations are, not just now but into the future. While we are talking about the feedback that we have had on the engagement with tower tenants, a renter at Windsor has said:

Thank you so much for today. I feel much calmer. I feel really heard.

Another renter at Albert Park said:

I came here ready to be angry because I didn't know anything. You've really helped me. It really helped being able to have a one-on-one conversation.

A renter at Carlton said:

I wasn't convinced about this, but you've convinced me you are genuine and care about renters.

A renter at Richmond said:

There are a lot of people worried about –

David Davis: On a point of order, President, the question, as I understood it, asked specifically about locations in her region – in the northern region. The minister is now talking about different locations in a different part of metropolitan Melbourne. It is not appropriate, and it is not responsive to the question.

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: Order! There is no point of order. The minister has got 6 seconds.

Harriet SHING: Thank you. The list goes on, and again –

Samantha Ratnam: On a point of order, President, just on relevance, my question was precisely about North Melbourne and Flemington residents.

The PRESIDENT: I hate paraphrasing people, but I feel that the minister gave a response that was a global approach at the start, so I think the minister has been relevant to the question. She has got 2 seconds.

Harriet SHING: One of the things that we are trying to counter is the disinformation that you are distributing, Dr Ratnam. We will continue to do that.

David Davis: On a point of order, President, I ask you to perhaps later, in the quietness after question time, just re-look at this, because I think where a question is specific about certain locations, it is clearly not adequate for a minister to answer about entirely different places. I know you always say – and I understand why you say it – that you cannot direct a minister how to answer a question, but you can to the extent that you can tell a minister they cannot answer with an irrelevant detail a different question than the one that has been asked.

Harriet Shing: Further to the point of order, President, where I do talk about the renter-first approach, it is an approach which applies globally and universally, and the examples that I have given are illustrative of that approach in action. On that basis, the general has led to the specific.

David Davis: Further to the point of order, President, they are illustrative, but that actually confirms that they are not actually a precise answer about precise locations. That is the point; they are not the proper answer.

The PRESIDENT: I will commit to Mr Davis to give consideration to his point of order in general. I usually wait until the end of question time to say whether I think the minister acquitted the questions, and I think the minister did. But I am always open to points of order if people believe the minister did not. I will commit to Mr Davis to give consideration in general, rather than on this question, to his point of order in coming hours and days.

Ministers statements: Swinburne University

Gayle TIERNEY (Western Victoria – Minister for Skills and TAFE, Minister for Regional Development) (12:20): I rise to update the chamber on our government's investment in cutting-edge research at our world-leading universities. Last week I visited Swinburne's \$6 million LivingAT Facility, Australia's first fully accessible co-designed research space. Swinburne is developing

exciting new technology, including high-tech prototype wheelchairs, to improve mobility and quality of life. Swinburne's partnership with Yooralla, a disability support provider, is ensuring co-design with people with lived experience of disability. On this visit I met PhD candidate Mark Hanson, who is developing a game-changing training program to help airline staff better meet the needs of travellers with disabilities. As a wheelchair user himself, Mark is applying his experience to ensure that other Victorians can enjoy far more accessible transport options.

Swinburne's LivingAT Facility also features the Ngarrgu Tindebeek supercomputer, whose name means 'knowledge of the void' in the local Woiwurrung language. This incredible \$5.2 million machine is financially supported by this state government, and it is enabling groundbreaking research into space, the mysteries of the human brain and complex ecosystems on earth. While I was there, I met Joe, who has been working on computers and supercomputer technology at Swinburne for 34 years. What an achievement, Joe. I am proud to say that our \$350 million Victorian Higher Education State Investment Fund has supported Swinburne's research lab.

This is another excellent example of the Allan Labor government partnering with our higher education system to improve lives for the better, to train our local workforce for jobs of the future and to make our economy more accessible to all Victorians.

Health workforce

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:22): (607) My question is again to the Attorney-General. Attorney, every month you receive an updated whole-of-government legal risk register. In March Peninsula Health abandoned its appeal of a court judgement in a class action brought by 1600 junior doctors regarding wage theft by the Allan Labor government. I ask: is the threat of further litigation included on the register?

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:22): I have some difficulty in answering Ms Crozier's question because, first of all, she has put an assertion which she has no basis to put. Yes, there is a legal risk register, but it goes to a cabinet committee. What you are asking me to talk about are matters for cabinet. In general it is not my practice to go through the deliberations of a cabinet committee.

Often this comes up in this place, where I get asked about legal matters in my capacity as Attorney-General – as first law officer – and they link things in relation to that. That does not mean that I take responsibility for the legal response for other portfolio matters. If there is a legal matter that I am aware of that exists in another portfolio, that does not inherently make it part of my responsibility. In that sense the question that Ms Crozier has put places me in somewhat of a difficult situation to give her much information apart from I am aware of the matter she referred to and there is the existence of a legal risk register.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:24): Another cop-out by the Attorney. Attorney, the register requires each department to identify their top 10 legal risks. Where does the risk posed by further litigation by junior doctors, whose wages were stolen by the Allan Labor government, sit on the register?

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:24): The way you have characterised the way the register works is not a correct articulation of it. Yes, it is important for whole of government to be aware of significant litigation across the public sector, because in that sense you promote consistency –

Georgie Crozier: You're not answering the question.

Jaclyn SYMES: I am trying to be helpful. My answer to your first question effectively answered your substantive question, and the way you have characterised it in terms of 'What number is this on the register?' is an inappropriate question that actually cannot be answered.

Prisoner phone calls

David ETTERSHANK (Western Metropolitan) (12:25): (608) My question is to the Minister for Corrections, and it relates to the cost of phone calls in Victorian prisons. Father's Day is in two weeks, and thousands of children with parents in Victorian jails will not get a call from Dad because of the prohibitive cost. Calls in Victorian jails are the highest in the country, with a 12-minute phone call costing \$7. To put that in some context, inmates can only earn up to a maximum of \$9.60 a day, and that is money that they need for all of their expenses. The government has already agreed in principle with the Yoorrook Justice Commission recommendation to immediately take all necessary steps to ensure prisoners, including Aboriginal prisoners, can make telephone calls for free or at no greater cost than the general community. I ask: what is the government doing to make phone calls cheaper in Victorian jails?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (12:26): I thank Mr Ettershank for his question and his interest in this matter. As a government we are proud to be investing in our corrections system, and I know that particularly the COVID period was a difficult period where people could not see their relatives in correctional centres in person. There are a number of ways that people can see and connect with family, because we know that to get the best result for people in our corrections system it is about connection to community. Connection to family is a key factor in assisting someone's rehabilitation, and that is why we have invested in new technologies at our new custodial facilities with opportunities to connect via Zoom and make use of those technologies that we utilised during the pandemic and that we have continued at many of our premises with the return to in-person visits. But you are correct about the cost of calls.

I had the privilege and honour of appearing before the Yoorrook commission last year, and I stated my view that the cost of calls in custodial settings should be lower. It is a matter I have raised with the department. As we speak I am waiting for an updated brief on how we can bring that to fruition, understanding that the settings and tools were used to monitor calls. There is a technology in place that is needed to appropriately manage the risks in those settings. But at the moment I have asked for a brief, and I am happy, offline, to update you on where we progress with that.

David ETTERSHANK (Western Metropolitan) (12:27): I thank the minister for his response. There is a mountain of evidence demonstrating that connection with family and friends outside of prison reduces anxiety and depression amongst inmates. Family connection supports prisoners in their rehabilitation and reintegration into the community. It reduces recidivism, and it has also been shown to reduce the number of violent incidents in jail. For incarcerated parents, regular phone calls enable them to not only maintain but significantly strengthen their relationships with their children, which of course also greatly improves the health and wellbeing of their child. Jurisdictions in the US and UK have introduced free phone calls in prisons and are noticing the positive differences that makes to the lives of inmates, so I ask: will the government make phone calls in prison free this Father's Day and then look to make them free all year round?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (12:28): I thank Mr Ettershank for his supplementary question, and I do agree that connection to family and community is a key rehabilitative factor. It is why as minister I made the point at Yoorrook and I stand today saying I believe the cost of calls should be cheaper. In terms of all those options, I have asked for a brief from the department, and I eagerly await that detailed response from the department. I am happy to have a discussion, Mr Ettershank, to continue this conversation, because it is important. We have implemented new technologies where people have a free option via the internet. There are other options for in-person visits. But the cost of phone calls is something that I am very acutely aware of and I am committed to addressing.

David Ettershank interjected.

Enver ERDOGAN: It will not be ready by Father's Day, Mr Ettershank.

Ministers statements: aged care

Ingrid STITT (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (12:29): I rise to take a moment to acknowledge our aged care workforce across the state. Last Wednesday was national Aged Care Employee Day, a time to acknowledge the contribution aged care workers make to improving the lives of older Victorians living in residential aged care across the state. The aged care workforce is the backbone of our aged care system and critical to the delivery of dignified and person-centred care. The Allan Labor government recognises that everyone deserves to age with dignity and respect, and the highly skilled care delivered by the nurses and carers is really vital in achieving this.

I want to particularly acknowledge those working in our public sector residential aged care services. When you visit any of our PSRACS across the state it feels like you have been invited into people's homes. Over the last few months I have had the opportunity to visit many of these facilities and meet the nurses, care workers and administrative staff who staff these facilities, and I am continually impressed by the deep commitment of the staff to the dignity of the residents and their right to age well and the exceptional care that is given. I thank our PSRACS staff for the work they do each and every day to provide high-quality care to older Victorians living in our public facilities. And to all those working in aged care across Victoria: thank you for your highly skilled care and your dedication to older Victorians.

Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:31): (609) My question is for the Minister for Corrections. Minister, stories emerged in the media several weeks ago outlining how members of organised crime and bikie organisations are working as CFMEU officials on government worksites. I therefore ask: has the minister sought assurances from his department that criminal elements are not working on Victoria's correctional facilities?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (12:31): I thank Mr Davis for his question and his interest in our corrections system. As minister I am proud of the investments our government has made to make sure we have a modern and effective corrections system, one that is focused on community safety but also one that is committed to giving the people in our custodial settings the best chance to turn their lives around. In terms of the way construction projects are managed from the department's perspective, we have the Community Safety Building Authority, which manages those contracts. There is a public tender process. As minister I would never involve myself or interfere in those processes; it would be highly inappropriate. In terms of the contracts – and I am sure there are subcontractors employed as well – and the membership or otherwise of any organisation of people that work on those sites, obviously we have strong probity and procurement policies in place, but the Community Safety Building Authority is there in charge of that process to make sure that everything is aboveboard.

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:32): I take it that that means the minister has not asked for such assurances, and I therefore ask: Minister, will you pledge to the Victorian people to now proactively seek those assurances from the department or the relevant authority?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (12:32): I thank Mr Davis for his supplementary question. I think it was clear last sitting week that I am not aware of any specific concerns about criminal behaviour on our prison construction projects, but of course if you have some allegations, Mr Davis, I recommend you refer them to the appropriate bodies. IBAC, the Ombudsman, Victoria Police – they are the appropriate bodies. Nothing has been brought to my attention. If they were, I would refer them to the appropriate bodies.

David Davis: On a point of order, President, it was a very specific question asking whether the minister would take a specific action. It was not about the opposition. It was about what action the

minister would take: would he seek the assurances from the department or the relevant authority? He either will or he will not, but he did not answer that question at all. He talked about other matters.

The PRESIDENT: You are debating the point of order. I think the minister's answer was that he has had assurances, that he is not aware –

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: Like I have said, it is very dangerous for me to paraphrase anyone, but my understanding in real time was that the minister was saying he has had that information –

Enver ERDOGAN: I am not aware of any.

The PRESIDENT: He is not aware of any.

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: The minister has got 37 seconds if he wishes to continue.

Enver ERDOGAN: Let us be very clear: there is no place for organised crime on prison construction projects. The only place for organised crime is in prison. In relation to any allegations, nothing has been put to me. I get regular briefings from the department, and if there is an allegation, if I become aware, I will refer it to the appropriate body.

David Davis: On a point of order, it is clear again that he did not actually answer the question, President. He actually did not answer. He will not seek those assurances, and I think the failure there is significant.

The PRESIDENT: I think the minister was relevant to his position on your question.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:35): I move:

That the minister's answer be taken into consideration on the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

Dhurringile Prison

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL (Northern Victoria) (12:35): (610) My question is for the Minister for Corrections. The minister's decision to close Dhurringile Prison at the end of this month blindsided the Dhurringile and Goulburn Valley communities, especially the 160 employees at the prison and their families. Last week the local community held a meeting to discuss the future of the Dhurringile Prison site. One of the genuine concerns raised by the community was the lack of information from the department regarding the decommissioning of the site and what this actually means. Can the minister detail what assets at the Dhurringile Prison site will be removed during this decommissioning process?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (12:36): I thank Mrs Tyrrell for her question and her interest in Dhurringile Prison, a prison that I did announce the closure of last month. It was a difficult decision to make. But as minister I have always been forthright in saying that we need to make sure we have an efficient and effective system and make best use of our best facilities, and that is what we have done with announcing the opening of the Western Plains facility and taking the opportunity to close some of our ageing infrastructure, such as Dhurringile. I want to take this opportunity to thank the staff there. Dhurringile Prison has been an important part of our system for over 60 years. It has a great, beautiful, historic homestead onsite. I know there is great community interest in the future use of the site.

In terms of the decommissioning work, these are very detailed operational matters that I am reluctant to share for a number of security reasons. I understand decommissioning involves removing some of the security features that we employ in corrections facilities, and it would be inappropriate for me to

go into that level of detail in this open forum. I am happy for my office to reach out to you and give you a broad explanation of what is happening, without compromising the security measures in place in that work. I understand that work is about to begin – from September. There are over 50 staff that are staying on – 58 in fact – but I understand that, of the 58, five have actually taken up job opportunities. So 58 are continuing on the decommissioning work, but five have already got other job opportunities, highlighting the low levels of unemployment in regional Victoria in this time and I think one of the historic low periods. On that point, I might give a shout-out to our Treasurer for his economic management; we have historically low unemployment figures in regional Victoria. So 58 staff will be continuing as part of the decommissioning work – five have had other job opportunities and have taken those opportunities – and that work will commence from 1 September.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL (Northern Victoria) (12:38): I thank the minister for his answer. Considering the lack of consultation with staff and the community, initially with the closing of the prison and, secondly, regarding details of the decommissioning of the site, it is imperative that the government engages with the community on the future of a facility that is of such historical significance to many people. Will the minister give an undertaking to ensure thorough and continuous consultation with both the Greater Shepparton City Council and the local community on the future of the Dhurringile Prison site?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (12:38): I thank Mrs Tyrrell for her sincere engagement on this issue. I want to also give a shout-out to other members in this place that have approached me: Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes, Ms Lovell, Mrs Tyrrell – many members have approached me about the future use of the site, and I think that is important. I have made very clear to the department my expectation of engagement and that it work very closely with the Shepparton council and with the local community. I know a lot of the surrounding neighbours are interested in the future use of the site. I mentioned earlier in my answer to the substantive that there is a historic homestead. It is beautiful, and it should be maintained. It is a really important part of Victoria's history, and that is my expectation from the department, that that engagement work is done.

Ministers statements: Eastern Community Legal Centre

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (12:39): I rise today to update the house about the great work being done by the Eastern Community Legal Centre to support victims of crime in Melbourne's east. Recently I had the pleasure of joining my colleague in the other place the hardworking member for Box Hill Paul Hamer to meet with the team at Eastern Community Legal Centre to see the Allan Labor government's investment in victims legal services firsthand. The Eastern Community Legal Centre has been serving the community since 1974 and offers a comprehensive range of universal and targeted legal services and specialises in supporting victim-survivors experiencing family violence. The centre is one of the providers of the victims legal service, Victoria's first dedicated statewide service for victims of crime.

Established last year and backed by \$7.3 million in investment from the Allan Labor government, the victims legal service provides free legal advice and assistance to victims of crime in Victoria. The service is designed specifically to meet the needs of victims of crime in a trauma-informed, accessible, inclusive and culturally safe way. Importantly, the victims legal service will support victims of crime to access the new financial assistance scheme, which will open later this year. It is a landmark reform by this government that will dramatically improve the way people receive the support they need to recover. As well as the victims legal service, the ECLC delivers specialised family violence programs, including the MABELS initiative and SAGE program. These provide essential support to some of the most vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women and those at risk of elder abuse.

The Eastern Community Legal Centre's focus on evidence-based practice, integrated service delivery and strong partnerships aligns with our government's commitment to ensuring that all Victorians have access to the support they need, especially in times of crisis. I want to take this opportunity to express

my gratitude to all those working in the community legal sector, in particular the Eastern Community Legal Centre. Their efforts are integral to making Victoria safer and a more just place for all.

Kindergarten funding

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (12:41): (611) My question is for the Minister for Children. Minister, the Economy and Infrastructure Committee is conducting an inquiry into local government funding and services, and it is no surprise to hear the Allan Labor government's inability to manage money is now forcing councils across Victoria to reduce or cut services for their residents. I have long said that free kinder is not free for ratepayers. The Labor government claims the credit but leaves councils to pick up significant parts of the bill. Council after council have told us the burden of the Allan Labor government's promises falls on ratepayers and budgets are at breaking point. Minister, which residents services should councils cut to finance kinder costs your government is failing to provide?

The PRESIDENT: The problem I have with that question is that this minister is not responsible for council services. Could you rephrase it to make it relevant to the minister, Mrs McArthur.

Bev McARTHUR: Thank you, President. Minister, this is about free kinder. Are you going to provide free kinder, in full, to all residents in Victoria – ratepayers in Victoria – or do the ratepayers have to pick up the bill? Are you going to provide all the costs or not?

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (12:43): Thank you very much, Mrs McArthur, for your question. I hear those behind me suggesting perhaps it is a Dorothy – I thought we got rid of those – but I am more than happy to talk about the benefits of free kinder. What is more, I am more than happy to talk about the more than 90 per cent of services that are offering free kinder, and I am more than happy to talk about all of the support that we provide to local government in addition to the \$2500 per child for free kinder.

For a start, to go to the essence of your question, as the President indicated, I cannot talk about what other services council do support, but I can talk about the support that we give to local government for kinder. We have free kinder funding, which for local government run sessional services is 30 to 40 per cent higher than average parent fees which were previously charged; a 40 per cent increase in funding for early years management for sessional services in 2024 compared to the 2021 funding rates, noting that approximately half of all early years managers in Victoria are our local councils – so direct beneficiaries of that funding; \$4.8 million to expand the kindergarten central registration and enrolment scheme grants program for local government – and this is a significant increase compared to the \$1.6 million that it was in previous years; the workforce planning support program grants for local councils, which create strategic five-year workforce plans – and this is absolutely critical in the delivery of our Best Start, Best Life \$14 billion reforms; and the \$5.2 million for the kindergarten infrastructure and services plan grants program, which is helping local governments to identify when and where to invest in early childhood services.

Many of those opposite and many of those in the other place on your side of the chamber as well as ours are most welcoming of all of this support to ensure that in their local communities we are offering free kinder for children. Three- and four-year-old kindergarten, we know, is of direct benefit to children. It sets them up for their lifelong learning. Programs such as these and support such as this for councils to offer those kindergarten programs are absolutely critical.

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (12:45): Can you just confirm that free kinder is not free? Because you are not providing 100 per cent of the costs to provide your free kindergarten. Minister, your grants application process is time-consuming and costly for councils.

Members interjecting.

Bev McARTHUR: Corangamite shire estimate that they will need –

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Bev McARTHUR: Thank you, President. Corangamite shire estimate that they will need to find north of \$10 million, and a different council CEO told us the Building Blocks grants on offer are increasingly not covering the full cost of new or upgraded kindergartens – so much for free kindergartens! Forcing councils to come begging for grants and then giving them less than they need lands local ratepayers with the bill for the difference. Minister, if you want to promise free services, when will you pay the full cost yourself –

Members interjecting.

Bev McARTHUR: instead of writing cheques local councils have to cash?

The PRESIDENT: Order! Mrs McArthur, can you just ask that last bit of the question – the actual question – I did not hear it. And can she do it so that we can all hear her.

Bev McARTHUR: Minister, forcing councils to come begging for grants and then giving them less than they need lands local ratepayers with the bill for the difference. If you want to promise services, when will you pay the full cost yourself instead of writing cheques local councils have to cash?

The PRESIDENT: That was a bit different, but I will call the minister.

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (12:47): It was a bit different, but the common theme is free kinder, and those opposite need to decide whether or not they support it. Those opposite need to decide whether or not they support free kinder, and when we say ‘free kinder’ we are talking about the cost-of-living pressures for parents of three- and four-year-old children. We all know how expensive it is to raise a family, and we are providing free kinder to assist with that. Those opposite need to decide whether they support it. The shadow minister wrote to me asking for us to be able to charge fees. She does not clearly support it, but you opposite need to decide whether or not you support it and whether you are on board with free kinder or not.

Age of criminal responsibility

Katherine COPSEY (Southern Metropolitan) (12:48): (612) My question is to the Minister for Youth Justice. Minister, what consultation did the government enter into with the Victorian First Nations community ahead of today’s backflip on your commitment to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14?

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (12:49): I thank Ms Copsey for her question and her interest in our Youth Justice Bill and the work that has gone into that – a bill that, I must remind people, is quite transformative. It is the first type of large reform we have had for the system since 1989. It is a significant piece of work. It is a piece of work that will modernise and make sure our youth justice system is working effectively to not only keep our community safe but also give the young people that come into contact with our youth justice system the opportunity to turn their lives around. In terms of –

The PRESIDENT: I might just interrupt before the supplementary. I am mindful, Minister, of the anticipation rule. I think we are debating the bill today, but my understanding is the question was around a policy outside the bill, that is not in the bill.

Enver Erdogan: On a point of order, President, it is a matter that will be before the committee and will be debated.

The PRESIDENT: Before another point of order, Ms Copsey, could you ask the question again?

Katherine Copsey: I will repeat the question: what consultation did the government enter into with the Victorian First Nations community ahead of today's backflip on the commitment to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14?

Harriet Shing: On a point of order, President, I would perhaps suggest that this is a question most appropriately addressed to the Attorney-General as the first law officer of the state, given that today's announcement does not sit within the matters that were the subject of Mr Erdogan's first response.

Enver Erdogan: On the point of order, President, that is right. More specifically, the Bail Act and raising the age probably falls more appropriately in the remit of the Attorney-General, but I was happy to also give a robust response because I think it is important –

The PRESIDENT: Thanks. Ms Copsey, are you happy to redirect your question to the Attorney-General?

Katherine Copsey: If I will get an answer, yes, that would be great.

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:51): I thank Ms Copsey for her question. I guess the enthusiasm of the Minister for Youth Justice to respond is probably a reflection of the fact that many ministers in the Allan Labor government are dealing with youth justice and dealing with the issues that are important to our First Nations peoples in Victoria. When it comes to the policy of raising the age, there is an amendment in the bill that is in the Minister for Youth Justice's primary remit in relation to raising the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12. That is something we are very proud of, and we are hoping that we achieve that this week. We will be the first state jurisdiction to make that move.

When it comes to matters of age and matters of diverting young people from the justice system, particularly vulnerable cohorts and particularly Aboriginal young people, that is something that the government works very closely with our Aboriginal stakeholders and partners on. We are supportive of principles of self-determination. I, the Minister for Youth Justice, the Minister for Police and indeed the minister responsible for child protection and the minister for First Peoples, we all have regular contact with Aboriginal advocates in relation to ensuring that we get the best strategies and the best programs in place to indeed respond to issues that keep young people on the right track.

When it comes to consultation with First Nations and Aboriginal stakeholders and advocates, we take a partnership approach. There are ongoing conversations constantly. The Aboriginal Justice Forum is 25 years old and meets four times a year. We front up, we talk about these difficult issues, and together we are making really large inroads into things that are important to Aboriginal Victorians, which is being shown and demonstrated in the stats.

When we talk about the age of criminal responsibility, it is important to talk about the facts. Right now there is no-one in custody under the age of 14. It is very rare to have someone under the age of 14 in custody. That is because we are working with our partners and we are bringing a whole-of-government response to ensure that we are getting in early and we are providing the supports to individual children and to families in a way that brings about good, long-term outcomes. We know that impact with the justice system is the last resort. We want to use it as a positive intervention when we have to, but we actually do not want that intervention at all. That is what we will continue to have really important conversations about, because that commitment has not wavered.

Katherine COPSEY (Southern Metropolitan) (12:55): I thank both the youth justice minister and the Attorney for their contributions in response to that. Attorney, I will address the supplementary also to you. What specific recommendations have Victorian First Nations community groups made to the government as to why the age of criminal responsibility should be raised to 14, as the government previously committed to?

Jaclyn Symes interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Do you mind repeating the question?

Katherine COPSEY: What specific recommendations have Victorian First Nations groups made to the government as to why the age of criminal responsibility should be raised to the age of 14, as the government previously committed to?

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:56): Ms Copsey, I am unclear about your question, I have got to say. Do you mean recommendations? Do you mean justifications? Do you mean evidence? Which stakeholders? This is a conversation that is always ongoing. This is a conversation that is something that we are always committed to having. I do not shy away from these conversations, but the way you have framed your question in relation to specific recommendations, I am really unclear about how you would like me to answer that, particularly when I have got a minute to do so. So perhaps maybe we can take that offline or you can clarify the information you are after.

Katherine Copsey: On a point of order, President, for example, the recommendations from the Yoorrook report into the criminal justice and child protection systems – there might be more, Attorney.

The PRESIDENT: That is more debating than a point of order.

Ministers statements: kindergarten funding

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Children, Minister for Disability) (12:57): I rise to update the house on the Allan Labor government's investments into kinder – on this occasion, bush kinder programs across Victoria. Over the course of four years, the Victorian government is investing \$3.6 million to enable 150 kindergartens to establish or enhance their bush kinder programs each year. I am proud to say I recently opened round 2 of the bush kinder program, which provides \$6000 to support young children to learn and explore in a natural space.

I also recently had the opportunity to visit one of the previous bush kinder grant recipients at Bethal Primary School Kindergarten alongside the member for Greenvale from the other place. It was wonderful to have a chance to discuss the positive impact that these grants are having on our kinders and children, because these bush kinder programs not only help children connect with nature but also improve children's overall wellbeing, physical development, fine and gross motor skills, coordination, balance, eyesight and physical endurance.

This is just one small part of the Victorian government's nation-leading education reforms, because on this side of the chamber we believe in providing well-rounded and quality early education, and it is why the Allan Labor government is investing \$14 billion into the Best Start, Best Life reforms, which will transform early learning education across the state by providing free kinder, pre-prep, three-year-old kinder and increased infrastructure. I am proud to support these reforms because early learning is fundamental, and that is why we will continue to invest in the sector to make early education bigger and better for all Victorians.

I would like to remind everyone that applications for this round of bush kinder grants close on 4 September and encourage all eligible organisations, including local government kinders, to apply for this wonderful opportunity. I look forward to seeing how the recipients of this grants round will use their funding to develop new and unique outdoor learning experiences for our littlest learners.

Constituency questions

Northern Victoria Region

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (12:59): (1004) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. When will the government fund and commence works for the upgrade of the Howard Street and Midland Highway intersection in Epsom? This is a very busy intersection, with both roads carrying in excess of 10,000 vehicles a day and with a primary school on one side and a shopping centre on the other. It is also notoriously dangerous, the site of many traffic accidents in recent years –

including some involving primary school students – and the Labor government has not responded with enough urgency. Back in 2021 and again earlier this year I spoke in Parliament about the danger of this intersection, and now the recently released RACV report *My Country Road* confirms that Howard Street and the Midland Highway is the most dangerous intersection in regional Victoria. This intersection has missed out on funding time and time again, and it is time the government stepped up and funded the upgrade.

Northern Victoria Region

Georgie PURCELL (Northern Victoria) (13:00): (1005) My constituency question is for the Minister for Environment. Recently I met with hardworking constituents from Biolinks Alliance, who are doing incredible work to build the capacity of conservation groups within my electorate. Connecting Country is one of those organisations, and with the help of Biolinks they initiated the large old tree project, which engages landowners with appropriate habitats to help protect the threatened brush-tailed phascogale throughout the Mount Alexander shire. This incredible project is now under threat due to funding. We know how critical empowered communities are in addressing the species extinction crisis in Victoria, and yet the entire community conservation sector is collapsing under the watch of this government. My constituents want to know if the government will match the philanthropic funding raised by Biolinks and the community organisations it works with to constructively support and undertake species conservation in Northern Victoria.

South-Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ann-Marie HERMANS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:01): (1006) My question is to the Minister for Local Government. Given that Casey council is under the Labor state government administration and currently has no councillors, it has recently updated its governance rules to require individuals submitting public questions to be present in the gallery during the reading of their question and response. Considering that council meetings are now scheduled for 4 pm, how can you, Minister, provide assurance that this change will maintain transparency for all residents of Casey? Casey residents have previously submitted a petition with 250 signatures requesting that the monthly Tuesday meetings be changed from 4 to 7 pm to allow more people who have work commitments the opportunity to be able to attend. Even though there is the ability for people to live stream proceedings, they will not be able to ask questions or have them answered in this way. Minister, we want to know an answer.

Northern Metropolitan Region

Samantha RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (13:02): (1007) My constituency question is for the Minister for Environment. I wish to ask again: when will the feasibility study for the wallan wallan regional park be released? Some of you may remember I asked this question nearly a year ago. You told us the report was finished, but you still have not shared it with the people who care about the precious Merri Creek, which flows through my electorate. The park was promised during your 2018 election campaign. It is important to the growing Wallan community and the health of the Merri. It will support flood mitigation and should be central to land-use planning and urban development in the region. Community groups support this park, including Wallan Environment Group, Merri Creek Management Committee and Friends of Merri Creek. Some sought to speak to you about this and raise their concerns with the department, but you still have not released the feasibility study. Minister, when will you release the wallan wallan regional park feasibility study?

North-Eastern Metropolitan Region

Richard WELCH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:03): (1008) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. In the lead-up to the 2022 election the member for Box Hill twice posted on social media that he was promising a pedestrian crossing on Elgar Road between Windsor Crescent and Surrey Park. He stated that the government had committed \$300,000 for the crossing. However, last week when I visited the site there was no sign of any planning or any works – no sign of the

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Tuesday 13 August 2024

Legislative Council

2667

promise being fulfilled. Many children cross this road. There is no other crossing within 500 metres. It actually adds a kilometre to anyone attempting to use Surrey Park. It is a busy park used by all of the community. My question to the minister is: when will the Elgar Road crossing, promised in 2022, be delivered to the people of Box Hill, allowing the community to cross Elgar Road safely?

Western Metropolitan Region

David ETTERS HANK (Western Metropolitan) (13:04): (1009) My constituency question is for the Minister for Environment. My constituent is a Sunshine West resident. During the recent Derrimut fires she was, like all her neighbours, incredibly distressed to see plumes of toxic smoke drifting towards her home a bit over a kilometre away from the fire. The fact is that few locals know where toxic chemicals are stored until they explode, but they do know that most of Victoria's toxic chemicals are parked somewhere in the western suburbs. My constituent wants an independent contamination taskforce established to look into how chemicals are stored and how state services respond to dangerous chemical fires that contaminate the air and pollute the waterways of the west. She asks: when will the government set up a contamination taskforce?

Northern Victoria Region

Gaelle BROAD (Northern Victoria) (13:05): (1010) My constituency question is for the Minister for Regional Development. What action has the state government taken to ensure that regional Victorians are not left without telecommunications coverage once access to the 3G network is cut off by Telstra on 31 August and Optus in September? An interim report released by the federal government has recommended a delay of the shutdown and an audit of the number of customers impacted. In parts of my electorate residents are concerned as they rely on 3G to operate irrigation and farm machinery, for medical devices, to call emergency services, to do their banking and to stay connected with family and friends. Can the minister please advise what action has been taken by the state government to ensure that residents living in rural and regional areas in northern Victoria will not be disadvantaged by the 3G network shutdown?

North-Eastern Metropolitan Region

Aiv PUGLIELLI (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:06): (1011) My question today is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it relates to traffic noise pollution from Wattletree Road in Eltham North. I have heard from residents whose homes and gardens back onto Wattletree Road that the noise from increased traffic, particularly larger cars and larger trucks, has made their backyards practically unusable. They have suggested that a soil barrier along the side of Wattletree Road has been used in other sections of that same road to block and absorb some of that noise. Minister, will you consider installing a soil noise barrier along the western side of Wattletree Road in Eltham North between Glen Gully Road and Casuarina Ridge?

Western Victoria Region

Joe McCracken (Western Victoria) (13:07): (1012) My question is to the Minister for Energy and Resources, and it relates to constituents of mine who have contacted me about the lack of three-phase power at the Waubra Community Hub and footy club rooms. Recently, while hosting a Central Highlands footy club match, the power tripped out no less than a dozen times. Waubra is home to one of the biggest wind farms in the Southern Hemisphere. According to locals:

We only have access to two-phase power in our town. We cannot attract business. We cannot even keep the pie warmers on. We cannot keep our scoreboard running. Why should we function in these conditions?

The member for Ripon has been contacted and continues to ignore the community and do nothing. Minister, what will you do about it?

Western Metropolitan Region

Trung LUU (Western Metropolitan) (13:07): (1013) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Planning and is regarding future development works on the soon to be former Footscray Hospital site. Can the minister please update my constituents on the Maribyrnong City Council's adopted plan for the existing Footscray Hospital site on Gordon Street? With the new Footscray Hospital set to be opened late next year and the demand for infrastructure and housing, many of my constituents are wondering what will happen to the old location for the Footscray Hospital. The western suburbs lack key infrastructure and lack housing options. The redevelopment of the old Footscray Hospital has the potential to address these growing demands. It would cater for the new hospital workforce and the social housing need and provide the Maribyrnong area with the infrastructure it needs for the future.

Eastern Victoria Region

Renee HEATH (Eastern Victoria) (13:08): (1014) My question is for the Minister for Ambulance Services. Minister, this year ambulance response times have been declining. Response times for code 1 patients have been slower in the Cardinia Shire Council, Casey, Bass Coast and Mornington Peninsula shire councils. They have been worse than the state average. In Cardinia waiting times have increased by more than 12 per cent in just a year, and less than half of the responses are within the 15-minute target. Paramedics in my area are under extreme pressure. They have said that ramping and inefficiencies in the ambulance dispatch system mean that those in need of immediate care are put at an extreme risk. Minister, what steps will you take to address the crisis in ambulance waiting times for those in the Eastern Victoria Region?

Eastern Victoria Region

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (13:09): (1015) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education. A constituent's 14-year-old son has autism spectrum disorder, ODD and ADHD. Despite these diagnosed conditions, schools have struggled to provide adequate support and reasonable adjustments for him. He has faced multiple suspensions due to behavioural issues stemming from his conditions. During these suspensions the system has failed to provide appropriate educational materials. Recently he was sent home for two months while a safety plan was developed, receiving minimal homework and schoolwork to go on with. He has significant gaps in his education, and his mental health is deteriorating. His parents are most concerned. In the past five years the Association for Children with Disability has had an over 200 per cent increase in calls about the lack of reasonable adjustment in the classroom. Minister, what is your government doing and what will you do to fix this education system, which is failing these children in need?

Western Victoria Region

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (13:10): (1016) My constituency question is for the Minister for Health. Victorians elect governments to manage the state on their behalf and pay taxes so services for the public good can be fairly and efficiently provided. Between elections they trust their government to do this. On 9 August, Minister, you were quoted in the Premier's health services media release saying:

... these reforms will keep us on track ... at the same time protecting the local services we know Victorians trust and rely on.

Protecting local services – yet on that same day the *Camperdown Chronicle* revealed the shock news, shocking even to the doctors involved, that the Camperdown Hospital will be shut for all planned births. Minister, how is that protecting local services? How can Victorians trust you with their health service when you promise to protect local services but their local maternity ward is closed? Can you promise it will be restored immediately and permanently?

Southern Metropolitan Region

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (13:12): (1017) My constituency question is also for the Minister for Health, and it concerns the deteriorating position at Eastern Health and Monash Health. We have seen massive explosions in the waiting lists at Box Hill Hospital and Monash, Clayton. The government has been secretive about this – very secretive about this – and Ms Crozier has been trying to get information. What I am asking the government to do is release the statements of priorities for Eastern Health, Alfred Health and Monash Health in my area. These are the hospitals that serve my electorate, and the minister should immediately release these statements of priorities, which lay out the funding and the requirements in terms of outputs by the health services. The fact that the government has not released these is shameful. It is a cover-up, and I think people are entitled to know the truth. What cuts have been delivered to our health services? Let us see the size of those cuts and what the impact will be on the vulnerable.

North-Eastern Metropolitan Region

Nick McGOWAN (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:13): (1018) My constituency question relates to, of all things, Ringwood East train station. That will not be new to members of this place, because I am often speaking about it. I had a bit of a bad weekend, you would be sad to hear, I am sure, when I learned that the community liaison group – that is the group set up to assist communities and in particular traders in this case along Railway Avenue in Ringwood East – has been disbanded. It has been disbanded notwithstanding the fact that the station is nowhere near complete. This should not come as a surprise, because of course we are putting the donkey well ahead of the cart yet again. For the locals this is actually a serious matter because it means that they are no longer getting the support to attract local constituents to come and shop there. They are no longer getting the support to include their voice and have it heard in the continuing construction, which seems to be never-ending. Notwithstanding the fact that the level crossing removal itself has been completed, the station has not. It is lamentable. I seek action from the minister responsible, which is Danny Pearson, to reinstitute the community liaison group at his earliest convenience.

Bills**Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Bill 2024***Council's amendments*

The PRESIDENT (13:14): I report to the house that I have received a message from the Legislative Assembly in respect of the Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Bill 2024:

The Legislative Assembly informs the Legislative Council that, in relation to 'A Bill for an Act to establish a Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission, Parliamentary Integrity Adviser and Parliamentary Ethics Committee, to make consequential and related amendments to Acts and for other purposes' the amendments made by the Council have been agreed to.

Petitions**Point Lonsdale**

Sarah MANSFIELD (Western Victoria) presented a petition bearing 92 signatures:

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the unresolved issue of the township of Point Lonsdale at The Heads of Port Phillip Bay falling into two shire councils – the Borough of Queenscliffe (BOQ) and the City of Greater Geelong (COGG). This petition aims to resolve this issue by uniting the town in one shire. The issue at hand is that the democratic right to representation is being undermined by a border through the town. This gives those in the BOQ diluted local representation, less equity in the division of rates and gives them less political influence in the direction their home takes if they live in Point Lonsdale. Similarly those in the COGG also have diminished say in the direction their home takes. A unification would allow greater and more comprehensive planning and a significantly more efficient allocation and function of scarce resources. Currently there are residents of Point Lonsdale whose kids attend the school, who visit the local doctor and shop in the local supermarket and their

rates are spent on grants to soccer clubs 40 kilometres away. A politically united town is a fairer, efficient solution.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to investigate and remove the local government border running through Point Lonsdale and unite the whole town into one of the adjacent local government areas.

Sarah MANSFIELD: I move:

That the petition be taken into consideration on the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

Bills

Health Services Amendment (Saving the Royal Children's Hospital) Bill 2024

Introduction and first reading

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (13:15): I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Health Services Act 1988 in relation to the Royal Children's Hospital and for other purposes, and I move:

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

Georgie CROZIER: I move:

That the second reading be made an order of the day for the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

Committees

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Alert Digest No. 10

Sheena WATT (Northern Metropolitan) (13:16): Pursuant to section 35 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, I table *Alert Digest* No. 10 of 2024, including appendices, from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee. I move:

That the report be published.

Motion agreed to.

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (13:16): I move:

That the Council take note of the SARC report.

In moving this I make the point that obviously as a member of the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee I have a very good understanding of what is in the report, but what I am also going to talk about is what is not in the report. SARC has an important role in looking out for the rights of citizens – the rights of people – and ensuring that proper processes are followed. That applies to legislation, but it also applies to subordinate legislation.

The government has announced this week, and in the paper effectively today in the *Age*, that it is seeking to bring a bill to this chamber and to this Parliament and seeking to pass it this week. I would have thought that SARC would have had a significant role in that process, and I put on record the fact that SARC should look at bills, including urgent bills. It is not sufficient for a bill to be passed urgently through both chambers. It is a very rare circumstance, perhaps. As a general practice, bills should not be passed through both houses of the chamber in one week without SARC looking at the impact on rights and responsibilities and a whole range of different points. So I would say if the government is

going to bring forward a bill this week, as it has foreshadowed in the *Age*, then the government should send that bill at an early point to the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee and the committee should meet forthwith. I am going to talk to the chair of that committee and make the point that the committee should meet and look at this bill urgently this week.

We saw during the pandemic the failure of the government to ensure that SARC actually did look at the bills that were very impactful on people's rights and privileges. The government failed to allow sufficient time and would not convene SARC meetings to look at bills that were being crunched through the chamber in three days. We at that time requested that SARC get off its tail and have a proper meeting and make sure that the human rights and other matters – the charter rights and the general assessments – were done for all bills, including ones that the government sought to make an urgent matter.

I am putting on record now that the government is planning to push a bill through this chamber and the other chamber this week and SARC has not been advised of this. SARC should meet, SARC should look at it and SARC should indicate whether it meets the normal guidelines and normal practices. If it does not, that is a matter that the chamber should be aware of, as it is being pushed to crunch this through in a very short period of time.

Sheena WATT (Northern Metropolitan) (13:19): I follow Mr Davis and would like to take a moment to discuss the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee *Alert Digest* No. 10 that is before us today. Thank you for your comments. Can I just say that our committee has been meeting very, very frequently throughout the year and has discussed a number of bills that have been before us in only this last week. It goes without saying that this is an incredibly complex committee, taking on some very big legislative challenges when it comes to the bills before us and the scrutiny required under the charter. At this last meeting we had the benefit of some new insights and intelligence from some folks from the bar who came and joined us. I just want to send my thanks to them; I think his name was Joshua, from memory. He has given us a new line, a new way, of considering bills before us. Without saying anything too disparaging about those who came before, I will just say that Joshua has come to our committee with some new gusto and some new ideas, and I certainly welcome that.

There are four bills that were considered at quite considerable length in our debate this week. Thank you to committee members, including Rachel who is next to me. I am trying to recall if there are any other members from our place, although there are others from the other side –

A member: Ms Terpstra.

Sheena WATT: Ms Terpstra, that is right. She can always be trusted, although I understand she was an apology this week. But can I just say that we had one of our most in-depth debates around the bills before us, and I encourage members to read the report when they get a chance.

Motion agreed to.

Papers

Papers

Tabled by Clerk:

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 –

Order of 6 June 2024 giving approval to the granting of a lease at Sandringham Beach Park.

Order of 24 May 2024 giving approval to the granting of a licence at Port Melbourne Ornamental Plantation Reserve.

Order of 19 July 2024 giving approval to the granting of a licence at Princes Park.

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 – Notice under section 32 in relation to Statutory Rule No. 44 (*Gazette S425, 2 August 2024*).

Planning and Environment Act 1987 – Notices of approval of the –

Ballarat Planning Scheme – Amendment C247.

Bass Coast Planning Scheme – Amendment C170.

Baw Baw Planning Scheme – Amendment C153.

Boroondara Planning Scheme – Amendments C381 and C397.

Cardinia Planning Scheme – Amendments C265 and C273.

Colac Otway, Golden Plains, Greater Geelong, Queenscliff and Surf Coast Planning Schemes – Amendment GC228.

East Gippsland Planning Scheme – Amendment C167.

Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme – Amendment C248.

Latrobe Planning Scheme – Amendment C141.

Melbourne Planning Scheme – Amendments C441 and C472.

Port Phillip Planning Scheme – Amendment C199.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 –

Documents under section 15 in relation to Statutory Rule Nos. 72 and 73.

Legislative instruments and related documents under section 16B in respect of Ministerial Order No. 1455 – Order amending Ministerial Order No. 1228 – Victorian Institute of Teaching Registration Fees under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006.

A proclamation of the Governor in Council fixing an operative date in respect of the following act:

National Energy Retail Law (Victoria) Act 2024 – 30 July 2024 (*Gazette S413, 30 July 2024*).

Petitions

Housing

Medicinal cannabis

Responses

The Clerk: I have received the following papers for presentation to the house pursuant to standing orders: Minister for Housing’s response to petition titled ‘Reconsider the Barak Beacon development housing proposal’ and Minister for Roads and Road Safety’s response to the petition titled ‘Amend the Road Safety Act 1986 to exempt medical cannabis patients’.

Production of documents

Kangaroo control

The Clerk: I table a letter from the Attorney-General dated 12 August 2024 in response to a resolution of the Council on 29 November 2023, on the motion of Ms Purcell, and further to the government’s initial responses on 6 February 2024 and 20 June 2024, relating to the kangaroo harvest management plan. The letter states that the government has identified a further 126 documents within the scope of the order and makes a claim of executive privilege over 20 documents in full and one document in part. The letter also states that these documents are provided as the second and final tranche of documents responsive to the order. I further table the 105 documents provided in full and one document provided in part, together with schedules of the identified documents.

Business of the house

Notices

Notices of motion given.

General business

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (13:40): I move, by leave:

That the following general business take precedence on Wednesday 14 August 2024:

- (1) order of the day 1, listed for a future day, resumption of debate on the Government Construction Projects Integrity Bill 2024;
- (2) notice of motion given this day by me referring matters relating to Ambulance Victoria to the Legal and Social Issues Committee;
- (3) notice of motion 462 standing in Sarah Mansfield's name referring matters relating to oil and gas infrastructure to the Environment and Planning Committee; and
- (4) notice of motion given this day by Samantha Ratnam on moratorium on evictions.

Motion agreed to.

Motions**Middle East conflict**

Sarah MANSFIELD (Western Victoria) (13:41): I move, by leave:

That this house:

- (1) notes that since the Legislative Council's resolution on 17 October 2023 concerning Israel and Gaza, which stated that this house 'stands with Israel', the Israeli government and its forces have restricted access to health care for civilians by:
 - (a) establishing significant checkpoints and movement restrictions on civilians of South Hebron Hills, leaving them with very limited capacity to access health care;
 - (b) shooting at community volunteers at al-Hawl refugee camp, who are trying to provide life-saving first aid;
 - (c) routinely stopping ambulances from entering the checkpoint of al-Aroub refugee camp for 1 or 2 hours at a time;
- (2) recognises the brave healthcare workers who continue to risk their lives to provide care to people in Gaza;
- (3) does not support the state of Israel's continued invasion of Gaza;
- (4) supports calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire; and
- (5) calls on the Labor government to take action, including severing military trade relationships with the state of Israel.

Leave refused.

Members statements**School breakfast clubs**

Ryan BATCHELOR (Southern Metropolitan) (13:42): Children should not have to go to school hungry. The Allan Labor government understands the cost-of-living pressures facing families, and some children may not be able to get breakfast. That is why the government is continuing the expansion of the breakfast club program across this state, a program that has already provided more than 40 million breakfasts to our children as well as practical cooking classes for families at 115 schools – but the job is not done.

The expansion of the school breakfast club program in the recent state budget will provide more than 150 additional schools the opportunity to join the program at the start of 2025, and more will come in the following months. In parts of Southern Metro we know that the children attending the newly formed Hampton East School – the old Katandra–Berendale School – Caulfield Primary and Caulfield South Primary are set to benefit early in the new year as they get added to the program.

This Labor government understands that families are doing it tough right now, and we are committed to doing more to help. The expansion of school breakfast clubs is but one of the concrete measures that the

Labor government is taking to support our kids learning, strengthen our government schools and support families with the cost of living.

Cyril Callister Museum

Joe McCracken (Western Victoria) (13:43): It was an absolute pleasure to attend Cyril Callister Museum yesterday and open their newest addition, called Cyril's Lab, which is in Beaufort. Cyril Callister, for those who do not know, was the inventor of Vegemite. You might see my little badge up here – I can get you one too if you like. He invented that in Chute, which is just a very small hamlet, a town near Beaufort. Cyril's Lab is designed to engage young people and give them real, practical, hands-on science experience – which coincides with the launch of Science Week this week – and has a very local flavour, no pun intended. Cyril's descendants Libby and Jamie Callister are so proud of the ongoing work that the museum and the foundation do. I want to particularly acknowledge the tireless work of all the volunteers that have put in such a great effort to make this museum into the beautiful reality that it is, particularly Liza Robinson. She has been amazing in working to bring the museum to life, and it really does celebrate everything that is Vegemite. As they say, it puts a rose in every cheek, but the museum says 'Spread the love', and hopefully we can all spread the love.

Asylum seekers

Samantha RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (13:45): Over the last 30 days dozens of people seeking asylum and refuge in Australia have been staging a protest to raise awareness of their plight, including in my electorate. Many of them have lived in Australia for 12 years in a state of limbo and desperation. All they seek is permanent protection and a safe home, but they are being denied this by Labor. Tens of thousands of people who sought asylum in Australia were subjected to the unfair fast-track system set up by the Liberals. This was a system designed to make it harder for people to seek asylum despite genuine fears of persecution if they returned to their countries of origin.

For 12 years these people – young people, mums, dads, children, babies, toddlers, grandparents – have been treated with contempt by our governments. Children have been denied the right to attend kindergarten and schools in some cases. People have been subjected to sudden, unexpected rule changes that have meant some of them have lost their work rights overnight and their livelihoods sometimes for years. Some of their children who were born in Australia and who have reached the age of 10 are being granted citizenship while their parents are on a deportation pathway, leaving these parents in an impossible position. What are these parents supposed to do? They deserve our compassion and care, but they have been met with absolute cruelty.

I joined them at a rally in the Docklands yesterday. They will be protesting outside the home affairs office until they hear from the government. Labor, please listen – please show some compassion. If you have a heart, please use it. It would cost you nothing to grant these people permanency. Our country would gain everything with them as our new citizens. Permanent visas now.

Jude Perera

Ann-Marie HERMANS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:46): I rise today to pay tribute to the passing of former MPs in the south-east, noting that Jude Perera, former Labor member for Cranbourne, passed away. I pay my respects to his Sri Lankan community, his friends and his family.

Inga Peulich

Ann-Marie HERMANS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:46): I rise today in particular to pay tribute to the passing of Inga Peulich, member for the Victorian Legislative Council, representing South-Eastern Metropolitan Region from 2006 to 2018 and member for Bentleigh from 1992 to 2002. I first met Inga in 2006, noted she was a strong woman and then got to know her better in my early candidacy days in Cranbourne. While we butted heads a couple of times, I always respected her as a fierce campaigner and a member who championed conservative issues that concerned and impacted local families. Inga spoke out against the misuse of the cleverly named Safe Schools program, which

was found to inappropriately sexualise some children in schools without parental consent or knowledge, thereby undermining faith and cultural family values shared by many communities in the south-east. I also applaud Inga for her strong opposition in 2017 to the trial of the so-called safe injecting room in Richmond as well as the assisted dying legislation. A hands-on campaigner, Inga helped win three sandbelt seats, enabling the Liberal-Nationals to secure a one-seat majority government win in 2010. Inga died aged 67 years from health issues on 25 July 2024. My and in fact all of our thoughts today are extended to her devoted mother Nena, her loving husband Savo, her son Paul and her extended family and friends.

Small business support

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL (Northern Victoria) (13:48): Small businesses are the foundation of all communities, be they family farms, grocery stores, tradies, transport companies or the many, many more that keep our local economies going. These are the businesses that support their town's sporting groups, charities and local families through thick and thin. Our small businesses are the heart and soul of our communities, ensuring good communication, networking, trust and quality of business. My own electorate office in Shepparton relies on the services of local small businesses – why? Because I know I can rely on our locally owned and managed businesses to provide the highest standards of service. This service is not just a finished product. It is a new relationship that provides future networking and local information, and it enables me to keep my finger on the pulse of the community. As an elected member of Parliament, it is my duty to ensure we preserve all that is good within our communities. This is a vital pillar of our Victorian society, and we should do all we can to support and enable the liberties and future success of small businesses here in Victoria.

Assyrian Church of the East

Evan MULHOLLAND (Northern Metropolitan) (13:49): It was an honour last week to attend the Assyrian Martyrs Day commemoration organised by the St Abdisho Assyrian Church of the East cathedral in Coolaroo with my colleague Ann-Marie Hermans. I would like to thank Bishop Mar Benyamin Elya and the Assyrian Martyrs Day commemoration committee and the committees of the Assyrian Church of the East Youth Association, St George Assyrian Language School and children's ministry and choir.

Sarv Samaj Seva Samiti

Evan MULHOLLAND (Northern Metropolitan) (13:50): I also had the pleasure of attending a performance by Rasraj ji Maharaj for Bhajan Sankirtan, organised by Sarv Samaj Seva Samiti in Somerton in the electorate of Greenvale in my electorate, with Liberal colleague Trung Luu and Liberal candidate for Calwell Usman Ghani. Thanks to President Vijay Dihman and Gaurav Gulati and the team for the invitation.

Victorian Lebanese Community Council

Evan MULHOLLAND (Northern Metropolitan) (13:50): Congratulations to Michael Kheirallah and the board of the Victorian Lebanese Community Council on their 17th anniversary. It was fantastic to attend their event over the weekend with Liberal leader John Pesutto and Liberal candidate for Calwell Usman Ghani.

Victorian Maronite community

Evan MULHOLLAND (Northern Metropolitan) (13:50): It is also my pleasure to congratulate the Victorian Maronite community, in particular Monsignor Joseph Takchi and Father Superior Charles Hitti, as they celebrated the recent beatification of Patriarch Istifan al-Duwayhi in Lebanon.

Ringwood East train station

Nick McGOWAN (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:51): Last Friday evening after I finished work in my office in Eastland in the electorate of Ringwood I went and got takeaway. I got my pizza from

Wally at Railway Avenue in Ringwood East. I was in a pretty good mood – pretty chipper, I suppose – because by about 9 pm or 9:30 pm I was ready to go home. I was ready to go and watch some of the Olympics. Sadly, I thought I would also check while I was there on the lights in the local toilets. The toilets are about 190 metres from Ringwood East train station. That is a train station that is probably costing the taxpayer in the order of \$300 million to \$400 million, and when combined with the Level Crossing Removal Project on both Dublin and Bedford roads, close to \$1 billion. I checked on those toilets because three months ago, in April, the lights were not working in the car park. To my dismay, I walked up the laneway, which was pitch dark – no woman in their right mind would do that; no man in their right mind would do that either – and not only were the lights not working in that car park but, three months after I last raised this issue with the council and with the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister Pearson, the light in the disabled toilet is now not working either. Those toilets were a disgrace; they were squalid. And this brings me to the broader issue. We have to have a public toilet at Ringwood East train station. It is a disgrace that this has happened. I will now write to each and every minister urging them to raise this matter at cabinet. It is a safety concern for every woman, every elderly person and every young person in my electorate of Ringwood.

Dustin Martin

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (13:52): I want to pay tribute to Dustin Martin, who announced his retirement from AFL football last week. Dustin is originally from my electorate – the boy from Yapeen, who played junior football for Campbell's Creek and then Castlemaine and Bendigo Pioneers before being drafted to the mighty Richmond Football Club in the 2009 draft. Fifteen years, 302 games and 338 goals later, Dustin retires as one of the most decorated players of all time, including as a three-time premierships player; a three-time Norm Smith medallist; the Brownlow medallist of 2017; the recipient of the Leigh Matthews trophy, the AFL's Most Valuable Player award, for 2017; the AFL Coaches Association champion player of the year award in 2017; a four-time all-Australian team member; a three-time Gary Ayres Award recipient; a two-time Jack Dyer medallist; twice being selected in the best 22 under 22 team; and also an AFL Rising Star nominee in 2010. I have had the pleasure of meeting Dusty several times during his years at the Tigers, and he is one of the most gentle, shy and unassuming AFL players I have ever met. But on the field he dominated, and he lifted the Tigers to three premierships with his sheer brilliance. Dustin leaves us with so many memories, but my favourite will always be his fourth goal in the 2020 grand final when he sealed the 2020 premiership by stealing the ball out of Stanley's and Dangerfield's hands, brushing Dangerfield off like a fly and kicking that amazing goal. Thank you, Dusty.

Monash Business Awards

Richard WELCH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:54): I want to give tribute to the Monash Business Awards and their gala dinner the other night, where they honoured local businesses in my electorate for their achievements through the year and the work they do. It was a great opportunity for businesspeople to get together and exchange ideas and network et cetera – a rare occasion when you are busy burrowing away in your own business. I particularly want to give a shout-out to category winners of the awards, amongst them STEMbirds, who do education in schools for STEM; Flagworld, who supply something like 80 per cent of all flags in Australia; and The Green Collar, a really fascinating business that helps those leaving the prison system to reintegrate into the wider community. I also want to give a particular shout-out to the Business of the Year, OC Connections, whose innovative products in plastics prove that we can be both a world leader and an innovator and conduct a social enterprise simultaneously – great work by them.

Bundoora Bulls Junior Football Club

Richard WELCH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:55): I would also like to give praise to the Bundoora Bulls Junior Football Club, a club that went into abeyance during the lockdowns and was rescued from the grave by the hard work of volunteers. They got out on the field for the first time in four years this year. They did not make the finals, but such is the quality of the club that they were

chosen to host the finals. It was my pleasure to attend, serve on the barbecue and see this club rise and rise again.

Health services

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (13:55): The chaos and dysfunction of the Allan Labor government continues. This follows months of refusing to back down on savage funding cuts to health services across the state and directives from the department and letters from the minister demanding health services find savings of up to 40 per cent that would inevitably see a loss of services and a loss of jobs. The government, despite their rhetoric, is continuing to amalgamate health services by stealth. There has been no clarity around what funding each health service will receive, and it provides no assurances about what the cost will be to implement electronic medical records across the state. Furthermore, the disgraceful way in which the department and the government have handled the CEO of the Royal Children's Hospital and the fallout from this has impacted morale amongst clinicians and staff. It is not only hospitals that are in chaos as a result of the Allan Labor government's decisions but also Victoria's ambulance services. Disaster responses are now becoming business as usual.

Inga Peulich

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (13:56): On another matter, and a sad one, I want to quickly acknowledge the sad news of the death of Inga Peulich, a colleague who when I first came to this place provided me with support and advice. She was a fierce advocate for the community she represented, first as the member for Bentleigh from 1992 to 2002 and then as a member for South-Eastern Metropolitan Region from 2006 to 2018. Inga's story is a great one that she would often reference. As a young girl, her family fled communist Yugoslavia following her father being blacklisted from working as a journalist for uncovering and reporting on state corruption. She knew what corruption would do to a state. Inga was a great Liberal who will be sadly missed by her family and friends.

Business of the house

Notices of motion and orders of the day

Lee TARLAMIS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:57): I move:

That the consideration of notices of motion, government business, 278 to 511, and order of the day, government business, 1, be postponed until later this day.

Motion agreed to.

Bills

State Sporting Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Harriet Shing:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (13:58): I rise to speak on the State Sporting Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. This bill has been introduced by the government to amend the ANZAC Day Act 1958 to change the description of an area in which sports are held on Anzac Day, a very important day for this country and indeed for members in this place, who I know cherish that day and do so much around commemorating our past and current service men and women. There are also a series of changes being made to the Kardinia Park Stadium Act 2016, and as a Geelong supporter I am obviously very familiar with that magnificent stadium. The changes will also impact the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Act 1985, the Melbourne Cricket Ground Act 2009 and the State Sports Centres Act 1994 in relation to trust membership, leasing powers and other various

amendments. This bill also amends the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Act 1985 in relation to acting appointments and for other purposes.

There are a number of minor consequential changes that have no real impact in relation to the great sporting history of our state. We should be very proud of what this state does in relation to how we have had the very significant title of being the sporting capital of Australia. Unfortunately, that reputation was tarnished and trashed by the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games by the Allan Labor government. The Premier was the minister responsible for the Commonwealth Games and the Commonwealth Games debacle, and it has been really under her watch that this has all occurred. It was a huge impact – the cancellation of the games ricocheted around the world. That is what I am talking about in relation to the reputation of our state being trashed. The in excess of \$600 million that it cost Victorian taxpayers to cancel the Commonwealth Games is now flooding over to Glasgow – off to Scotland – where they have announced that they are willing to have the Commonwealth Games that this government cancelled. It is quite extraordinary.

The government said it was going to cost \$7 billion, but we have not got to the total amount of that. Mr Davis has done a magnificent job on the inquiry in pursuing these very issues around probity, what actually went on and what the government knew and did not know. We will never get the Premier to come before the inquiry – she refuses to. She is quite gutless actually. She will not step up and do what a true leader should do. She is weak on this issue. She is weak on many issues. But this issue –

Tom McIntosh interjected.

Georgie CROZIER: Mr McIntosh is interrupting over there, because he knows. You know, he is a member of the CFMEU; he holds that very proudly, and look at the corruption that has gone right through this state. I will get back to this bill and what this is about, but I do want to say that the reputation of Victoria and Melbourne being the sporting capital of Australia has been severely tarnished because of the actions of the Allan Labor government.

We have got this mounting, incredible debt that generations are going to have to pay. Part of that debt that is mounting and part of the issues around the huge amounts of money that have been wasted are due to the Allan Labor government and the Premier, who is a weak leader – she will not come before the Commonwealth Games inquiry – hopelessly inadequate, out of her depth, blowing up money left right and centre that the taxpayer deserves to have going into areas that it should, like health, education, law enforcement and other areas. Money has been wasted and blown – \$600 million has gone out the door to Glasgow, which is going to hold the Commonwealth Games. The Premier has overseen so many debacles, including the Commonwealth Games, and the corruption across this state with the CFMEU. She will not stand up to those people either.

I want to say how disappointed I am and many Victorians are, Acting President, through you. I know those over there are very exercised about Victoria's reputation being trashed by the Premier, who was responsible for cancelling the Commonwealth Games and costing Victorian taxpayers in excess of \$600 million. We see that Victorian taxpayers are now paying Glasgow, Scotland, to host the Commonwealth Games. That is Victorian taxpayers money going out of the country, thousands of kilometres away, and funding the Commonwealth Games.

Even though this bill does a number of things, I think you cannot get away from the fact that the Premier – responsible for so much in this state – is a weak leader, is hopelessly inadequate and will be remembered for not only the CFMEU corruption –

Members interjecting.

Georgie CROZIER: but also the trashing, Ms Shing, of Victoria's reputation given the debacle with the Commonwealth Games.

Sheena WATT (Northern Metropolitan) (13:34): Acting President Bourman, you know I am a big fan of sports, and today this bill before us is about one of my all-time favourite topics. All sports fans

know that games are played best when the umpire – or the government in this case – protects the flow of the game as much as they enforce the rules. In the same spirit, this bill makes some minor amendments to legislation in the sports portfolio to make sports governance less confusing and more efficient. I could suggest other areas of sport that need to be less confusing and more efficient, like decisions of the umpires at the G.

Members interjecting.

Sheena WATT: I could discuss Raygun, but I understand there are others in this place that want to make significant contributions about the Olympics, and I will not take the air out of their tyres. I will come back to this and say that this amends the ANZAC Day Act 1958, it updates a unit of measure, it removes some really gendered language and it protects the Victorian sporting spirit for the next generation. How exciting is that? I wonder what the sports of the next generation are going to be.

Sonja Terpstra interjected.

Sheena WATT: Breakdancing – yes, probably that is true. At present our sports centres of excellence are managed by government-appointed trusts, who do quite an incredible job, and I need to pay respects to them for taking care of our Victorian icons – indeed they are our global icons – like the MCG. I love the G despite the result on the weekend. This bill before us streamlines the administration of those trusts by making them more flexible and more agile, allowing them to appoint acting members, or indeed an acting chair, when it is necessary. When members choose to resign – and that happens for a range of reasons – this bill allows them to resign directly to the minister instead of going through what is known as quite a bureaucratically arduous process: to resign via the trust. I do not wish that on anybody, so I am really glad that this bill addresses that quick smart.

Moreover, the bill maintains the minimum membership numbers for these trusts and allows an increase in their maximum allowed membership by one seat. How generous and good is that? This will enable greater diversity and skills on the board to strengthen their management. I will also say that it does delegate some of the ministerial powers to the trust so that they are able to approve small-scale and short-term leases on certain properties. I am thinking about the leasing of a small number of desks, for example. We are talking about some really minor issues here, so it is really good to see that this is being cleaned up with the bill before us. It means that both the minister's and the trust's administrative burdens will be reduced and there will be an extra degree of flexibility and certainty for the very capable trusts and their members, who have been entrusted to care for these really important sites. It does not in fact, though, reduce the minister's control of these sites on behalf of the people of Victoria – sites that we love and care about very, very deeply. The minister may decide to delegate less power to the trusts than is provided by the bill, and the minister may still intercede in a deliberation process which has been previously delegated to a trust.

While I am talking about the minister's powers, can I just stop for a second and acknowledge and thank the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events in the other place, Steve Dimopoulos. This might be the first bill in that portfolio of his that I have had the opportunity to speak on, and I will take the moment to acknowledge him and his incredible work overseeing what are some absolutely stellar, international-grade, world-class events that happen right here in our backyard – events like the Formula One, the Melbourne Cup, the Australian Open and the FIFA World Cup. There was the basketball recently, which was an absolute hit. I know that when people watch these events they are watching Victoria. I do not know about you, but when I watch the Australian Open and on the ground it says 'Melbourne' I am bursting with pride. I know that we are on display to the rest of the world, and when they get that drone out that shows us what Melbourne looks like, I am like, 'Ooh, it's a good-looking city.' I absolutely love it.

We have ensured, through incredible investments led by the minister, that we are known as the home of sport and that we are a state and a city that invests time and money and brings economic investments and jobs for countless Victorians. I worked in the sports industry before this job, so it is something

that I care a lot about, I have got to tell you. This bill takes a really similar approach to event management declarations. Kardinia Park comes into this, and I know other members will talk a lot more about Kardinia Park. I have got some good childhood memories of that place. When we were faced with some challenges during COVID-19, the event scheduling needed to be adapted to become more flexible and work on some really short notice periods. The current system requires event declarations to be made within certain timeframes before an event is held, which does not always align with the fast-paced realities of sports scheduling. This allows for fair and free-flowing games, and it makes sure that we can stop play if we need to, which is a good thing.

It is time for our management of these iconic venues to become as agile as the sportspeople on the field. The bill gives the minister the power to make event management declarations at Kardinia Park, while the secretary of the department may make floodlight declarations at the G. In short, let us blow the whistle and play on. But there are also times when we have to slow things down and send the footage upstairs, as we say.

Members interjecting.

Sheena WATT: That is right – we send them upstairs. At the moment we have got a number of advisory committees which perform this function for our sports venue trusts. They do not have decision-making power. They do not get the sports overlay as we wait for a decision – yes, I am one of those people that shouts out while I am waiting for the umpire’s decision upstairs. They listen to the concerns of key stakeholders, these advisory committees, and they discuss management decisions and priorities. Can I just send my thanks to everyone that is on one of these committees. They are not easy gigs – incredibly thankless – and I am so pleased that some members of our community are stepping up to do that. These members of advisory committees jump through just too many administrative hoops to be appointed to a role that essentially has no decision-making power, and this has led to some difficulties in sourcing members for these committees. It is hard enough as it is.

As somebody who has been on all too many committees over the years, before coming to this place – at one time 15 – I am just going to tell you that these are very challenging roles. As someone who has sat on boards and advisory committees in the sports industry, I have got to tell you these are some really challenging decisions that we are making. There were challenging times in COVID, and the challenges will continue to come. Thank you to those members. It is not always easy. People think that it is just about going to the games and having a good time. It is not actually about that. These folks are making some really critical decisions about safety and health, risk and good governance, and our community benefits. Thank you to them. Let us just make it a little bit easier so that we can fill these committees with good, good folk. That is what this bill before us enables us to do. Good governance, particularly good governance in sport, is all the more important, and I am so pleased to see these changes before us.

I am going to talk, though, about the Olympics, because I love the G.

A member interjected.

Sheena WATT: Yes, I go there all the time; I do not know why they do not have some sort of frequent flyer system. I know that with our recent domination in the Olympics it is no understatement to say that we are the sporting and major events capital of not just Australia but the world, and to keep this title we need some investment in our sporting facilities. As much as we love the G, which was home to the 1956 Olympics – something that we often remember as we look at that site, as we walk around remembering how big it is – I am absolutely delighted to know that there is no better example of Olympic investment than the Melbourne and Olympic Parks precinct. It is a really special part of town. It is a place in our community that generated more than \$740 million just in visitor spend over the last 12 months – an astonishing figure, and I am sure one we can all increase as we come into the finals season. The value of this –

Members interjecting.

Sheena WATT: No, we are not going to discuss our sports following. Can I make that really clear.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Jeff Bourman): Order! On that note, can we keep the cross-chamber chatter about which football clubs we do or do not follow to zero.

Sheena WATT: Can I just thank you for that protection there in that moment. I really need that; I am quite vulnerable after the weekend.

The value of the precinct of Melbourne and Olympic Parks really cannot be overstated. We had the 2023 Australian Open, which boomed money through the doors every single day; in 2023 the total was \$375 million for the state's economy – just incredible numbers. I want to talk about Ash Barty, but I am not going to – but anyway, big love to Ash Barty. I am a certified member of the Barty party. Our venues include John Cain Arena, home to brilliant basketball; AAMI Park, home to my beloved Melbourne Storm; and Rod Laver Arena, home to all our various Australian Open winners all the time. There is also a little spot next to the precinct that you might not know about called Centrepiece, there at Melbourne Park. It is right next to Kia Arena and has hosted 100 events and 50 other entertainment events. More than 3 million people have come through the door right there at Centrepiece. It is a great venue. It probably needs a bit more knowledge amongst the Victorian community because, I tell you what, it is very, very popular indeed with our overseas visitors, and it is a place that many use in many of our very big sporting events. Can I just say, to put in numbers how many people are coming through Centrepiece, you could fill the MCG 30 times, AAMI Park 100 times and Rod Laver 200 times, just to give an understanding about how many folks are coming through that space. It is quite incredible. This is alongside our already star-studded collection of professional sports that we have over in that area – soccer, netball, basketball and my personal favourite there at Melbourne and Olympic Parks, which is Rugby League.

I could talk more about it, but beyond the packed calendar of events, the precinct's businesses actually generated hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue – \$880 million in fact – while the precinct's supply chain delivered widespread benefits to local businesses, with \$36.4 million in capital expenditure injected into the Australian economy and the trust alone spending \$90 million with Victorian-based businesses. I do encourage anybody who finds themselves at the Australian Open to check out all of the brilliant Australian-owned businesses that get highlighted and showcased there. Some have gone on to some really big and better things from having that little spotlight on them from Melbourne and Olympic Parks, and it is pretty special indeed.

Apart from that, a lot of folks have jobs there. I want to highlight the fact that over there at Melbourne and Olympic Parks there are many thousands of Victorians who are employed and who receive a pay packet. In fact 4200 Victorians and an additional 1600 Victorians, directly and indirectly, have jobs across that precinct area. What brilliant numbers. The precinct's activities are key contributors to our sports and live entertainment industries, with a 6 per cent share of Australia's \$14 billion sports industry and 9 per cent of the country's \$15.6 billion live entertainment industry – I would like to know what the Taylor Swift slice is – being a key enabler of Australia's ability to attract so many international acts. While I am discussing international acts, I would like to say: Janet Jackson, I am very deeply disappointed you are not coming to Australia. I am deeply disappointed she is not coming, and I am very, very upset. That is okay; I will forgive her. I have only seen her six times.

Harriet Shing: I think the late 1990s just called and asked what you were talking about.

Sheena WATT: That's all right – late 90s. It is fine. I love it.

Members interjecting.

Sheena WATT: Thanks. Wow, Carlton and now this; I am really coping it. With Labor governments investing more than \$1 billion across the precinct since 2010, we have further strengthened the reputation of Melbourne and Olympic Parks as one of the best sporting and entertainment precincts globally. I did not even get to how much I loved seeing the Tillies there –

absolutely loved it. It brought a new vibe to the city, one that I am not sure we will replicate anytime soon. It transformed our love of and respect for women's sport in this country. We did it because we invested so very strongly in this precinct, and I am very, very excited about it. I commend the bill.

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (14:19): I am pleased to rise and make a contribution to the State Sporting Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. This bill is genuinely a relatively innocuous bill. It does not really change the situation with respect to sport in this state. It occurs under the umbrella of what has happened in our state with respect to the Commonwealth Games.

Harriet Shing: You have no idea what you are talking about right now, do you?

David DAVIS: I actually do. I have a very good idea of exactly what I am talking about. I am about to make the point that the Commonwealth Games was cancelled, as you well know, and we still have not heard adequate explanations about that and we still have not heard about the attendance of key people at those committee hearings –

Sonja Terpstra: On a point of order, Acting President, I struggle to understand what connection the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games has to the bill that is before the chamber. I ask Mr Davis to come back to the content of the bill.

David DAVIS: On the point of order, Acting President, this bill amends a number of different acts: the Kardinia Park Stadium Act 2016, the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Act 1985, the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Act 1985, the State Sport Centres Act 1994 and the Melbourne Cricket Ground Act 2009 – all of which had close involvement in the Commonwealth Games. Netball, hockey and boxing are all Commonwealth Games sports that actually have direct involvement with these particular venues.

Members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Jeff Bourman): Everyone, cool your jets. Mr Davis, could you keep it a bit closer to the bill at hand. I do understand that some of those places had links to the Commonwealth Games, but this is not a prosecution of the problems, so if you could just keep it on the bill.

David DAVIS: Further to the point of order, Acting President, we have also heard about the Olympics and other matters in earlier contributions, and I am responding to those points.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Jeff Bourman): If I may, you cannot go further to the point of order when I have already made a ruling. If you want to make a new one, have at it. Just try and keep it close to the bill.

David DAVIS: As I said, netball, hockey and boxing are all Commonwealth Games sports. We have obviously had the Olympic Games just occur in this recent period. We have all enjoyed watching – sometimes later at night than we ought to – the happenings in Paris, and I compliment the French and the Parisians on a very successful Olympic Games. That stands in stark contrast to the impact on a number of Commonwealth Games sports, the very sports that are conducted at a number of the venues that are dealt with in this bill. As I said, this bill deals with professional boxing and combat sports and permits the minister to make acting appointments to the board. Boxing is an important sport and a sport that we would have seen here as a part of the Commonwealth Games, but we are not seeing it in the 2026 Commonwealth Games because the state government botched the process. When it comes to the State Netball and Hockey Centre and the State Sport Centres – there is a very significant point here – the state government is abolishing the advisory committee of those sport centres, and they are also abolishing other advisory committees, including the Kardinia Park advisory committee. Kardinia Park was also slated to play a significant role in the 2026 Commonwealth Games, which was meant to be a dispersed regional games, including places like Kardinia Park.

Harriet Shing: On a point of order, Acting President, one might be forgiven, listening to Mr Davis, for reaching a conclusion that he has broken ranks with the leader, who has heartily supported this bill. Mr Davis, perhaps you might come back to the substance of the bill and your emphatic support for it.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Jeff Bourman): Ms Shing, that is not really a point of order. He was talking about the advisory committee. Mr Davis, could you continue and just try to keep it to a relatively narrow focus.

David DAVIS: Acting President, as you will understand, if this bill is passed, it will abolish the Kardinia Park advisory committee. There will be no more Kardinia Park advisory committee. It will be as dead as a dead parrot. Instead of the membership arrangements that would have been there before, the strength of position of the Kardinia Park advisory committee, and indeed the advisory committee for the State Netball and Hockey Centre, the replacement committees that are proposed here will be entirely creatures of the minister. They will be able to be appointed and dismissed at the whim of the minister. They will not have the legislative backing that these committees have had, and this is part of a broader sweep across government by the Allan Labor government as it seeks in the bill to sweep aside all of the advisory committees.

Members interjecting.

David DAVIS: I am indicating concerns I have with this bill. There are perfectly good things in this bill. I will come to those in a moment. I am starting with the problematic things. I have got 8 minutes, and I am dealing with that nicely, step by step, and you will just have to wait a little.

As I have indicated, we have seen the Commonwealth Games stripped out of this state. It was not analysed by the high-risk, high-value arrangements, which would have protected the state.

Harriet Shing: On a point of order, Acting President. Mr Davis, you have the luxury of some time to get to the things that you agree with, which you have indicated on your side of the benches you do agree with. You keep coming back to subject matter that the Chair has indicated is not within the remit of the bill. Again, Acting President, I come through you to ask that Mr Davis be drawn back to the subject matter of the bill.

David DAVIS: On the point of order, Acting President, this is directly relating to the bill. All of those are venues and sports that would have been here but are now not to be here, and I am making the very clear point – no matter how touchy the minister is given her previous involvement – that this is relevant. Advisory committees should be listened to.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Jeff Bourman): Thank you, Mr Davis. You have had a fair bit of leeway. I know you have only been talking about the advisory committees and so on. I think it would be really nice if we could just keep it to the venues and the stuff in the bill rather than the wideranging frolics that we have been on.

David DAVIS: The advisory committees are part of a whole-of-government attempt to sweep aside advisory arrangements. We have heard this recently in other bills, and we saw the government backtrack on a number of those, but in the committee stage I am going to ask the minister to explain where the impetus came from for the abolition of these advisory committees. These advisory committees, I am informed, are part of a broader sweep across government where the government is seeking to remove legislatively backed advisory committees. I say that in this particular instance that is only modestly concerning, but in other instances it is becoming increasingly concerning and part of a pattern of stripping away legislatively backed advisory committees. I say that those committees have a stronger presence. They are not purely creatures of the minister.

Ministers can have advisory committees – of course they can. They can establish them at whim, and they can remove them at whim. This bill does not give a strong set of advisory committees in the way that has been there in the past, and that is one of my concerns about the bill. Whatever else is valuable – the gender-neutral language and all of those points that have been made by others – these are perfectly

legitimate points, and they are supported by the opposition. I should say that there are other matters that we want to talk about.

The Commonwealth Games, as we have heard, was a very important opportunity for the state. We know that the legacy of the 2006 Commonwealth Games was a significant one, and I am going to make some points about the sports that were held then at a number of venues that are part of this bill.

Harriet Shing: On a point of order, Acting President, I do not want to have to keep getting my menchieps up like this, but Mr Davis has flouted your previous guidance and, I would suggest, rulings by continuing to traverse subject matter which has no connection to the bill at hand – and you know this, Mr Davis; I can see the little twinkle in your eye.

David DAVIS: On the point of order, Acting President, I know the minister is very, very touchy about these matters, but I think when I am talking about venues I am entitled to talk about the history of these venues – what has been conducted. I heard one person mention the 1956 Olympics, and that is obviously –

Harriet Shing: Once.

David DAVIS: Well, that is fine. I am going to talk about the 2006 Commonwealth Games. I would have thought that that is equally appropriate. It was held in Melbourne, and I am going to read the list of sports that were part of it.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Jeff Bourman): I will let you go, Mr Davis, if you can prove a link between the sports and the venues.

David DAVIS: As you will understand, with the Commonwealth Games – the ones that were held here in 2006 – the MCG was very important.

Sonja Terpstra interjected.

David DAVIS: Of course it was. This bill directly deals with the MCG, to amend the Melbourne Cricket Ground Act 2009. I would have thought that the Melbourne Cricket Ground is a very important venue. It was central to the 2006 Commonwealth Games. There were 16 sports in the 2006 Commonwealth Games: athletics, badminton, basketball, boxing, bowls, cycling, gymnastics, hockey, netball – they are in common with a number of these points that we are discussing here – rugby, shooting, squash, aquatics, table tennis, triathlon and weightlifting. Of course none of them will occur with the 2026 Commonwealth Games, and that is disappointing.

I come to another part of the bill, with respect to the State Sport Centres Act 1994. As I have said, the bill abolishes the State Netball and Hockey Centre advisory committee, and I have expressed my concern about that. It increases the maximum membership of the trust. Let me be clear: the maximum membership of the trust does not deal with a legislated advisory committee. It permits the minister to delegate approval of leases that are not major leases over certain land managed by the trust. In respect of the boxing and combat sports act, it permits the minister to make appointments to the board. With respect to the Melbourne Cricket Ground Act 2009, there is a change in requirements relating to resignation and members of the trust. It permits the minister to delegate power to make floodlight determinations – I can understand why some ministers might want to delegate that power. It permits the minister to make acting appointments to the trust, and it increases the maximum membership of the trust.

I want to also deal with this issue of the Kardinia Park advisory committee again. The changes to the act here permit the minister to make event management declarations; change the membership and procedures of the trust; delegate approval of leases that are not major leases over certain land managed by the trust; and, as I say, abolish the Kardinia Park advisory committee. All of these go to the matter of greater ministerial power, not lesser ministerial power – cutting out local input, cutting out the input from legislated advisory committees that have a strong legislative underpinning and giving more and

more power to the minister. I would say that the issue here is that the community should be cautious about what is being proposed here. Whilst there are aspects of this bill, as I have indicated, that we support, there are others where there is an inherent caution in the way that we are approaching it.

I will ask the minister in committee about the whole-of-government report that seeks to nobble and remove advisory committees that are legislated right across government. These I believe are very much part of this grab for power – this search for greater power for ministers – and an overruling of that local community input.

Michael GALEA (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:34): I am enthused to join this freewheeling debate on what is an exciting, exciting bill of course, because it goes to the heart of one of the many things that makes Victoria such a great place to be, and that is our wonderful sporting culture, our sporting economy indeed as well and the many incredible athletes, administrators, fans and spectators, who all make that such a special thing. We are indeed blessed here in Victoria to be not just the undisputed sporting capital of Australia but indeed one of the world's great sporting capitals too. You only have to look. Whether it is Taylor Swift or whether it is Liverpool Football Club, whenever they go to the MCG, there is one response you get: they are blown away. Never have either of those two international sensations – of equal measure, I am sure, Liverpool Football Club and Taylor Swift – had such big crowds as they did when they were performing right here in Melbourne, just up the street from Spring Street here, at our iconic MCG. This is a very exciting space to be in. I know that our minister, Minister Dimopoulos, is very excited as well and is leading from the front and doing some great things in this portfolio, as he is with major events too and indeed other areas. But when it comes to sports, as I say, Victoria is the undisputed sporting capital of Australia.

What these reforms will achieve through the legislation before us today is all about making sure that we can continue to do that in the best possible way. It is facilitating and streamlining so that we have the best possible outcomes and can continue to deliver the best possible sporting events for Victoria and indeed for Australia. We are privileged, as other commentators have said here today, that we have in the Melbourne Park precinct the incredible Australian Open, one of four grand slams around the world, right here in Melbourne. We have the Rip Curl Pro down in Torquay. We have the Melbourne Cup. We have Formula One.

David Davis interjected.

Michael GALEA: Indeed we have the Women's World Cup, a huge success last year – and I am delighted to take Mr Davis up on that interjection in fact, if I am permitted to; I would be delighted to take up that interjection indeed. As Mr Davis well knows, he and I as well as Mr McIntosh were in some committee hearings last week where we heard from some academics based right here in Melbourne who have been looking at the impacts of the Commonwealth Games decision. The interesting thing that we heard, the evidence that we heard, was that there is no evidence at all of any reputational damage to the state of Victoria as a result of the Commonwealth Games. You were right there, Mr Davis; you heard it just as much as I did. That is exactly what the witnesses said to us – that there is none. That is because people in different sports across the world know that Melbourne is the place to do major events. That is why we have seen the ones that I have just mentioned and indeed many others in the major event space as well. Of course, once again, this gives me a great opportunity to mention the iconic Taylor Swift as well.

Add to that, of course, that we are the home of the AFL; we are the birthplace and we remain the home with the MCG. We have the best supported teams in the A-Leagues in the country – chief amongst them, of course, the sensational Melbourne Victory. We have Melbourne Storm, we have rugby clubs, we have the National Basketball League and we have cricket at the domestic level as well as internationally. They are just part of the array of sports that we are very proud to boast about in this great state, ones that this government continues to support. This bill is indeed one very big part of that.

What are the things that this bill will set out to achieve? As I say, it is about promoting good governance and reducing some of the administrative burdens across several key pieces of legislation. The bill will be amending the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Act 1985, the Melbourne Cricket Ground Act 2009, the Kardinia Park Stadium Act 2016 and the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Act 1985. I do note that a boxer from, I believe, the Mornington Peninsula actually got gold in the boxing events just last week as well. I know Mr McIntosh will be very excited about that, as indeed, if I may say, I was when I saw a certain Thomas McIntosh competing for New Zealand in the rowing sculls, and I believe he did quite well as well. It was good to see that your namesake from across the ditch, Mr McIntosh, was performing in the Olympics, just as you are always performing here for us – and performing excellently, if I may say.

These changes are across a raft of existing pieces of legislation. Whilst they are relatively minor changes, there is a sensible rationale for doing this, and that is to make sure that we are, as I say, providing our sporting associations, grounds and other bodies with the support that they need to make decisions quickly and effectively as that pertains to government. Through things such as granting authorities to the minister, decisions will be able to be expedited, which will only serve to help that process.

One of the things that this bill will achieve is, firstly, the delegation of lease approvals. Under the existing framework ministerial approval is required for all leases over state sporting facilities. This process can be cumbersome and time consuming, placing an unnecessary administrative burden on the minister and their office. What this bill proposes to do is to amend that to allow the delegation of lease approval powers to be made by the relevant department, apart from major leases, which will still be subject to ministerial sign-off. It will streamline the lease approval process for these minor leases, reducing that workload on that office whilst maintaining oversight of significant leasing decisions. The delegation of these approvals will facilitate more efficient management of lease agreements, enabling quicker responses to routine leasing matters and freeing up other resources for more critical issues.

The bill also will address the need to update and modernise the legislation. As Mr Davis noted in his contribution, there are several instances of outdated and gendered language in existing acts, which this bill will seek to remove. Additionally, the ANZAC Day Act 1958 will be updated to modernise units of measurement and remove some obsolete references. These updates are critical for ensuring that our legislation is inclusive and reflective of contemporary standards. Modernising the language and references in these acts will make them more relevant and accessible, fostering a more accessible legislative framework.

Under this bill we also see proposals to adjust the membership of key trusts. Specifically, the maximum membership of the Melbourne Cricket Ground Trust will increase from eight to nine members and the membership of the State Sport Centres Trust will increase from seven to 11 members. These changes will enhance governance diversity and capability, providing these trusts with the additional resources needed to manage their expanded infrastructure portfolios effectively. By expanding the membership of these bodies we are able to ensure that the trust can draw on a broader range of skills and expertise, strengthening their overall governance and operational efficiency.

There are also provisions to dissolve the State Netball and Hockey Centre and Kardinia Park advisory committees. As we have recently been discussing, these committees will be replaced with less formal advisory bodies which will be established at ministerial discretion. I think the important thing to note in terms of the rationale for this change is that the current advisory committees are very much subject to onerous appointment processes which have deterred participation. By simplifying the appointment process and reducing some of those bureaucratic barriers, some of that red tape, we can encourage broader stakeholder participation and input, which when it comes to participation in these bodies and in our sports economy more generally can only be a good thing. This is a change that will foster more effective and flexible advisory bodies that are better suited to the dynamic needs of our sporting facilities.

In particular in relation to the Kardinia Park Stadium Act the amendments will aim to streamline event management and governance. One amendment transfers the authority to make event management declarations for Kardinia Park Stadium from the Governor in Council and vests that power with the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, which is again a simplification and expedition of the process which will enable quicker and more responsive event management. Additionally, the bill will abolish the Kardinia Park advisory committee, replacing it, as I say, with that flexible advisory body.

The amendments to the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Act aim to simplify administrative processes and improve governance flexibility. Some of the key changes affecting this piece of legislation include that resignations from the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust will now be submitted directly to the minister rather than the Governor in Council, again streamlining that process; the minister can appoint acting members to the trust, ensuring it is able to remain functional on an ongoing basis when regular members are unavailable; and lease approvals for the National Tennis Centre and Olympic Park will shift from the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 minister to the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Act minister, thereby reducing bureaucracy and leveraging and maximising specific expertise.

In terms of the Melbourne Cricket Ground Act, amendments will include enhancements to administrative efficiency, including that members' resignations will be submitted directly to the minister, expediting that process. The minister will also be able to, as we have heard, delegate floodlight determinations to the department for quicker responses, as is appropriate. The State Sport Centres Act 1994 will see the abolition of the State Netball and Hockey Centre advisory committee, as mentioned. When it comes to the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Act amendments, there are provisions for the minister to appoint an acting chairperson and acting members to the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Board. This is flexibility that will be crucial for maintaining the board's functionality during those temporary vacancies as they may arise, ensuring that continuous capacity for oversight and governance of professional boxing and similar combat sports.

The benefits of this bill are quite simple and straightforward. Based on the commentary from those opposite I am hoping that we will see this bill passed today despite whatever reservations Mr Davis may have and the comments perhaps made by Ms Crozier. This is a very simple, straightforward bill that does really emphasise those changes which will make a big difference in a small but significant way and enable government to provide the best support it can to our sports, tourism and major events industry and to continue Melbourne's reputation as the global heart of sport – one of many but one of a very few special number as well.

As we have seen, the Australian influence, whether it is from Melbourne or beyond, is a very special thing to see, whether it is in these sports I have mentioned or indeed in the Olympic Games. I will take this opportunity to briefly give a shout-out to our new queen of the Olympics – that is of course Raygun – for her incredible breaking at Paris just last week. As a member for the South-Eastern Metropolitan Region, the heartland of *Kath & Kim*, I feel well entitled to say that she is absolutely embodying our spirit of the south-east, embodying the spirit of Victorians and embodying the spirit of Australia. So I give a massive, massive shout-out to our new inspirational Olympic queen Raygun and of course all our athletes over in Paris, who have done us so very proud, and our para-athletes, who will very shortly be, if they are not already, engaging in their games too. We send our best wishes over to them from the sporting capital of Australia.

This is a very good bill – a very simple, straightforward bill. I would very much enjoy the chance to dive into further matters, but they have been blocked and closed off as a course of discussion in this particular debate. Nevertheless for the matters that we are discussing in this bill today I will leave my remarks there but to say that I do commend the bill to the house.

Gaelle BROAD (Northern Victoria) (14:48): I rise to speak on the State Sporting Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I note that this bill seeks to make amendments to several acts, including the ANZAC Day Act 1958, the Kardinia Park Stadium Act 2016, the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Act 1985, the Melbourne Cricket Ground Act 2009, the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports

Act 1985 and the State Sport Centres Act 1994. These changes are in relation to trusts, membership, leasing powers and other miscellaneous amendments, although we note that it does propose to abolish the State Netball and Hockey Centre advisory committee and also the Kardinia Park advisory committee.

I thank Sam Groth for his work as shadow minister and for the consultation with key stakeholders and the government on this bill. I note the advice received was that, while these committees will be abolished, they will continue to exist in a less formal capacity. I thank David Davis for highlighting some of the concerns around these changes. I also note that stakeholders have indicated that they are seeking further details regarding the establishment and the timing of it, the membership and the terms of reference for these groups.

This bill is a timely opportunity to highlight the value of sport. My family is a very big sporting family; we love it. Sports play a significant role not just in inspiring people to be fit and healthy but in bringing local communities together and providing people an opportunity to participate. You do not have to be brilliant at sport. There are so many ways you can be part of it in your local community: keeping score, helping with transport or with finances, or keeping the grounds. There is a very long list; just ask your local club. Our local communities are filled with people who give of their time behind the scenes, and we are so grateful for their contribution.

I recently hosted a party to celebrate the official opening of the Olympics. I was pleased to hear Mr Galea also refer to the Olympics. I asked everyone to come wearing either green and gold or dressed as their favourite sport. It has been very inspiring to watch our local sports men and women competing on the world stage, and I want to congratulate all the athletes from right across Northern Victoria who have been taking part in the Olympics or who will be taking part in the Paralympic Games in Paris.

Jenna Strauch won an Olympic silver medal in the four-by-100 medley relay team, having started her swimming career at the Bendigo East Swimming Pool. Bendigo's Dyson Daniels was seriously impressive to watch on the basketball court. Other athletes from Northern Victoria include Bec Allen, in basketball – she is from Wangaratta; Benjamin Buckingham, in the 3000-metre steeplechase – he is from Myrtleford; we had Linden Hall – she did us proud in the 1500 metres – whose home town is Riddells Creek; Lauretta Hanson, in road cycling – born in Daylesford; Mitchell Iles, in the men's trapshooting – his home town is Hurstbridge; Aislin Jones, in skeet shooting, from Shepparton; Ebony Lane, in the four-by-100 relay in athletics, from Echuca; Catherine Skinner, in women's trapshooting, from Mansfield; Cortnee Vine, in soccer – or some like to say football – from Shepparton; and James Willett, in men's trapshooting – he is from Yarrawonga. Some of the Paralympians competing include Col Pearse, in swimming – he is from Echuca; James McQuillan, in wheelchair rugby – from Echuca as well; Bridget Murphy, para equestrian – hometown was Healesville; and Patrick French, in archery, from Romsey.

At the Paris Olympics Bendigo's own Andy Buchanan produced a wonderful run in the marathon, finishing in the top 50. He was not in the original team and was called up at the last minute. Friends and family and his running mates came together to watch him race, at the Lar Birpa athletics track in Bendigo. It was a good reminder to be ready – you never know when you are going to have to step up – and Andy certainly rose to the occasion.

The Paris Olympics has seen our best performance at an Olympics ever, with outstanding performances by our team, who achieved a record number of medals. The Olympics and the Paralympic Games in Paris provide a much-needed boost to morale. I know it has been a topic of conversation for people. I have enjoyed watching the athletes being interviewed and hearing their stories. Years of dedication, sacrifice and training – it makes them look like an overnight success.

But there is not a lot of good news around at the moment, especially in Victoria. Our state has the highest debt of any state in Australia, and like a house of cards, we are seeing services crumble after a

decade of Labor. We have a health crisis. Our health system is under intense pressure, with ambulance ramping, a shortage of GPs, especially in regional areas, and continued –

Sonja Terpstra: On a point of order, Acting President, I am not sure that any of the matters that Mrs Broad just mentioned in her speech relate to the bill that is before the house. I would ask, on relevance, that she come back to discussing matters that are actually in the bill.

Gaelle BROAD: On the point of order, Acting President, given that the previous speaker mentioned Taylor Swift events and we have had other speakers mention the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games, I think this is all very relevant.

Sonja Terpstra: Just to clarify, I was not taking objection to those references. The references about an ambulance crisis and those cuts to services is what I am referring to. That has got nothing to do with the bill.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Jeff Bourman): Mrs Broad, if you can keep it vaguely sporting-like, that would be awesome. There were some references to something that is not really to do with this bill, so if we could move along to sports or events-type stuff, that would be great.

Gaelle BROAD: That is fine. I will not talk about the massive, record state debt that we have, but I will get back to talking about –

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Jeff Bourman): Order! Mrs Broad, just move on, thanks.

Gaelle BROAD: The Olympic Games are a reminder of what we lost when the Labor state government cancelled the Commonwealth Games for 2026, where nearly \$600 million of taxpayer funds were wasted, along with the damage to Victoria's international reputation. Premier Allan was the Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery. She failed to deliver the games and also failed to appear before a parliamentary inquiry into the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games. It was, as my colleague Joe McCracken has described, gold medal incompetence. Hopefully Glasgow and Scotland can salvage the Commonwealth Games and give our athletes and all of us something to look forward to.

Sonja TERPSTRA (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:55): I also rise to make a contribution on the State Sporting Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 that is before the chamber, and I note that the opposition and the Greens are supportive of this bill. It is a bill to make minor amendments to legislation in the sport portfolio to improve consistency in governance provisions and reduce red tape. I think what is really important to note is that it also amends the ANZAC Day Act 1958 to update a unit of measurement and remove gendered language.

In regard to the appointment of acting members and chairpersons, obviously temporary vacancies on trusts can arise with little notice, and currently across various sporting trusts there are no provisions to permit the appointment of acting members or an acting chairperson. The bill before us will ensure consistency across all government sporting trusts so that acting members and chairpersons can be appointed when required. That is a sensible amendment that will obviously be of great assistance to those trusts and boards when they need to make sure that they have got the appropriate level of representation on them to make the decisions that they need to in regard to those facilities that they might be charged with managing. This also reflects other proposals in the bill which are designed to improve consistency across trust appointments and streamline practical administration of the trusts and therefore reduce the administrative burden and support flexible responsive governance.

I read what was in the bill and want to make a contribution. I do want to talk about sports more broadly in a minute. But I just thought I would go to some of the things that are really important, and particularly this has an application in my own region. The Melbourne Cricket Ground Act 2009 currently requires the Melbourne Cricket Ground Trust membership to consist of a chairperson and not less than six and not more than eight members. The bill will increase the maximum membership by one member and will enable greater diversity and skills on the board, so a better mix, which is

important. That will strengthen the management of this state sporting asset. It is not required that all nine positions be filled, but it provides a little bit more flexibility.

The State Sport Centres Act 1994 currently provides that the State Sport Centres Trust is to consist of not less than five and not more than seven part-time members. The trust has recently assumed responsibility for a new facility at the Knox Regional Sports Park and now manages four venues. I note that the Knox Basketball Stadium is an enormously popular –

Harriet Shing interjected.

Sonja TERPSTRA: It is a whopper. Thank you, Ms Shing. It is absolutely enormous. For example, I know there was the King's Birthday tournament down there just recently, and it was just huge. Knox Basketball is the largest basketball association in Australia, and it has around a thousand teams competing every week across junior and senior domestic competitions. That just goes to show you why it makes absolute perfect sense for the trust to assume responsibility for a new facility at the Knox Regional Sports Park, so it will now manage the four venues. The demands of the expanded infrastructure portfolio created significant additional work for the trust, and the bill increases the maximum number of part-time members of the trust from seven to 11.

We have heard other speakers talk about advisory committees. Members of the Kardinia Park and State Netball and Hockey Centre advisory committees currently go through a very onerous appointment process that includes submission of personal identification documents, undergoing mandatory probity checks and being formally appointed by the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events for membership of a committee that is advisory only, and members must also submit their resignation to the minister when they are wanting to exit the committee. These requirements have often deterred those asked to consider advisory committee membership.

In addition, the status of the committee as a statutory entity means that members are bound by the Public Administration Act 2004 and the Victorian Public Sector Commission's code of conduct for public entities. We know that sports in the community, for example, do not happen unless they have got the strong support and involvement of local volunteers, like I was just talking about the Knox Regional Sports Park and the Knox Basketball Stadium. Again, volunteers are involved at all different levels of sports, whether it is administration of teams or organising uniforms or participating in discussions about how different competitions are arranged. We need to acknowledge the contributions of volunteers to all levels of sports.

The level of administration and regulation is and can often be excessive and onerous for an advisory body designed to be a forum at which stakeholders of the facilities can discuss management decisions and priorities but actually have no decision-making power or capacity. These mechanisms are more appropriate for those bodies that make decisions about state assets and must satisfy high standards of transparency and accountability, and therefore a non-legislative advisory body will be established by the minister under section 6A of the State Sport Centres Act once the statutory advisory committees have been abolished. Contrary to what some of the speakers on the opposition benches were saying, there will be a non-legislative advisory body established that will still give people involved in these facilities the opportunity to continue to have input on their very important facilities and stadiums.

This also follows the model set for Knox Regional Sports Park when the State Sport Centres Trust assumed responsibility for the management of the Knox Sports Park and the Knox Regional Sports Park land from 7 September 2022 – try saying that seven times really, really fast, it is quite a mouthful. Nevertheless, the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events directed the trust to establish the Knox Regional Sports Park Committee to provide advice to the trust on the operations and management of the Knox Regional Sports Park and Knox Regional Sports Park land. The committee was indeed established, and its first meeting was held on 27 May 2024.

There is a lot in this bill, and as we have heard, a number of speakers have commented that Melbourne and Victoria are indeed – we will claim it – the major sporting and events capitals of Australia. That

is what we all love to say and what we all love to embrace. Across the Allan Labor government and previous Labor governments there has been consistent government investment into sporting and major events over more than 25 years. Research commissioned by Visit Victoria in 2023 found that Victoria's major events calendar contributed \$3.3 billion to the economy and generated more than 15,500 jobs for Victoria every year, so that is why our major sporting facilities are thoroughly and widely supported by this government. As I said, major events drive interstate and international visitation and put Melbourne and Victoria on the global stage, filling hotels and supporting Victorian jobs. So it is very important, and we all know how important it is to ensure that we continue to support sporting activity in Victoria.

As we know, the 2024 Australian Open – we smashed those attendance records for the Australian Open this year. There were more than 1,020,000 fans passing through the gates during the competition, and 1,110,000 fans throughout all three weeks, including opening week. That was a sensational result, and that event alone created more than 1700 full-time jobs and contributed more than \$387 million to Victoria's economy. Over the past 10 years the event has contributed nearly \$3 billion to our economy. Of course there are other events, like the Formula One Australian Grand Prix – again record-breaking crowds, with an estimate of over 452,000 people attending.

There are a range of other things – another impressive venue is the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre. We know that we have athletes training and attending other events there as well. There are also masters events held at the MSAC as well, and I know I look forward to competing at the Victorian masters swimming championships coming up on 25 August, so let us see if I can smash my records from last year. I think I finished in the top five for the 100-metre freestyle for my age group, so I hope I can hang onto that top five spot in Victoria – I hope I can hang onto that title. On the back of the Olympics that we have been watching, we cannot have a conversation about sport without mentioning Raygun. Only an Australian could turn up to the Olympics, represent their country in breakdancing and get absolutely zero but walk away as a national hero or a cultural icon in Australia. I think we have got more to see from Raygun. Who would have thought that we would see breakdancing as an Olympic sport? But there you go. That is what the Olympics is all about: bringing people from diverse backgrounds together to participate in all sorts of sports.

In weightlifting, for example – I did not know this, but I was looking at a bit of this because I also have an interest in weightlifting – it was only at the Olympics in 2000 that women's weightlifting was first admitted to the competition. Weightlifting as a sport in the Olympics made its debut in 1896, so women only had to wait 104 years before they were able to enter the weightlifting fray. Some incredible athletes have participated in the Olympics this year in weightlifting. It is an amazing sport. Weightlifting as a traditional Olympic sport seems to be waning a little bit, which is a bit sad because it is such a traditional Olympic sport. But I am also really pleased to say that my cousin is an Olympic weightlifter. She competed in the Olympics and also in the Commonwealth Games; she medalled in the latter for women's weightlifting. Only in Australia do we have such fond regard –

A member: Have you been lifting weights? Are you a bit of a weightlifter?

Sonja TERPSTRA: I am, and I guess at this juncture maybe I am –

Harriet Shing: Are you a lifter or a leaner?

Sonja TERPSTRA: I am a lifter, my friend. There are plenty of leaners about the place, but not me. I will give a bit of a shout-out to the weightlifting community and fraternity. One of the gyms that I train at, Accardi fitness – I will give a bit of a shout-out to them. I have to say, having a look at weightlifting as a sport, it is waning a little bit, but it is really interesting the amount of women that are starting to participate in weightlifting and showing an increased interest in that sport.

I have a namesake, Niki Terpstra, in the Netherlands who is a fantastic cyclist. I cannot claim any familial relationship to her, but nevertheless I can at least claim the same name. 'Terpstra' is not a very common name, as you probably all know, but there you go. Whether it is cycling, whether it is

swimming, whether it is weightlifting or whether it is breakdancing, there seems to be something for everyone at the Olympics this year.

I have to say that one of the most exciting things I have seen – and I know this has happened in the past at the Olympics – is the spectacular sporting commentary of Roy and HG Nelson, which needs to be held in very high regard. I remember watching Roy and HG commentate on my cousin when she was competing in the Olympics and talking about her lucky socks. I thought that was spectacular. Roy and HG also commentated on the Olympics, and that is something that is unique to Australia – we can combine high-level sporting activity with our gold-standard comedic talents.

In the 2 minutes I have left on the clock, I might talk a little bit about the investment that we have had from this government in the Melbourne and Olympic Parks precinct, which has been the jewel in the crown of Victoria's sporting and major events calendar, generating more than \$740 million in visitor spend over the past 12 months alone. A recent study showed the unequivocal value of the precinct to the state in 2022–23. That is a really impressive thing. It just goes to show how much our Victorian economy benefits from our investment in sport – like I said, people come, whether it is to the Australian Open or whether it is to the grand prix or to any other premier sporting event. We have heard about concerts at the MCG, whether it is Taylor Swift or I think Robbie Williams has been here as well. There is a steady flow of international acts that come and participate at our sporting venues, because they are big enough. These acts are so popular that they need big enough venues to fill, and of course they do fill them. Some of those tickets sell out pretty quickly. Sometimes you think, 'I won't even try because I know they'll be gone within a nanosecond.' Nevertheless we have seen some fantastic international acts that have come to our fantastic state of Victoria.

I will give a shout-out again to all of the fantastic things that we embrace about sport, whether it is international sport, whether it is sport at a state or national level or even community sport. These local sporting venues, right up to our large state-based venues, are incredibly important to Victoria and Victorians. With that, I commend this bill to the house.

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (15:10): I rise to speak on the State Sporting Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. This is a bill that will make a number of amendments to a number of acts – a bit of an omnibus bill. It proposes to make amendments to the ANZAC Day Act 1958, the Kardinia Park Stadium Act 2016, the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Act 1985, the Melbourne Cricket Ground Act 2009, the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Act 1985 and the State Sport Centres Act 1994. By and large this bill is a bit of a tidying-up bill by the government. There is not a great deal of substance to what the bill will do, other than to modernise and correct some things in those acts.

However, there are always a couple of things that do concern us about any bill, and this bill does seek to make a number of changes to the way that a couple of advisory committees will be appointed and will work. That is a little bit of a concern to me because, as we know, this government does not like to take advice. This government thinks it knows best what is best for all Victorians, and it would rather not take any advice. It does worry me when it makes changes to advisory committees that they could go the way of the emergency services volunteers advisory committee, which was just abolished by the current minister. The government no longer takes any advice on those things; it just imposes changes on our emergency services. I fear that that might happen in some of our sporting bodies as well.

Sport is something that is tremendously important in Victoria. We are the sporting capital of the world. We are very fortunate that our forefathers had the foresight to have such a wonderful sporting precinct at Yarra Park with the MCG, the AAMI Park facilities, the tennis centre and all of the parkland down there as well as the additional ovals that make up the sporting precinct in that area. It certainly has put sport right at the heart of our community. I was very disappointed when they actually moved the Olympic pool from the site where it was in 1956, which was part of the precinct, because I had a lot of emotional connection to that pool, having grown up as a competitive swimmer. The new pool out at Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre is a vast improvement on the facilities that were available at the Olympic pool, so it was maybe in hindsight a good measure to relocate the pool. Of course the

pool had been relocated prior to that as well, because it used to be just a little bit further along on Batman Avenue as the Olympic pool before it was moved to the facility that was built for the 1956 games.

As I said, it is not just that professional sporting precinct in the city that makes sport so important to Victoria, it is the grassroots sports that really are so vital to all of us. And it is the sporting grounds and facilities that support all of those grassroots and junior sporting clubs that are so essential to making sure that Victoria does remain the sporting capital of Australia and that we have young competitors coming through. Just yesterday it was announced that the Melbourne Victory would come to Shepparton and play an A-League soccer game against our local team, the Goulburn Valley Suns. That has created a lot of excitement in our community, because there are many in our community who see soccer as the premier football game in Australia. For me of course it is always AFL, although I do enjoy a good soccer game as well and I will go along and watch that event if I can possibly be there. For me it is AFL first and foremost, and that starts with the junior footy clubs in my electorate, many of which I actually sponsor. I follow a couple of them a little more closely than maybe some of the others.

One of the football clubs in my area that really needs some investment and assistance from government is the Murchison Toolamba Football Netball Club. This is a football–netball club that has a number of junior levels and senior teams as well. They have been planning a redevelopment of their facilities – it is a three-stage redevelopment – for many years. They need \$4.1 million to make that a reality for their club, but we have not been able to get anything out of the state government to support them – or out of local government – and that is because the ground on which they play is Crown land. It is not land that is managed by local government. In order to qualify for any grants from the state government, that grant has to be auspiced through local government, and of course because local government do not manage their ground, they will not auspice that funding on behalf of the football club. So the football club has been put in a very difficult situation.

The current rooms were constructed in 1981, and they have not been renovated or upgraded since. The club officials have met with officers from the AFL who, after inspecting 3000 other football clubs, deemed Murchison's facilities to be in the bottom 100 in terms of condition. So it is in the bottom 100 out of 3000 football and netball clubs. It is very, very depressing for the club. It makes it difficult for them to attract new players, particularly junior players, when their facilities are just so bad. I have seen their facilities firsthand, and I agree with the AFL – in fact, I would put it right at the bottom, but not having seen all of those other facilities, I respect the AFL's view that they are in the bottom 100 clubs. But it is still a disgraceful position for that club to be put in, and the government needs to sort out how it can fund and assist the Murchison Toolamba football club to improve their facilities.

There are a number of other facilities in my electorate that need upgrading. Earlier in the year I fought very hard for the Kyneton netball club to get upgrades to their facilities, because they were actually getting changed in rooms that had mould in them. The rooms that they were using were actually used as the sheep pavilion for the local show, and there was mould growing in the area where the girls were forced to change; there were toilets that did not work, et cetera. We were lucky enough to get some interim funding for some temporary facilities out of that advocacy, and in the longer term there is funding for new facilities to be built at Kyneton for the girls on the netball team, and I am really pleased about that.

We need a lot more investment in female facilities. I have spoken recently about the need for investment in cricket change room facilities for females to participate in cricket throughout regional Victoria as well. In recent years there has been a huge focus on increasing the amount of change rooms and facilities for women participating in AFL, but not so much in other sports, and our cricket associations are desperately seeking investment. A couple of the clubs have got investment through recent funding grants, and the local cricket association wrote to me to thank me for raising those issues on their behalf, saying it felt that was part of the reason why the funding did come through. I was pleased to receive that from the cricket association.

We know that in the last couple of weeks we have had the Olympic Games. It has been wonderful. I always wonder why these countries overseas play sport in the middle of the night. It really upsets me because I get no sleep whatsoever for the two weeks of Wimbledon, the two weeks of the US Open, the two weeks of the French Open and the two weeks of the Olympic Games. It really does affect me operating during the day, because I am a sports fanatic and I just cannot stop myself watching sport, even if it is played in the middle of the night. It has been absolutely amazing to see the Olympic Games, to see the Australians competing. Whether they won medals or just competed, they were all winners. They were there. They are Olympians. Wow, imagine being able to say, 'I went to the Olympic Games' and 'I am an Olympian.' What a fantastic achievement.

There have been a number of young people competing from my electorate; Mrs Broad had a very, very extensive list of those who competed from our electorate. I would like to just make mention of a few of those people. Of course Cortnee Vine, who plays for the Matildas and who kicked that winning goal that we all celebrated earlier in the year that kept us in the world cup, is originally from Shepparton. She is the daughter of a Shepparton couple who now reside in Queensland I think or northern New South Wales. We still claim her as our own. Jenna Strauch, who won a silver medal in the women's four-by-100-metre medley relay is originally from Bendigo. A fantastic achievement, Jenna. Aislin Jones, who was in the skeet shooting, now resides in Gippsland with her family. I knew that family when they lived in Shepparton. Aislin was just a little girl then, but she has gone on to be an Olympian and has represented Australia at world championships and Commonwealth Games over a number of years. She is absolutely amazing.

Andy Buchanan from Bendigo competed in the marathon. He actually got a last-minute call-up to replace an injured teammate, and he completed the marathon in a very respectable 2 hours and 12 minutes, just 6 minutes behind the winner, to come 45th in a field of 81 – an incredible effort for someone who arrived at short notice and who did not really have that time to put into training. Tess Madgen, a former Bendigo Spirit player and a veteran from the Tokyo 2020 games, plays for the Opals women's basketball team. She actually captained them to a bronze medal against Belgium in the Olympic Games. In the men's trapshooting Australia was represented by two country boys – James Willett, who was born in Yarrawonga, and Mitchell Iles from the Eildon electorate. Both did our country proud in trapshooting. James got sixth place, the highest finish by an Australian in an event since Michael Diamond finished fourth in London in 2012. Laura Paeglis, a 22-year-old woman who trains at Diamond Valley Archers in Yarrambat, made her Olympic debut this year. She did everyone proud by getting the highest score for 30 years by an Australian woman in Olympic archery.

So it is fantastic to have seen these young people – and maybe some of them not so young even – competing in the Olympic Games. It is great for young people to be able to see people they know. For our children to see people they know competing gives them the inspiration that perhaps one day they could go on and compete as well.

I want to talk about one last piece of infrastructure in my electorate that has desperately needed an upgrade for many years. I have advocated for this to the government for a very, very long time. And that is the Shepparton Sports Stadium. The Greater Shepparton City Council have a plan to turn that into the Shepparton sports and events centre. This is our basketball stadium that was built in the 1970s. It had a couple of extra courts added to it late in the 1990s but largely it has had nothing done to it since. The roof leaks, the facilities are terrible and it needs a complete rebuild. But this state government have continued to ignore that piece of infrastructure. In fact at one stage they said to me Greater Shepparton council can apply for up to \$1.5 million in funding towards that. Well, that is a real insult when you look at some of the other things that are being funded, particularly in basketball around the state – \$105 million for Knox basketball centre, \$20 million for Mernda, \$19 million for Traralgon, \$50 million for Waurin Ponds.

Shepparton is a major sporting centre. We have a number of state competitions that come to Shepparton and state championships. In fact we have world championships for BMX and we deserve a better stadium than what we have. We have been asking this government for \$20 million towards

the upgrade of the stadium and they have not been forthcoming. They did recently put in \$3 million for some minor upgrades to a number of facilities in Shepparton, which will help the stadium, but we need investment in our stadium.

John BERGER (Southern Metropolitan) (15:25): Today we are discussing the State Sporting Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. This bill really gets to the core of what the government stands for, and that is the community – uplifting the community through unique Victorian sporting pride. This bill seeks to improve the effectiveness of governance over sports in Victoria. It will do so by making straightforward but important reforms to acts such as the Kardinia Park Stadium Act 2016, the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Act 1985, the Melbourne Cricket Ground Act 2009 and so on. These reforms will strengthen and improve the nature of sports in Victoria.

No-one gets country sports more than Victorians. We are even beating the rest of the eastern states at their own sports. It was a privilege not so long ago to go to the State of Origin rugby game, where New South Wales absolutely flogged Queensland. I took great delight with a few of my friends who live both in New South Wales and Queensland, having been able to witness a stadium full of over 90,000 people while they had to watch at home on their TVs. It is stadiums like the MCG that are integral to the sports culture in Victoria.

Being an ardent Collingwood supporter like you, Acting President Ermacora, we have those opportunities to go to big sporting events on the biggest day, being grand final day in Victoria, to see all those people participate in those sports. For these reasons Victoria deserves a government that backs our favourite sports. The Allan Labor government has consistently proven itself to be a government dedicated to uplifting sport on every level. The State Sporting Legislation Amendment Bill is proof of this fact, and whilst reforms in this bill are largely very straightforward, there is a lot of substance in the bill itself.

I will now get to the individual reforms and amendments that this bill offers for this great sporting state. Firstly, the bill will deliver amendments designed for easier streamlining of decision-making relating to Kardinia Park Stadium and the Melbourne Cricket Ground. The bill amends the Kardinia Park Stadium Act to transfer powers that the government currently holds to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, the power being transferred through the amendment to section 34 in Part 5 of the Kardinia Park Stadium Act 2016, which will allow for the minister to make event management declarations. Previously this power was held by the Governor in Council and was used at the recommendation of the minister for sport. This new model will allow for quicker and easier event management. This means quicker and easier decisions to ensure that Victoria continues to live up to its name as the sporting capital of Australia.

Before moving on I would just like to note that this reform also enables another key trait of the Allan Labor government that sets us apart from those across from me. Unlike the Victorian Liberal Party, the Allan Labor government backs regions. From sports to housing to public transport, this government is always looking out for the regions.

Ann-Marie Hermans: On a point of order, Acting President, I do believe that we are moving away from the point of this bill, and I do not see the relevancy in what is being said at the moment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Jacinta Ermacora): Please return to the topic of the bill, Mr Berger.

John BERGER: Specifically, the bill amends the Melbourne Cricket Ground Act further to dissolve and subsequently repeal the relevant provisions of the State Netball and Hockey Centre and Kardinia Park advisory committees. Additionally, the bill will make changes to a variety of leasing provisions. These leasing provisions span several acts. Finally, the bill also makes several significant reforms to legislative measures surrounding our many sports trusts. The bill addresses a lack of consistency within the trust appointments in Victoria, and it also addresses the appointment process for advisory committees, which contains onerous appointment requirements that often stand in the

way of efficient functioning of advisory committees. Similar to other reforms to be made by this bill is the section that it will transfer – there are provisions to implement a shaving down of some of the outdated provisions relating to the prohibition of payments of Tennis Australia and Tennis Victoria employees as members of the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust.

I would like to acknowledge the minister responsible for this bill, Minister Dimopoulos in the other place. This bill is a great example of how the Allan Labor government's Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events understands how important sports and sport culture is in this state. After all, we are discussing this bill in the sporting capital of Australia. Just over the Yarra from my great local community of Southern Metro and just a short stroll from this building is the huge monument to that fact. One part of this bill worth highlighting is the amount of red tape that we are going to be cutting, and for many local sporting clubs in my community this is overwhelmingly going to be a good thing. For bigger clubs like the Melbourne Cricket Club, the MCC, the bill amends the Melbourne Cricket Ground Act 2009 to change the requirements around delegating the power to make floodlight determinations. This is a straightforward change. The minister cannot be involved with everything, and there are no governance reasons that require the minister to approve small leases over small areas. These amendments give the trust the flexibility it needs. The bill reduces the administrative burden, and with floodlights it just cuts down that red tape.

We know the importance of floodlights to our community. The government already provides support via Sport and Recreation Victoria and the *Community Sporting Facility Lighting Guide*, which assists local clubs, organisations and councils with lighting projects for AFL, soccer and netball. It offers recommendations for planning designs, maintenance and operation of a variety of lighting systems. The guide is very comprehensive. It covers topics such as planning processes, power supply, maintenance and operation. It even helps councils and clubs to determine the types of lighting and design standards for training and competition.

Take, for instance, the Orrong Park tennis club redevelopment and the Orrong Romanis Reserve sports lighting upgrade, all thanks to the Allan Labor government. In fact I want to thank the Minister for Community Sport in the other place, Minister Spence, who gave me the opportunity to represent her at the official opening. What we did open was sports lights and floodlights. I saw firsthand the countless families walking around the park and the many children running on the ovals and the tennis courts playing sports all around, and it was dark until such time that the lights went on. Without these facilities our kids would not have the opportunity to participate. That gives them that, and I know firsthand the importance. I am from a sports family. My daughters all played netball, and I was the president of the Broadford Football Club for three years. I am sure my colleague Ms Lovell would know all about the local football clubs up that way. It is a great footy club.

The bill also makes changes to the ANZAC Day Act 1958 to change the description of an area in which sports are held on Anzac Day. We know how integral Anzac Day is to honouring the service of our diggers. It is our main form of remembrance in Australia. Sport has played an important part in this, and the AFL is a huge leader here. From local footy leagues to the big day, footy leads the way, and I am proud that the mighty Magpies can share that date with the second-biggest game of the season, the Anzac Day clash at the G. But it is more than sport. It is the way we educate the public on the sacrifice of our diggers. I am proud that the government can continue to do its part through this bill. The ANZAC Day Act is also outdated. It came into place in 1959, and a lot has changed since then. The act refers to miles, not the kilometres we use in Australia, and this law, which is still on the books, refers to the post office at the corner of Bourke and Elizabeth streets, which is strange as it has not been there for some years. In reality the bill will not substantially change the effect on sports captured by the provisions of the ANZAC Day Act. Sports that compete on the day within 48.28 kilometres radius of the city will still have to pay a proportion of their net profit to the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund, and the reason for that exact kilometre radius is because back in the day it was based on miles.

It is a really straightforward bill, as you can see. Before I end I want to address some of the concerns. It is my understanding that most members are supportive of the legislation, but I understand there are some notes around advisory committees and the number of members of the State Sport Centres Trust. Regarding the trust, we know that not everyone can attend every meeting of every committee. I know myself, being on Legislative Council committees, that sometimes I cannot attend and require a proxy vote. On top of that I have been a proxy vote for many Council members. This is straightforward governance. Temporary vacancies on a trust can arise with little notice. Currently the mechanism across the various sports has no provision to permit the appointment of acting members or an acting chairperson. This bill ensures that there is consistency in government sporting trusts so that acting members and chairpersons can be appointed when required. Where members across a number of trusts are required to resign via written notification to the Governor in Council, it creates a lot of issues. It means that resignations will only take effect when considered at an executive meeting, and they are sporadic and not necessarily consistent. In a practical sense this has presented difficulties to members, whose resignations needed to take effect on the day they were made, and this has not happened a lot. Resignation to the minister is consistent with other sport legislation and consistent with good practice.

I know from my time at the Broadford football club about what rules are in place and the internal rules of the footy club itself. You have got to deal with committee meetings and annual general meetings – things of that nature – and of course there are account-keeping records. We all know from our experiences that they all need to be kept in reasonable form, and sometimes in country or regional areas that attention to detail is not always there. Then you might have the VFL rules, the Victorian Football League rules and the local rules from the Heathcote District Football League, so all of those things come into play as we are going around.

There is a lot of work that goes into local footy clubs in trying to reduce the red tape, and we know even with local volunteers that some of the requirements they have in terms of some of the certificates to do a few things in the medical area are often overlooked. But I want to give a shout-out to the volunteers of local football clubs because of the work they do and how many people are involved to ensure that local sport gets recognition from people like us in parliaments and the general public and to make sure that they operate successfully. It is a very difficult task, I know, in regional areas to make sure that those things take place. In reality the bill will not substantially change the effect on sports captured by this provision. On top of that, it is pretty straightforward in terms of governance, so I commend the bill to the house.

Ann-Marie HERMANS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (15:37): I too rise today to speak on the State Sporting Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. As has been mentioned previously, this bill has been introduced by the government to amend the Anzac Day Act 1958 to change the description of an area in which sports are held on Anzac Day. When this act was originally made it was only 13 years, roughly, after the end of the Second World War, so Anzac Day still had a tremendous number of diggers and people that could remember what it was like to live through two world wars and to have lost family members. In fact I still remember lining up in primary school and discovering that I was one of the few people that actually had grandfathers in the line, because so many people had lost family members in different wars that Australians had sent out their troops to.

I think about this and I think about the change that we are making, and I just want to start by saying this first of all: I want to thank every one of our service men and women that have actually served our nation to protect our rights and freedoms. How incredibly important it is to continue to remember Anzac Day. I would not want, in the purpose of this bill going through, for us to end up having anything that could be disrespectful to our diggers and to our Australians that have put themselves on the front line and have given their lives and their time in service for our nation. That is something that I just wanted to start by saying, because I do really appreciate the many men and women who have gone out on our behalf. It is a wonderful thing in the south-east to be able to go to so many commemorative services to remember these people and to still have some that are alive that can actually remember the friends that they have lost. It is incredibly important that we are respectful in the changes that we make

and so would ask those who have the opportunity now, with the changes that will go through with this bill, to remember the importance of being respectful of our service men and women on Anzac Day.

I go to go back to points held in the bill. There are a series of changes made to the Kardinia Park Stadium Act 2016, the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Act 1985, the Melbourne Cricket Ground Act 2009 and the State Sport Centres Act 1994 in relation to trust membership. I will come back to that one in a minute. I want to also note, though, that when we are changing powers in relation to the appointing of acting members to a trust we are also, in this bill, in terms of the Melbourne and Olympic Parks, allowing the minister to have discretionary powers relating to fees, allowances, remuneration of members of the trust et cetera et cetera. I just say I hope that this is going to be done in a way, again, that is going to be fair, reasonable and respectful. I am sure it will be, but I just wanted to throw that out there.

While we are on the point of sport, I could not help but notice that Mr Berger mentioned that we are the sporting capital of Australia. I would like to say that we might have been the sporting capital of Australia should we have had the fulfilment of the Commonwealth Games that were promised by this –

John Berger: On a point of order, Acting President, I do not see the relevance of the comment to this debate. It is not relevant at all.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Jacinta Ermacora): Mrs Hermans, stay with the legislation.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: Thank you. I was just commenting on an actual quote that Mr Berger made in his speech on the sporting capital of Australia being Victoria. I do want to, though, shout out to our wonderful, wonderful athletes. I had the great privilege of being able to meet some of our Olympic medallist hopefuls who have been out and have competed and represented our nation. I would like to shout out to Kate McDonald from the Cheltenham Youth Club. It was a wonderful thing to see her training on the bars and getting ready for the gymnastics team and wonderful to be able to watch her compete. I also want to shout out to Brock Batty, a 17-year-old who was representing Australia in trampolining, also from the Cheltenham Youth Club. I was really disappointed to see that this club is in desperate need of millions of dollars and has not been funded for the things it actually needs. So these people are training in facilities and in situations and circumstances where they need upgrades.

That brings me back to the whole point of this bill and the acts in terms of stadiums and opportunities to change how certain things are governed. I do again want to say it is wonderful to watch our athletes. It is wonderful to watch them in the Olympic Games. It was wonderful to be able to watch Brock Batty of Frankston. It was wonderful to be able to watch Kate McDonald, and it was wonderful to be able to watch a number of our Australians and our locals. I want to mention a few others. Brock Batty we know is from Frankston, but he does his training, as I said, at the Cheltenham Youth Club. There are a few others that have trained nearby or have had something to do with the south-east. I want to shout out to Stephanie-Elise Catley, who I believe has had some connection to Carrum football and competed in Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020. The women's football 12-team tournament is the one that she was in for this Olympic Games. Sadly, she did not make it to the final. Hopefully she will make it in the future at the next games, which unfortunately will not be the Commonwealth Games here in Victoria, and will have an opportunity to compete.

We have Brooke Buschkuehl, with, I believe, a connection to Cranbourne athletics, in long jump. She also competed in Rio in 2016 and Tokyo in 2020 and has the Australian and Oceanic record. Elena Galiabovitch, I believe, trained at the Oakleigh Pistol Club and therefore has connections in and around the south-east area with shooting. She also competed in Tokyo in 2020 in the women's 10-metre air pistol and women's 25-metre pistol as well. There are so many. I have to say that it was wonderful as well to have Sergei Evglevski from Berwick in terms of shooting, who also competed at Tokyo in 2020, shooting in the men's 25-metre rapid-fire pistol. In fact there were so many things worth watching. I do not know how many of you had the opportunity to see Kelland O'Brien in the cycling,

who also competed in Tokyo in 2020, cycling in the men's track team pursuit and, according to our shadow minister, has some connection to Mordialloc and was able to compete and bring home a gold medal.

Also my daughter and I were thrilled to watch some really interesting sports. We loved the women's skateboarding. I do want to shout out – even though we are looking at a really young 14-year-old – Arisa Trew. It was exciting to watch. It is exciting to support sport, and that is what Victoria wants to do. Victorians love their sport, so making amendments that allow us to be able to enjoy our sport is really, really important. But how we go about that and what framework we use for that are also incredibly important.

I notice that this bill seeks to make changes to appointments and functions of the advisory committees. I have to take the point that my colleague Ms Lovell mentioned, of this government not liking to take advice, which is why we had those budget blowouts with the Commonwealth Games and therefore our games were cancelled in Victoria. I also want to mention that, certainly in the south-east, we are a people who love our sport. One thing about the south-east is you do not have to go far to find team sports. You do not have to go far to find individual sports. Victorians and people of the south-east, whom I represent, understand the incredible importance of playing sport for our health and wellbeing, whether it be football, netball, cricket, gymnastics, skateboarding, swimming, hockey, soccer – the list goes on and on for us in the south-east. It is wonderful that we have some areas where we can play, but I do again take the point that we do not have enough facilities for women. We need to continue to help women with their change rooms and their facilities in a variety of our local sports. We perhaps might not be suffering as much as some of the regional areas, but we definitely are in need of continual upgrades to allow people to be able to have the facilities that they need.

I want to go back to looking at some of the specifics of this. I want to mention, first of all, that they are going to be abolishing the Kardinia Park advisory committee. They seem to be okay with it, but it always concerns me when we get rid of advisory committees.

I also note that this is going to amend the Melbourne Cricket Ground Act 2009. One of the things that the minister is going to be able to do with this particular bill, I note, is be permitted to delegate the power to make floodlight determinations. I again want to stress that I hope that in making these determinations local residents will be consulted about whether they actually want these floodlights on on Anzac Day. I just want to put that out there, because it is a day when we are meant to be respectful and mindful of people who have laid down their lives in acts of service. I am not quite sure whether the residents want the floodlights. I think it is something to make sure of – that that is going to be respectful – and be mindful of when that determination does not currently have to be made by the minister.

This bill is going to amend the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Act 1985 to, again, permit the minister to make acting appointments to the board. This is going to favour whoever is the minister and whoever is in government at the time. When we are under a government that is not able to budget for the Commonwealth Games, I am always feeling a little bit nervous about permitting the minister to make acting appointments to any board. I also notice that it is going to amend the State Sport Centres Act 1994, abolish the State Netball and Hockey Centre advisory committee – once again, another advisory committee disappearing – and permit the minister to delegate approval of leases that are not major leases. Let us hope that that discretion is going to be done in a way that is tasteful and fair and reasonable for all Victorians.

I notice that throughout this there are powers transferred to the minister in so many cases. I always cannot help but get a little bit prickly when I see that under this current government. This is a government where we have a health crisis. This is a government where we have a running debt. This is a government where we have budget blowouts. This is a government where we have record state debt and we are paying millions of dollars every day simply in interest.

I want to start to wrap up. I noted that one of the members mentioned the Knox basketball centre and the thousands of people who have the opportunity to play at Knox basketball centre. I also want to acknowledge that in Frankston there has been a significant need for a redevelopment. In fact initially I do believe it was Liberal locals that actually drew this to the attention of the government by their wanting to find funding for that. It is great that this government has been prepared to match and even find significant funds, but I am looking forward to seeing further developments in the area of sporting for this state.

Going back to some of the amendments, I think I want to mention one more sporting person, and that is Keegan Palmer, also from skateboarding. It was wonderful to see us receive so many gold medals in so many different areas. We are a people, in Victoria, that love our sport. We know that it is incredibly important for our state. It is incredibly important that people are always given a fair go as well in their local areas and that when we make changes like this, which can look like they are just cleaning up, tidying things up and allowing other people to be able to have more sporting access, we are always mindful of the fact that there are local residents that live around these areas and that we need to be careful in how we implement these. That is just a word of encouragement that I would like to throw out there to this current government, because we had 100 Victorian athletes from 26 different sports at the Paris Olympics. I want to thank all of them who have gone and competed and made us all so very proud. We thank them for their dedication and their discipline, and we thank them for the way they have represented Australia. We are so proud that so many came home with medals, but we are just so proud of the many that actually were able to compete. We had 53 medals; we had 18 gold. It was a wonderful Paris Olympics, and I want to thank all of our sporting heroes.

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (15:52): I will be brief this afternoon to speak on the State Sporting Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. Really in essence it is a tidy-up bill. It is a modernisation bill, and the Nationals, as my colleague and a member for Northern Victoria Region Gaelle Broad has said, will take a not-opposed position. I do just want to correct the record there, because in listening intently to most of the speeches I heard the government member Ms Terpstra say that we were supporting it. I just want to correct the record and put on record that the Nationals and the Liberals are taking a not-opposed position. My colleague Mr David Davis certainly has outlined many of his concerns, which need to be addressed in relation to the changing of powers and the need to continue to have fair and good oversight that is not seriously ministerially driven but still provides for local governance and context.

This bill certainly has been introduced and amends the ANZAC Day Act 1958, the Kardinia Park Stadium Act 2016, the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Act 1985 and also the Melbourne Cricket Ground Act 2009. This is certainly hallowed ground if you are an Australian and a Victorian. Both the MCG and indeed the Melbourne and Olympic Park precinct are places that many of us have been to in our lifetimes. The whole Melbourne and Olympic Park was established for the 1956 Olympics only a short distance from the hallowed MCG, which served as the stadium. We certainly have been a part of it, and I know I was from a distance. I had small children when the Commonwealth Games of 2006 came to Melbourne. It very successfully came to Melbourne. Indeed it ran on budget, it was very much a friendly games and it was noted for –

David Davis: 2026 wasn't friendly.

Melina BATH: No, it was not. I am getting to that, Mr Davis. It certainly set a new standard in relation to Commonwealth Games from an events point of view. We have heard from a very learned and considered gentleman, Simon Thewlis, who is part of the events – I will say – knowledge and content that is Victoria. He has worked in the events industry for 40 years, and when he spoke at our Commonwealth Games debacle inquiry, he came and spoke about how the 2006 Commonwealth Games was on budget, set a new record and was so supported. Of course we woke the other day to see that the 2026 Commonwealth Games are now going to end up in Glasgow, and that money that is going to come will come from –

John Berger: On a point of order, Acting President, I am not sure of the relevance of where the member is going with her speech now.

Melina BATH: I am making the speech. You can make your point of order.

John Berger: I think you are talking about the Commonwealth Games. I think the bill makes no reference to the Commonwealth Games.

Melina BATH: On the point of order, Acting President, Mr Galea spoke about *Kath & Kim*, and no-one from that side decided to jump up and call him to order. So to the point of order, there has been wideranging debate and I feel that I have the opportunity to make comment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Jacinta Ermacora): Ms Bath, please return to the topic of the bill.

Melina BATH: The topic is sport and indeed the importance of those facilities, both in the Melbourne and Olympic Parks space and the MCG. We have heard from all sides; indeed we heard from Mr Galea talking about rowers from New Zealand competing in the Olympic Games recently. I would like to throw in my comments about the Olympic Games and the importance that sport has in our state and regions. I very much commend the Gippsland Sports Academy for preparing both current and future stars on the stage, whether it be in Commonwealth Games of the past or Olympic Games of the past or indeed current Olympic champions, who I am so very proud of.

We saw the most amazing and talented people from the Eastern Victoria Region. We saw Eleanor Patterson win the bronze medal – a Leongatha girl and the most wonderful person, as so many of our Victorians are as ambassadors for sport and ambassadors for unifying our people but also encouraging young sports men and women. We saw Aoife Coughlan do amazingly well in the judo. We saw Paige Barr in the rowing, and she was a previous champion of the Gippstar Awards. Aislin Jones – now, I think my colleague Mrs Broad claimed Aislin for the north, but actually she lives in Leongatha at the moment. She grew up in Bairnsdale as well, so we will share celebrations of her. She was the youngest ever Olympic shooter, and what a star she is. Skateboarder Keefer Wilson is from Nyora. Emily Beecroft – I was so very proud only last week on Thursday at the Gippstar Awards to present her mum and dad Lauren and Garry with her champions award from the Gippsland Sports Academy, because she was preparing for the Paralympics. Also we cannot go past acknowledging the most amazing and talented Jade Melbourne from the Latrobe Valley – I know her mum, dad and family were over there, and what a superstar she is.

But I also acknowledge that this bill in its endeavours to formalise and modernise some of these acts very much encompasses the importance, throughout the sports and sporting organisations – the very fabric of the mechanism of these sports – of coaches, sports psychologists, sports nutritionists, managers, volunteers and umpires and the role they play.

I would just like to make some comments about the speeches that we have heard today. I heard Ms Terpstra make a comment saying how much Victorians have benefited from the government's investment in sport. Well, it is true, it invested almost \$600 million to not hold a sporting venture. Indeed we know that, across the ditch, Glasgow will be holding a sporting venture that we could have had. I also want to acknowledge –

David Davis: We are helping to fund it.

Melina BATH: We are helping to fund it – how wonderful is that? – and not holding it. And I say that with a terrible pain in my heart for the people in my region, who should have been celebrating local sporting heroes in 2026 in Gippsland, with the infrastructure, while the members across the way talk about them benefiting from this investment. We also heard that international sport is incredibly important to Victoria. Very sadly, there are missed opportunities with those ventures in and around the Melbourne and Olympic Parks precinct that this bill seeks to modernise and alter. It is a spring-cleaning piece of legislation. My colleague David Davis certainly has spoken to his concerns, and I know he has got questions for the committee of the whole.

I will halt my contribution there. We have certainly had wideranging debate, from Taylor Swift to rugby teams to rowers in New Zealand to a whole range of people. What I want to say is that this government has taken Victorians for a ride in not holding the Commonwealth Games – giving the carrot of what was going to happen for our communities and our regions and then taking it away. We wish Glasgow well, but it is also a bitter pill to know that it could have been us for a whole lot less than the \$7 billion that it was supposed to cost, apparently, according to a former Premier.

Gayle TIERNEY (Western Victoria – Minister for Skills and TAFE, Minister for Regional Development) (16:02): I will reinforce comments that have been made on this side and on the other side as well as in the other place that this bill is about making minor amendments to the legislation in the sports portfolio to improve consistency in governance provisions and of course also to reduce red tape. It also amends the ANZAC Day Act 1958 to update a unit of measurement and remove gendered language. All of this is pretty straightforward.

I understand that some members in the other place and in the debate that we have had this afternoon have raised concerns about the abolition of the advisory committees. Certainly this government has no intention of the abolition being permanent. I would like to reassure members that have concerns, and I hope to answer any questions that members may have in this regard. Members of the Kardinia Park and State Netball Hockey Centre advisory committees currently go through an onerous appointment process. This process includes submission of personal identification documents, mandatory probity checks and being formally appointed by the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events for membership on a committee that is advisory only. Members must also resign to the minister. These requirements have often deterred those who may want to consider membership of these advisory committees. In addition, the status of the committee as a statutory entity means that members are bound by the Public Administration Act 2004 and the Victorian Public Sector Commission code of conduct for public entities. This level of administration and regulation, the government believes, is excessive for an advisory body designed to be a forum in which stakeholders can discuss management decisions and priorities without holding any decision-making powers. These mechanisms are more appropriate for those bodies that make decisions about state assets and must satisfy high standards of transparency and accountability. A non-legislative advisory body will be established by the minister once the statutory advisory committees have been abolished.

This follows the model set for the Knox Regional Sports Park when the State Sport Centres Trust assumed responsibility for the management of Knox Regional Sports Park and the Knox Regional Sports Park land from 7 September 2022. The Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events directed the trust to establish a Knox Regional Sports Park committee to provide advice to the trust on the operations and management of Knox Regional Sports Park and Knox Regional Sports Park land. The State Sport Centres Trust invited nominees from the trust, each tenant of the Knox Regional Sports Park and Knox City Council to be part of that committee. The trust may also invite nominees from additional organisations where it considers they have significant interest in the operation and management of the Knox Regional Sports Park. That committee has now been established and its first meeting has already been held; that was in May this year. Meetings are open to community groups and other users of the Knox Regional Sports Park. No formal appointment process is required. No change in the powers or ongoing purpose of the committees will occur. In fact these advisory committees will operate more efficiently and more effectively once these reforms take place.

I can advise the house that this change is supported by both trusts and the current advisory committees. Consultation occurred with all advisory committee members in December 2023 and no objections were raised. Under current legislation the probity checks and paperwork required are onerous for various stakeholder organisations, of course including volunteers. Some nominees have declined to be formally appointed due to the onerous nature of the appointment process. Committees will continue with more flexibility under ministerial direction relevant to each act. The minister will no longer be responsible for formally appointing members to each advisory committee.

All relevant entities will be invited and encouraged to participate in advisory committees. Terms of reference will follow the model used to establish the recent advisory committee that I have just indicated – that is, the Knox Regional Sports Park committee. The committees created under ministerial direction will enable participating bodies to be more flexible about who attends meetings, ensuring that entities can easily substitute attendees, resulting in continuity of participation and representation.

Consultation occurred with the following stakeholders: Kardinia Park Stadium Trust, City of Greater Geelong, Sports House tenants, Geelong Football Club, St Mary's Sporting Club, Kardinia senior citizens club, Geelong netball league, Geelong Football Umpires League, Leisure Networks, Barwon Sports Academy, Geelong Cricket Club, State Netball Hockey Centre, State Sport Centres Trust, City of Melbourne, Netball Victoria, Hockey Victoria, Zoos Victoria, Royal Park Protection Group and Urban Camp. I also should indicate that I am aware that the opposition has not opposed this bill in the lower house. The indication, from what I have heard today in this place, is that the opposition and the crossbenches will also not oppose this bill.

In respect to criticism of membership levels, the current membership provisions of the Melbourne Cricket Ground Act 2009 require the Melbourne Cricket Ground Trust to consist of a chairperson and not less than six and not more than eight members. Increasing the maximum membership by one member to nine will enable greater diversity and experience on the board to strengthen the management of this important state sporting asset. It is not required that all nine positions be filled.

The State Sport Centres Act 1994 currently provides that the State Sport Centres Trust is to consist of not less than five and not more than seven part-time members. The trust has recently assumed responsibility for a new facility at Knox Regional Sports Park and now manages four venues. The demands of the expanded infrastructure portfolio have created significant additional work for the trust, and the bill increases the maximum number of part-time members of the trust from seven to 11. It is not required that all 11 positions be filled. This change will see more effective operations of the trust to deliver better outcomes of these important facilities.

Temporary vacancies on trusts can arise with little notice. Currently across various sporting trusts there are no provisions to permit the appointment of acting members or an acting chairperson. This bill will ensure consistency across all government sporting trusts so that acting members and chairpersons can be appointed when required. This reflects other proposals in the bill designed to improve consistency across trust appointments and streamline the practical administration of the trusts. Therefore this amendment will reduce administrative burden and support flexible and responsive governance.

The current legislation provides that any lease granted by the Kardinia Park Stadium Trust, the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust and the State Sport Centres Trust over land on a number of trust sites must be approved by the minister. While it is important that the minister controls long-term leasing arrangements over major state assets, there is no compelling reason to require the minister to approve minor leases over small areas – for example, short-term leases over a small number of desks. A major lease is for a term of 21 years or more or, for example, a lease over the whole of Kardinia Park Stadium Trust land. The Geelong Football Club's agreement in relation to the use of Kardinia Park stadium is an example of a major lease, and major leases will continue to be subject to appropriate ministerial scrutiny. An example of a minor lease is the lease of a room within a facility to a sporting club for the purposes of administration. Such a minor arrangement certainly would not inherently require close involvement of a minister. The amendment will give the trust flexibility and certainty and will reduce administrative burden.

The minister will have absolute control over whether to make a delegation and the scope of any delegation to approve a lease which may be narrower than the delegation power. Despite making a delegation, the minister may choose to exercise statutory approval power at any time with respect to any lease. The final settings for lease delegations will be determined in consultation with the

Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions. These settings have not been embedded in their legislation to ensure that they can be reviewed regularly and adjusted as appropriate.

Event management declarations enable the Kardinia Park Stadium Trust to take control from the Geelong city council over the majority of Kardinia Park for the purposes of holding events and staging necessary equipment and infrastructure. The events which are commonly subject to an event management declaration at Kardinia Park or floodlight determination at the MCG include AFL and AFLW matches, Big Bash League cricket matches and A-League soccer matches. Currently event management declarations are made by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of a minister. During the COVID pandemic many organisers of these events moved to floating schedules, in which the dates of matches were only released a few days or weeks before they were to occur. Major sporting organisations have retained some forms of flexible scheduling. This makes it difficult to have declarations and determinations made in time and frustrates the objectives of the legislation in supporting major events at these stadiums. Enabling the minister to make event management declarations at Kardinia Park and the secretary to make floodlight determinations at the MCG will provide greater flexibility and allow these orders to be made more quickly when events are announced.

The other thing that I want to mention is resignations. Currently members across a number of trusts are required to resign by written notification to the Governor in Council and resignations will take effect only when considered at an executive council meeting. This has presented difficulties for members whose resignations needed to take effect on the day they were made, for example, when a member was appointed to become a court judge. Reforming this requirement so it will be a direct resignation to the minister is consistent with other sport legislation and adequate to give effect to the members intentions. It will also reduce the administrative burden on Governor in Council.

At the beginning of my contribution I also mentioned the Anzac Day amendment. That is in relation to changing ‘miles’ to ‘kilometres’ – it is, again, a very minor amendment to what is before us today – and of course there is also an update to include gender-neutral language. It is important for the legislation to be written in an inclusive and accurate way. In closing, can I say that this bill will reduce, we believe, the administrative red tape for various sporting trusts and improve consistency of language and governance. We understand that this bill will not be opposed by those opposite. I believe that I have covered off most, if not all, of the questions or issues that have been raised in this debate, but I am happy to entertain further discussion in committee if required.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Committed.

Committee

Clause 1 (16:16)

David DAVIS: Can I begin by thanking the minister for her summing-up just a moment ago. I appreciate the fact that she did address a number of the issues that we had raised, which are around the abolition of these advisory committees. With respect to those committees, in clauses 1(b)(ii) and 1(f)(i) – the Kardinia Park advisory committee and the State Netball and Hockey Centre advisory committee – they are dealt with in the purposes clause. I understand the points that the minister has made that it may be more flexible and easier in terms of administrative load for both the government and the authorities and indeed some of the members of the advisory committees.

My concern in the longer run is that once these committees are abolished – and I am not impugning the government’s motives here; I can see that there can be some administrative ease that can result – not necessarily this minister but for a future minister in one or two or three ministers’ time there will be no legislative requirement. How is it that the government can guarantee that there will be advisory committees constituted by a future minister?

Gayle TIERNEY: In respect to that question, there are a couple of answers. First of all, in terms of some of the things that I have put on the record, it provides people with a clear understanding of the intent of the legislation. The second thing is that in terms of whoever the minister might be when a situation that Mr Davis has indicated may occur, the minister has a number of things that he or she may do. One would be a ministerial directive, another would be a ministerial statement of expectations. But can I say that it is our understanding that those that have been consulted, those on the ground that have been party to a range of advisory groups over a period of time, have indicated their support for this. They believe that what is being proposed is an advance on where things are at, and they believe that the work of the advisory groups can be added to by not having so many hurdles that are constantly preventing or are stagnating the operation of the advisory groups.

David DAVIS: I thank the minister for her response. Certainly Sam Groth, our shadow in this area, has consulted widely on this, and it is true that many of those who are currently on the committees are not unsupportive of a simpler system. My concern is – perhaps this is just a comment at this point rather than anything further – that in the longer haul, whatever the intentions of the current minister, there will be no legislated requirement to ensure that these advisory committees exist and are established. I just make that by way of comment. My second point is that, as I understand it, there is – and the information comes from recent bills in this chamber, one of which was amended, which saw the abolition of an advisory committee – in fact a whole-of-government consultancy report that recommends the abolition of advisory committees with legislative bases. You are not aware of that?

Gayle TIERNEY: All I am concerned about this afternoon is this piece of legislation. It is my information from the discussions that have been held by government with various groups that are involved in the different sporting facilities that this is a way of making advice to government more workable than what the current situation allows.

David DAVIS: My question then is very simply to the minister: does such a consultancy report exist which applies across the whole of government, including in the sport portfolio?

Gayle TIERNEY: My role this afternoon is dealing with this piece of legislation and dealing with questions arising from the advisory committee and the consultations that have gone on that have brought this matter to the chamber this afternoon. All I can say is that I am aware of the discussions that have led to this piece of legislation. I am not in a position to make comment on other discussions that may or may not have occurred within government.

David DAVIS: Is there such a consultancy report that makes commentary about advisory committees across government, including in the sport portfolio?

Gayle TIERNEY: I am personally not aware of it.

David DAVIS: I thank the minister. I accept that she is not personally aware of it. She may thereby be able to take that on notice and to establish whether there is such a consultancy report that makes recommendations about the removal of advisory committees with legislative underpinning across government, including in sport.

Gayle TIERNEY: In some ways I understand your intent, Mr Davis, but I am not going to go off and create some extra work or extra investigations beyond what is before us today. As I said, I was not aware of said piece of work. I am not going to deal with what in my view potentially is a hypothetical.

David DAVIS: I will note what the minister said, but I will place on the record that the information that has been provided to the opposition indicates that there is such a consultancy report recommending the removal of advisory committees across a wide front in government, including sport, and that where there is legislative underpinning those committees should be removed and that ad hoc committees established by ministers should replace them. I am just going to leave it at that and note that this is a broader piece of work, but it does include the sport portfolio, as I am informed.

Gayle TIERNEY: Again, the government is dealing with the legislation that is before the house this afternoon, which has been brought to this house on the basis that all those involved are pretty well convinced that this is going to make advice to government more workable, more flexible and more directive. I understand what Mr Davis is trying to do, and all I am concerned about is making sure that this piece of legislation is adopted by the Council and that the true intent, as opposed to potential conspiracy theories, of what is before us today is to, as I say, make advice to government a lot more accessible. It cuts out the red tape and makes it more workable.

Clause agreed to; clauses 2 to 58 agreed to.

Reported to house without amendment.

Gayle TIERNEY (Western Victoria – Minister for Skills and TAFE, Minister for Regional Development) (16:28): I move:

That the report be now adopted.

Motion agreed to.

Report adopted.

Third reading

Gayle TIERNEY (Western Victoria – Minister for Skills and TAFE, Minister for Regional Development) (16:28): I move:

That the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Michael Galea): Pursuant to standing order 14.28, the bill will be returned to the Assembly with a message informing them that the Council have agreed to the bill without amendment.

Youth Justice Bill 2024

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Harriet Shing:

That the bill be now read a second time.

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (16:29): I am pleased to rise to make a contribution to the Youth Justice Bill 2024. This is a very large bill; it would be correct to say that it is a doorstopper. It is a bill that has been a long time coming, but it is here now, and I will make some comments about this. The government has shifted and changed its position repeatedly, and I do not think that the government's approach on a lot of this has been satisfactory.

The background to some of this bill – and I will step through aspects of it in a minute – is the government's longstanding promise to lift the age of criminal responsibility for young people, from 10 to 14. This was a promise made by the current Premier and the former Premier and others within the government. The government is now fleeing from that commitment. It does not want to lift the age to 14. It now is saying it will only lift the age to 12. I say that Labor, with its strong ideological position, its strong position against victims' rights and its strong position against clear law and order policies, would be a very serious risk if it were returned at the next election – that it would follow through on its earlier solemn commitment to lift the age of criminal responsibility to 14. I think what we have seen today for Victorians is a short reprieve. I think what we have seen is a backdown by the government, a backdown of monumental proportion by the Premier, and a pausing of Labor's agenda, which will be resumed if they are elected in 2026.

What I think is also important here is to understand that we do have a significant surge in youth-related crime. There are many reasons for that, and that is not an easy discussion. But the truth of the matter is youth-related crime, and serious crime, has been on the rise. People have been injured and hurt. I perhaps put this in the context of my electorate and local areas within my electorate. We held a community forum in Mount Waverley recently. We had about 60 people there, community people – it was quite a successful forum – after brochures had been distributed and emails and so forth sent out and Facebook posts. There were a number of people who did not come who wrote in and made commentary on a wide variety of matters or who filled in surveys to give their views on a number of issues. Then there were others who did attend and came along to have their say.

A member interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Michael Galea): I can advise that the amendments are still being processed and are not ready for circulation.

David DAVIS: If I perhaps bring the house into the confidence of the discussion with the clerks and the Acting President: I had understood that the amendments would be able to be circulated. The Greens are the same. But that is not the case, as I understand it. The amendments will be a little longer, and I give my apology to the house. I know that Brad Battin, our Shadow Minister for Youth Justice, had done quite a lot of work on these amendments, and there are many hundreds of them, so I understand the complexity of that. He had put those to the parliamentary counsel and the clerks a little earlier. I am just recording that they are not ready. I gave a different commitment to the Government Whip just earlier, so if I am unable to fulfil that commitment, Government Whip, I am remorseful.

As I was saying, one of the things that became very clear to me at the series of forums that we have had – beginning with Mount Waverley and another one recently in the Glen Iris and Ashburton area – is that there is a real community fear and a real community concern about youth crime and rising violent youth crime. This is not the sort of concern that could be pointed at publicity or otherwise. It is founded on actual individual, personal experience. I had people come along to the forum and indicate that areas of Mount Waverley that they had moved into – up to 50 years go, some of them – which had been relatively safe had become much more violent and much more threatening. There has been a series of home invasions – this is suburban Mount Waverley – and a number of older people who have been in the area from early days are very, very worried about what is now occurring. Either they have had individual incidents of home invasions in their own home or they have had immediate or close-by neighbours have those sorts of impacts.

In a similar way, at the forum that we recently conducted in the Ashburton and Glen Iris area a significant number of people raised this issue either informally around the discussion or during the forum itself or by email or survey in and around the forum. I am not reverting, as it were, to formal police statistics here, although Brad Battin, our shadow, has made it very clear that the recent statistics make it clear that in fact there has been a significant surge in violent youth crime. Those local examples are different from formal statistics – they are significant anecdotal examples, not on a narrow front but on quite a wide front of cases where youth-based violent crime is increasing and increasing in areas where it has not traditionally been. My colleague in Brighton Mr Newbury has talked about this at length. Other areas of Southern Metro have also faced this particular problem.

There is a youth crime crisis. This is of the government's own making. I have to say that the decision just a few years ago to weaken bail laws has been a part of this problem. It was entirely an initiative of the state government itself to remove the penalty for those who commit an offence whilst on bail. This is just an example of this government's lax and weak approach – an approach that puts the community at risk by sending a signal that it is okay to undertake violent crime, to be bailed and then whilst the bail is in operation to go out and commit a further series of crimes, including violent crimes. I think these are important bits of history that need to be put on the record.

The notable elements of the bill relate to the age of criminal responsibility. The age must be raised to 12 no later than 30 September 2025. Any delays will require an amendment to the act. There are no exceptions to this for serious offences committed by young people aged 10 to 11. It should be noted that the diversionary elements proposed in chapter 4 do not apply to young people under the age of 12.

The government is seeking to codify *doli incapax*, which is a longstanding, long-established legal principle held by the courts. It is a common-law principle. This bill seeks to codify this principle, so that protection is there. The essence of the *doli incapax*, as I understand it – I am not a lawyer, but I have spoken to a number of barristers about this matter – is that it basically says that children who do not have the capacity to understand what they are doing will not be held responsible. But the government's approach here to lift the age of responsibility, notwithstanding the *doli incapax*, begs the question: if a child at age 11, for example, is able to understand what is going on and does have the mental capacity, they would not be protected by *doli incapax*, but they would have the *mens rea* to actually make the decisions for which, in my view and the opposition's view, they should be held responsible. The *doli incapax* actually protects those whose mental capacity is not sufficient to hold them responsible, but for those where it is possible to show that they are responsible it will be a case that they could be held responsible. The government's bill here will remove that point.

It does have some specific matters with respect to Aboriginal children and young persons, and there are a set of questions around that. The 'Police power to take into care and control and transport a child aged 10 or 11 years old', chapter 3, says such force as is reasonably necessary can be permissible to be used by police when transporting a child aged 10 or 11 into care, not to arrest or custody. Further, the Chief Commissioner of Police must keep records of every situation in which a child has been transported.

There is another part, chapter 4, which deals with diverting children away from the justice system. It says participation in caution, warning and diversion conferences proposed in this bill can be refused by a young person. Should a young person refuse all such diversion options, as detailed in clause 92, it seems unlikely that a criminal proceeding would be commenced. There is a presumption against imposing sentences of detention, and that is part 7.13, division 1. Proposed clause 324 will decree that a child must not be sentenced to any form of custody unless it is a category A or category B serious youth offence or any other offence against a person that the court considers to be serious and violent and the court declares the person is a serious risk to the community. There are a number of serious hurdles there.

'Sentencing generally' at part 7.6 – and I note clause 240 says whereas this was previously a menu of options available to the court, there is proposed to be a clear hierarchy of options. It is worth putting this hierarchy of options on the record because people will understand as you read it. It says:

- (1) In sentencing a child for an indictable offence or a summary offence, the Children's Court may –
 - (a) dismiss the charge without a formal warning ... or
 - (b) if satisfied that paragraph (a) is inappropriate in the circumstances, dismiss the charge with a formal warning ... or
 - (c) if that paragraph (b) is inappropriate in the circumstances, impose a fine or make a good behaviour order; or
 - (d) if satisfied that paragraph (c) is inappropriate in the circumstances, make a community service order; or
 - (e) if satisfied that paragraph (d) is inappropriate in the circumstances, make a probation order; or
 - (f) if satisfied that paragraph (e) is inappropriate in the circumstances, make a youth supervision and support order; or
 - (g) if satisfied that paragraph (f) is inappropriate in the circumstances, make a youth control order; or
 - (h) if satisfied that paragraph (g) is inappropriate in the circumstances, make a youth justice custodial order.

Eight layers indeed to get to that position where a youth justice custodial order might be made.

Chapter 10 deals with youth justice custody, and youth justice custody is generally broken down by age, status, remand versus custodial sentence and sex. However, the department is not obligated to apply the sex-based separation presumption in the case of a child or young person whose gender identity is not the same as their sex if satisfied on reasonable grounds it is appropriate to do so. That is clause 465.

Chapter 12 deals with youth parole. The Youth Parole Board will be given instructions not to consider information given by people on the proposed youth justice victims register when assessing a parole application or a child's right to be on parole. That is clause 622. Information given is only to be considered in the conditions placed on the young person's parole.

Part 12.4 deals with the youth justice victims register. The Youth Parole Board will be given instructions not to consider information given by people on the register when assessing a parole application or a child's right to apply for parole.

Chapter 16 talks about system planning, performance, collaboration and accountability, and the bill talks about the obligation of the department to construct and publish an overall youth justice plan. However, it is silent on the date by which the plan should be committed. We have seen other plans in government just not eventuate. Classically, the transport plan of this government, which was mandated by the Transport Integration Act in about 2009 or 2010 – I could be wrong by a year – has never been promulgated and has never appeared. The closest was in the Baillieu period of government. But this government has not produced such a plan, and the auditors carefully looked at that and said, 'Actually there is no such plan.' They said there are a whole heap of ramshackle bits and pieces but they do not add up to an overall plan. I am giving that by way of an example of another area of government that says a plan is mandated but has not actually been delivered. A question for the minister in committee on a different day, I think Thursday being the likely day, will be about how that plan would actually be mandated, how we would see that it is coming and when it might come – 2050?

Transitional provisions and consequential amendments relating to minimum age of criminal responsibility are in chapter 19. They lay out that any criminal offence committed by a 10- to 11-year-old person before the commencement date is rendered null and void. That means, no, they are just not going to be charged. That means police cannot lay charges even if the investigation has commenced. Court proceedings must not be started. If they have been started, they must cease immediately. Anyone serving a sentence for such an offence is immediately released unconditionally from custody, and any court orders such as community service or community supervision made are immediately set aside and permanently closed. Mr Battin notes that during the departmental briefing the Department of Justice and Community Safety noted that this was consistent with the changes made when the Northern Territory increased the age of criminal responsibility.

Chapter 22 talks about a trial of monitoring of children on bail in certain circumstances. Under the trial, courts will be able to order young people who have been charged with a serious offence to be subject to electronic monitoring as part of their bail conditions. If noncompliance is detected, such as breaching curfew, the monitoring will alert authorities and police and they will be able to file for bail to be revoked. My level of confidence here is low, given the way the bail system has worked in the more recent period in any event. The trial will include dedicated youth justice staff who will advise the court about suitability and closely monitor the bail compliance and progress. Court-based youth justice staff will deal with breaches.

The bill lays out the two-year trial. The government has stated it will be limited to 50 people only. There is nothing in the bill that requires it to be limited to 50 people, although the budget allocation of \$32 million over two years is expressed to cover only 50 people. On questioning, the Attorney-General's office said the secretary would work with the courts to manage the number of people subject to monitoring. This suggests the government will direct or at least influence the courts as to which bail conditions will or will not be available at different times. I think that that is a concern from the perspective of the independence of the judiciary. Legislated bail options such as electronic monitoring,

open to a bail decision maker, should not be withdrawn at the direction of a bureaucrat based on budgetary or other similar considerations. We certainly do not oppose trials of electronic monitoring. We see that that is a relevant option and a relevant part of the choices that can be put in place.

If I start to list out a number of the areas of concern, we are concerned with raising the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12. I have already explained the fact that the legal principle of *doli incapax* already protects children aged between 10 and 14 because it presumes that they will not have the mental capacity. But if they are shown to have mental capacity and are able to have the *mens rea*, they can at that point be held responsible.

There is no mention in the bill about strengthened measures to target young people before they commit a crime – or what used to be a crime. All the initiatives in this bill are aimed squarely at people who have committed an offence. In the case of 10- and 11-year-olds that is what would have been an offence. But the lack of prevention as a focus in the bill is a further concern.

Part 19.1 is an attempt to rewrite the law retrospectively, with such serious potential adverse impacts that I think many would be concerned. The bill requires a child's consent for all interventions, which empowers the child to avoid consequences for their action. Effectively, a child can take a position where they will not comply with any process – like a caution, warning or group conference – under this bill and little, if anything, can be done about that. No punishment can be applied, regardless of the child's action.

The bill focuses heavily on the concept of restorative justice. Not only does the concept have a questionable ability to influence crime reduction, but it is also extremely cumbersome. It would be costly to initiate its recommended functions in this bill, requiring a department to administer this part alone for questionable outcome benefits.

The effect of chapter 3 is that police have been placed in a welfare responder role. If there is no criminal act committed by a child, then it is not appropriate for the police to be in a position to be the primary responder. That role should be carried out by appropriate agencies that emphasise the best interests and wellbeing of children, one would have thought.

The proposed youth justice victims register – and the functionality that it is proposed to have in clause 659 – falls well short of the adult victims register in terms of information given, notice periods and the ability to make or influence submissions.

There are a set of issues about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children taken into care and control; that is clause 72. Clause 25 of the bill obliges the secretary to seek to develop strategic partnerships with Aboriginal communities by:

enabling the progressive transfer of authority, resources and responsibilities to an Aboriginal-controlled justice system in consultation with representatives of the Aboriginal community on justice-related issues and Aboriginal communities ...

An 'Aboriginal-controlled justice system' has not been defined. This appears to be a phrase adopted from the Yoorrook Justice Commission, and it is at odds with the principle that all Victorians are equal before the law. It is also relevant that there has been no treaty proposal to put to Parliament or the Victorian people.

There is concern across a wide front. There is concern from Police Association Victoria. They are against raising the age of criminal responsibility because of the current youth crime crisis and the fact that current early identification and diversion services to target young people before they commit a crime are totally and wholly insufficient. The bill does not add any programs here. They are also concerned about the new transport powers which have been placed upon them when dealing with 10- and 11-year-olds who have theoretically not actually committed a crime. There is a whole range of different material I could continue with. There will be an opportunity to explore some of this in the committee stage of the bill, but I think it is very important to actually note that we do have a criminal

crisis with young people. We do have families and individuals being hurt and suffering very severely because of what is occurring in our community.

I outlined at the start a number of the issues that are there for local communities within my electorate. This is not nebulous. It is not the case that there is doubt about this. There is a crime crisis that involves young people. Many in the community are afraid. Many in the community have been hurt. This has occurred wholly because the state government has weakened the law, and even the changes that are proposed in this bill will not restore the law to what it was a number of years ago. It will not be stronger than it was previously. The law will still be weaker, and the law will still be wholly such that that these young offenders are in fact not fully held to account.

In those circumstances we register our concern, our opposition, and indicate that in the committee stage we will ask a series of questions. We will also move amendments. I look forward to the clerks getting those amendments into order and developing a schedule that will test our amendments along with the amendments of the Greens and others, and as I understand it, there may well be house amendments as well. It is a bill that the community is entitled to be very suspicious of because of the government's manifest failure over recent years.

I became very aware of some of these issues when I was called by the Chinese consulate just a number of years ago to come to a house in Ormond where some young Chinese students, young boys studying here – lovely kids – had suffered a home invasion. This was a Sunday morning I was around there. The consul was there. Others senior in the Chinese community were there, and the mother of one of the boys – a Shanghai woman – had flown over in the period. The actual home invasion had occurred on the Saturday morning, and I was there on the Sunday morning. The mother had flown over clearly very distraught, and I am not going to go into the detail of what I heard but suffice to say that a number of violent young men with long criminal histories, out on bail, had conducted this home invasion on a Saturday morning. They had broken glass and got into the house. They had taken vehicles. They had taken computers and phones – electronic goods of various types. And some of the threats that were delivered to the young boys, students at Victorian universities, were – I am looking for the word here. ‘Bloodcurdling’ is the only thing I can really say.

Evan Mulholland interjected.

David DAVIS: No. I cannot circulate my amendments because they are not prepared as yet, as I am informed.

But in that sense I am drawing further examples for the chamber and the community to understand why the opposition is concerned about the government's response here. The government has been weak. They have been untruthful. They have broken their commitments. And as that has all occurred – weakening of the law – more violent crime has occurred.

Katherine COPSEY (Southern Metropolitan) (16:59): I rise to speak on the Youth Justice Bill 2024, which represents a significant piece of legislation and progresses a child- and adolescent-focused youth justice framework. While the bill advances some reforms that stakeholders have been calling for for decades, the Greens believe that there are a number of improvements that can be made to ensure that this opportunity to reform youth justice is done as fulsomely as possible. I will also have more to say in the committee stage about changes to the bill in the form of what I believe we will see to be house amendments that have been dropped on us this morning, literally at the eleventh hour.

With regard to the current version of the bill, without house amendments, I would like to start by acknowledging the government's work on this bill, which has been comprehensive, led by the Minister for Youth Justice and the Attorney-General. It has taken the lead from the sector and wider community in their longstanding and resonant calls for justice reforms that will serve young people in our justice system. In particular I want to recognise the substantial advocacy work done by the Aboriginal Justice Caucus and legal stakeholder groups such as the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, the Human

Rights Law Centre, the Smart Justice for Young People coalition, WEstjustice, Victoria Legal Aid and the Federation of Community Legal Centres, to name just a few.

The bill has positive steps in that it raises the age of criminal responsibility to 12 years. It is a step forward in that there is a clear presumption of *doli incapax* for 12- and 13-year-olds that will be enshrined in legislation. This is the legal presumption which reflects the reality that children at this stage are still developing and that their mental and emotional capacity is not yet fully formed. Importantly, the bill contains a key section of guiding youth justice principles, including principles and matters specific to Aboriginal children and young persons, as well as cultural support plans for Aboriginal children and young persons. And at long last there is an important legislative prohibition on solitary confinement in youth detention, which is a goal that has been very long and hard fought for. My Greens colleague Dr Tim Read introduced very similar provisions in the other place during the last term of the Parliament, and in fact the Greens Sue Pennicuik MLC, a former representative for Southern Metropolitan, also included a prohibition on solitary confinement when she introduced her corrections amendment bill in 2012, so it is great to see that provision included in the bill.

The Greens also will have a number of amendments to the bill. I am in a similar position to Mr Davis in that those are not presently ready for circulation, and I do apologise to the chamber. We have been working diligently, and I will speak briefly and broadly to the points that those amendments will cover. I did want to take the opportunity to thank the drafters and the clerks for their work in supporting the work of the representatives in this place. I know that they are all working overtime and that a significant amount of work has gone into preparing the bill for this stage, and we thank you in advance for all your work to support the chamber to have this debate and progress it through to committee. Your work is much appreciated by all members here.

The Greens amendments will reflect a commitment to reforming youth justice in a way that respects the dignity and rights of every child while aiming to reduce the risk of reoffending and to improve rehabilitation outcomes. We know that we need to keep young children out of the criminal justice system as this is often the last chance we have to stop them getting pulled into patterns of reoffending. I will now explain why our amendments across a number of areas propose important and necessary changes to the bill.

The first area is the minimum age of criminal responsibility. Our first set of amendments will set the minimum age of criminal responsibility at 14 rather than what the bill proposes, which is 12. This change aligns with international standards and evidence that children under 14 are developmentally incapable of fully understanding the consequences of their actions. In that light it is very, very disappointing to see the backflip from the government this morning on their previously announced plans to support a raise in the age to 14 by 2027. It is absolutely contrary to the longstanding advocacy by stakeholders in this space, it is contrary to the evidence, and the Greens will be standing by that community until we see that change recognised. This bill, however, raises the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 12. Consistent with the recommendation of the Yoorrook Justice Commission, we strongly recommend that it raise the minimum age to 14 immediately and without exception. Failing to do so will see many more 12- and 13-year-olds criminalised, dragged through the system and continue to come into contact with the criminal justice system in the coming years.

Australia has one of the lowest ages of criminal responsibility in the world. The global average is 14 years old, and we are by far in the bottom third globally. Most of our fellow OECD country members have raised the age to 14, 15 or 16 already. We have been repeatedly criticised by the United Nations, most recently by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, for failure to reform the current minimum age. We also know that Aboriginal children account for almost 65 per cent of young people behind bars around Australia, and it is more than time that we changed that. Victoria has a very important role to play in that national context as well. These kids face a system which is already geared against them, and particularly for First Nations children, which has decades of racism and bias woven into the fabric of the criminal justice system. The age of criminal responsibility being set as low as it is creates a cycle of imprisonment and reoffending among

Indigenous children, who are already disproportionately over-represented in the criminal justice system and contact with it.

Our second set of amendments will be around youth bail. Our amendments to youth bail are aimed at ensuring fairness and protecting the rights of young people. The proposal will be to remove reverse onus provisions and establish a presumption in favour of bail. These provisions, which were originally part of the Bail Amendment Bill 2023 and drafted by the government, are a crucial step for ensuring that young people are not unfairly denied bail. The second amendment that we will be putting to the house is regarding removal of the trial provisions for electronic monitoring. There is a good evidence base to show that such measures can be criminogenic and counterproductive to rehabilitation. We need to be supporting young people in this state, not shackling them and stigmatising them.

Moving on to the third-top issue that our amendments will address, we will be seeking to prohibit harmful practices within youth detention and youth justice centres. The amendments will seek to address several harmful practices currently observed in youth detention facilities. The Greens will propose prohibiting the use of isolation unless there is an immediate and serious risk and ensuring that kids that are subject to isolation still receive meaningful human contact. We will call for the legislative elimination of spit hoods in youth justice, as they are both degrading and unnecessary. We will advocate for increased transparency and accountability through public reporting on isolation incidents and the number of unclothed searches. We also believe in enhancing the minimum daily recreation exercise time to at least 2 hours, ensuring better physical and mental health for youth in detention.

The fourth set of amendments we will be looking to move propose establishing a minimum age of detention, at 16. Children under 16 should never be sentenced to detention, regardless of the nature of their offence. This is in line with international human rights standards, which emphasise the need for alternative measures and rehabilitation rather than punitive detention for children. In 2019 the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that all countries increase the minimum age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years of age, and the strong guidance and all medical guidance says that no child under 16 should be in detention. Additionally, children aged 16 and older should not be transferred to adult prisons, which are both harmful and counterproductive, and we will have an amendment that speaks to that change as well to the bill.

In relation to the new police powers proposed under the bill, the Greens oppose expanded police powers in relation to 10- and 11-year-olds, and we advocate for increased oversight should those powers as part of the bill come to fruition. We will have an amendment which addresses the switching on of police body-worn cameras, which should be mandatory during encounters with children aged 10 and 11 where police are exercising the powers under chapter 3. We will also propose removing excessive police powers related to searches, use of force and detention at police stations. We believe it is essential that any use of force and those powers is documented, and we will be seeking rigorous public reporting on those practices and the use of those powers.

The final area we will have amendments on is diversion – diverting children from the criminal legal system. The Greens do welcome this bill's focus on diversion pathways and alternatives to jail, such as warnings, cautions and group conferences, including family conferences. We think there could be an even stronger focus on diversion. Children should have the right to legal advice before consenting to diversion, and prosecution consent should not be a barrier to adjourn diversion. Furthermore, we recommend making it clear that discretion is not available for early diversion. When police are exercising those powers, they must choose the least restrictive pathway available for the child at that time. We believe that there should be comprehensive data collection on the warnings, cautions and prosecutions under this new framework.

In conclusion, the Greens amendments represent a commitment to a justice system that is fair, compassionate and effective in rehabilitating young people. They have been strongly informed by advocacy that has been quite united from the sector, including First Nations, legal and human rights bodies and those organisations that deal specifically with young people at risk of contact with our

criminal justice system. By adopting these changes we can ensure that our youth justice system truly serves the best interests of our children and our community and that it promotes their rehabilitation, upholds their human rights and crucially keeps children and the community safer. There will be more to say on this bill, I am sure, over the coming days, so I will leave my comments there and speak further during committee.

Jacinta ERMACORA (Western Victoria) (17:11): I am very pleased to speak on the Youth Justice Bill 2024. This bill builds on the success of our government in the youth justice space. In fact incarceration of young people is so low that we have had to close Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre. It is clear to me that the Allan Labor government is on the right track.

Successful diversion focuses on the child, not punitive punishment. It is vital that we take the focus off age and on to the outcomes that are being achieved. This bill is about bringing outdated legislation in line with modern standards. It draws on what we know from the contemporary research and knowledge about psychosocial development of adolescents. In fact this bill formalises what we have learned from the current practice. It codifies what is already happening for children under 12, and it is being presented in this chamber when there are no children under 14 in prison at this time.

We must acknowledge in law that young people are still mentally and physically developing and that intervention, boundary setting and support have a greater impact than punitive measures or incarceration. This is where we also know that the development of young minds, hearts and souls varies from child to child. That is why it is so important to focus on the particular child and what will work for them. This bill takes the focus off age and on to the child and the effective role diversion plays in setting young people on the right path. The bill codifies the concept of *doli incapax*. It trials the use of electronic monitoring for some children who are eligible for bail. This bill does something no other state in Australia has done and that is raise the age of criminality from 10 to 12.

Legislation regarding youth crime has not been systematically reviewed since 1989 in this state. That is 35 years of science, development and modernising that is not currently reflected in current law. This bill raises the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12. It will provide police powers when a child under the minimum age of responsibility is apprehended. The bill ensures that there is robust oversight and accountability of the youth justice system. With this oversight it will promote community safety, prevent or reduce offending by children, support rehabilitation and positive development of children and young people, provide victims with appropriate opportunities to participate in youth justice processes and protect the rights of children and young people involved in the youth justice system.

The bill will establish a scheme that provides alternative processes to court proceedings when dealing with children who are alleged to have committed minor offences. These include youth warnings and youth cautions, early diversion group conferences and court-ordered diversion from criminal proceedings. The bill will also repeal certain provisions in the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 and re-enact those inside this bill. The bill will amend the Bail Act 1977 to provide for a trial scheme under which, under certain circumstances, certain courts may grant bail to a child subject to conditions that provide for electronic monitoring of the child. The bill also makes consequential amendments to other acts.

Our youth justice legislation in Victoria, as it stands now, is out of date. It is based on old concepts and outdated preconceptions of youth crime and adolescent developmental theory. Rather than focusing on only defining criminality by age, this bill pivots to defining criminality through an understanding of the child. Any child under 14 years of age is subject to the legal principle of *doli incapax*. Until now this principle has not been codified in law. *Doli incapax* will now require proof beyond reasonable doubt that the child knew what they were doing was very morally wrong. It also introduces a presumption against custody under the age of 14, so there are a number of tools that facilitate the diversionary approach. This is not to say that children are not capable of committing crime. This is about bringing in alternatives to the punitive measures we currently have – in fact

codifying in law the very strategies that have reduced youth incarceration in this state. The new laws will focus on early intervention and diversion, particularly for first-time and low offending, but of course ensuring that there are still stronger consequences to address those who engage in serious, high-risk or repeat offending. Children and young people who are coming into contact with the youth justice system need a different response to that of an adult. We must recognise a child's ability to rehabilitate with positive supports and firm boundaries. Formalising much-needed supports and rehabilitation responds to the causal factors of youth crime. We know we will continue to see a reduction in children on that trajectory of lifelong criminal behaviour.

This bill has come about from the Armytage–Ogloff review, conducted in 2017. It identified the need for a standalone act separate from the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005. It went on to identify the need to expand the use of restorative justice programs that meet the needs of the victim and the offender and identified the need for the early interventions that have been previously mentioned. With this bill, we are addressing key areas identified within the reviews conducted. This bill enshrines, as I said, the notion of restorative justice, including the perspective of the victim, into the justice process. We are approaching youth justice with a victim-centric approach where victims may participate in the restorative justice process right from the pre-charge phase to the parole phase. The bill establishes a victims register for youth parole, where a victim must be notified ahead of a child being considered for parole. Registered victims may also provide information to the parole board, which may be taken into account when the board imposes parole conditions.

The bill maximises the opportunities for diversion through the introduction of a comprehensive pre-charge diversion process, and this bill increases transparency of decision-making in the diversion process and diverts more children before they enter the court system. Pre-plea diversion is shown to be highly effective, with more than 9000 diversions successfully completed since its commencement in 2017. In 2022–23, 98 per cent of diversions were completed successfully. This is what I mean when I say that this government is already practising many of the principles and mechanisms that are being introduced in this bill.

Along with these immensely positive diversionary processes, this bill introduces a trial for electronic monitoring of a child on bail in certain circumstances. This trial is based around addressing growing concerns for a small group of young people who are reoffending whilst on bail. The trial will enable monitoring that ensures a child is complying with a curfew, shows that they have entered a location or area where they are prohibited from entering and provides after-the-fact evidence of a person being in a place or location. For example, it shows if that child was or was not near the location where an offence occurred.

There is in some regard a protective element to this trial, and I think it will be very interesting to see what results emerge from this trial. There are some elements – not all – of the use of the electronic monitoring that are quite similar to the strategies that parents of teenagers use themselves at home. There is nothing like boundary setting to make a child feel secure, and as much as the electronic monitoring is different, it will have some elemental similarity to that. It is important to remember, however, that electronic monitoring does not replace support and intensive monitoring while a child is on bail. In conjunction with electronic monitoring, further supports will be implemented, including social support, employment programs, cultural support and other initiatives that address underlying causes of offending.

The introduction of the electronic monitoring trial does not mean that high-risk youth offenders will be released into the community. The unacceptable risk test for bail still applies, meaning that if the young person poses an unacceptable risk to the safety or welfare of another person, then they will not be granted bail. This trial will assist in gathering data on what role the electronic monitoring system can play in the ongoing management of young people, and I will be very interested to know what the results are at its completion.

This bill is about modernising an outdated piece of legislation, bringing legislation up to date with already trialled evidence-based tools – rather than emotional or ill-founded punishments that make us feel better but damage the potential for successful diversion for what is a very small proportion of our state’s young people. This bill, in closing, reflects the Labor way: a focus on the child, with clear supports combined with strong boundaries. The data is in, which is why we can all be confident that these groundbreaking reforms can be embraced confidently by this chamber. I commend the bill.

Evan MULHOLLAND (Northern Metropolitan) (17:24): I rise to speak on the Youth Justice Bill 2024. There can be no doubt that under Labor crime is out of control. There can be no doubt really that the Premier Jacinta Allan has completely lost control of the agenda. When it comes to youth crime, when it comes to just about every policy issue in this place, we see last-minute amendments, last-minute policy on the run and last-minute chaos when it comes to the creation of laws and when it comes to dealing with the serious issues of crime and criminal justice in our community.

We have been talking about this for some time. We have been talking about the rising level of youth crime in our communities for some time, because unlike those opposite we actually spend time in our communities. We actually spend time listening to people in our communities about what they are seeing and what they are feeling. I have spent hours speaking with victims of crime – victims of home burglaries in places like Kalkallo and Mickleham – and putting their stories forward in the Parliament in a plea for the government to do something about them, to do something about the fact that those people committing offences are on bail because of the government’s weakening of our bail laws, and now they have tried to come and clean up the mess. They have come forward with a Youth Justice Bill that they are changing at the last minute – the printers are running hot; it is policy on the run – because they do not actually have a plan; they do not actually have a solution. This is a government that is a decade old and is out of time and out of ideas.

In March this year I brought the Bail Amendment (Indictable Offences Whilst on Bail) Bill 2024 into this chamber. It sought to reintroduce a tougher test for those who committed an indictable offence whilst on bail, because we saw too much in our community that since Labor’s weakening of our bail laws last year youth crime had spiked, and people were committing offences while on bail. But now we see, and it was widely panned at the time, that the government will introduce an offence of committing a serious crime while on bail only months after abolishing the offence of committing an indictable offence while on bail. According to an article in the *Guardian*:

The state’s attorney general, Jaclyn Symes said the former offence had been “unintentionally” capturing low-level offending, resulting in the overrepresentation of vulnerable cohorts ...

The Attorney-General said:

What we’re doing is recalibrating and introducing an offence of committing a schedule one or schedule two offence whilst on bail, to recognise that reoffending in that high-end offence range is something the community are concerned about.

You don’t think? You don’t think we have been yelling from the rooftops about this? You don’t think there has been case after case after case in the media? But the belligerence of this government has prevented them from doing anything about it. I even brought a bill back this year to this chamber at first opportunity for the government to acknowledge they got it wrong, to acknowledge that that part of the bill they got wrong, but they still proceeded to both mock the opposition about it and pretend there was not a youth crime crisis. I will just go through some, because I did look up some of the contributions that those opposite made at the time. Ms Ermacora, who spoke before, described my bill and Mr O’Brien’s bill. She said:

This Liberal bill is definitely back to the future.

The only one going back to the future and back to the drawing board and back to the watering well is the Labor Party, who is having to fix up their own mess at our suggestion, who is having to fix up their own mess because too many people are committing offences while out on bail. Three people have

died. You are having to clean up your own mess. We also had Ms Watt, who said that she had a list of questions about my bill, but said that she:

... stopped making a list of questions and reaffirmed in my mind why I am a member of the Allan Labor government. It truly is a government that listens ...

Really? But of course Mr Galea, as he usually does, took the most pot shots. He said:

The one thing that these reforms cannot be, above almost any other policy area, is half-baked – they cannot be rushed ...

We do not even have amendments that are ready, because the government has rushed this. The government announced this today, once the bill was already in the upper house. We have had our amendments for a while. It was once they were already in the upper house; the government did not introduce them in the lower house. They were not originally part of the government's own bill. He also said:

... that is what happens when you try and amend complex legislation on the fly ...

The government is trying to amend its own legislation once it is already in the upper house. 'We can't do policy on the run,' Mr Galea said. 'We can't do things on the fly,' Mr Galea said – the Labor government said. It is just rubbish. He also said in regard to my bill:

We have come to see so many times the sloppy and shoddy work that they put into drafting these bills.

...

And that is exactly what this bill is today – it is a bill in search of a media headline with as much substance as a headline.

That is why, as I say, those opposite cannot be taken seriously.

Ms Symes is literally reintroducing and cleaning up a change that she made last year, a change that we tried to reintroduce at the first opportunity. We gave you the opportunity to actually listen to your communities, as we listen to our communities, and to listen to victims of crime, who are yelling from the rooftops about all these people on bail that are recommitting offences. You do not think your changes last year had something to do with that? Of course they did. But this is what we come to see over and over and over again from this tired, decade-old Labor government. They are out of ideas; they are out of solutions. It is policy on the run. I agree with Mr Galea on that point: we should not have policy on the run. We have got government dramatically changing bills once they are already in the upper house, having very long cabinet meetings, obviously reading the community sentiment after it has already sailed right by them.

I also want to talk about the government change of policy when it comes to raising the age of criminal responsibility, which has been long talked about by this government. They now say they are not proceeding with a change to the age of criminal responsibility to 14 by 2027, which is weird because on 18 June – not long ago, just a couple of months ago, if even – I asked the Attorney-General right here in this place whether there was any change to the government's plans to raise the age of criminal responsibility, whether there was any change to the timeline. She thanked me for the question and said 'no change'. What has changed between 18 June 2024 and today? That is what I would like to ask this government: what has changed – perhaps community sentiment; perhaps the fact that there are many, many serious offences committed by those aged between 12 and 14? Perhaps it is also, which I think is probably and likely the case, that those ideologues on the other side from the left of the party were rolled on this issue. We see the Premier-in-waiting, or the real Premier, being Mr Carroll, getting another win. Whether it be on the injecting room, whether it be on the Lord's prayer or whether it be now on committing serious offences while on bail and raising the age, it seems Mr Carroll is running the show, which I have to say is much better than the ideologues running the show. But we had a clear commitment from the Attorney on 18 June in this place, in *Hansard*, that there was no change to the timeline. We have seen a couple of months fly by and all of a sudden there is a change to the timeline.

We know that this government is in chaos. They are in absolute chaos this week. They are trying to rush bills through, and they have dramatically changed their position.

Youth crime is out of control in Victoria. We have seen a 30 per cent increase when it comes to young people committing offences across the whole state. As I said, tragically, three lives have been lost due to people on bail that should not have been out in our network with the ability to take lives in the community. We have seen very serious offences, particularly in my electorate. Recently Garinda Singh from Kalkallo in my electorate – his mother, wife and two young children were at home when three offenders armed with a gun ransacked his property and injured his mother. The rampage lasted 10 minutes. Particularly in our growth areas our services are neglected, so there is no local police station – the nearest is about 15 minutes away – and of course the vacancy rates are at historic highs. Offenders know they can get away with it in these new estates.

As the member for Berwick pointed out, this bill originally came from a report that was published in 2017 by Penny Armytage and Professor James Ogloff on meeting the needs and reducing reoffending. The *Youth Justice Review and Strategy* was classed as a landmark strategy at the time on what we needed to do with youth justice. The report said:

The Review provides an opportunity to redesign the system to create an evidence-based response to youth offending and youth crime that is reflective of the needs and attitudes of young people and the broader community.

Since that review we have seen widespread support for some of the things that have been put forward in the past, but the Allan Labor government has done very little when it comes to youth crime here in our state. In the most recent state budget we saw the Allan Labor government cut \$20 million from crime prevention at a time when crime is reaching record levels here in our state. I just wanted to go through youth offending in our state by the numbers, maybe to educate those opposite. There has been a 20 per cent increase in criminal incidents by youth offenders – a 20 per cent increase in the last 12 months. Aggravated burglaries increased in that time by 18.4 per cent. In the last six years 137 people have been injured by cars stolen in aggravated burglaries. Since 2014 aggravated burglaries have increased by 114 per cent.

At the most fundamental level we want all young people who have made a mistake to have the opportunity to take their punishment and rebuild their life, but that is not going to happen without forcing them to take on that responsibility and recognise that they have done wrong and putting community safety first. A true justice system, in the simplest words, helps young people and provides them with the tools to build a good life without recidivism.

I join my colleagues, particularly Mr Davis and Mr Battin and Mr O'Brien in the other place, in opposing this bill. I know we will have amendments to move later on, but I just want to highlight the chaos of this government – the chaos that led us to bring in changes to the bail laws, which were laughed at and mocked by a bunch of people reading their talking points opposite. Now they are coming back here and doing the same thing. They are a weak, pathetic government that is playing with policy on the run with youth crime that is out of control.

Jeff BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (17:39): As they say, comedy is all about the timing. I am not really laughing about this, but this monster of a bill has landed at probably the worst time in Victoria's history to be trying to do what I see as a watering down of the youth justice arena. We are in the middle of a crime wave. A lot of it is to do with the bail laws, I do understand that. But we are right at a time where, if I were running this place – which I will never be, thankfully – I would be sorting out the problems now and dealing with this later.

With a lot of the stuff they bring in here, like the raising of the age of criminal responsibility, I do not know how many people – I only know of one person in this place – have been and seen the carnage that some of these so-called kids can do. Most of them are not under 14, but some of them are. I recall a particular 12-year-old who was basically an animal – at 12. Nature or nurture? It is not up to me to

decide. I had to deal with him at the time. To say someone like that has no responsibility for their actions worries me. To raise it to 14 is just a disaster waiting to happen. I do not care what happens in the rest of the world. Every time someone says, 'Well, we're following the lead of here' or 'We're following the lead of there' – I do not care about the rest of the world. We are Australia; we deal with Australian problems in Australian ways. We deal with it that way.

I congratulate the government on not committing to raising the age to 14 for the simple reason that it will send a message. Between 12 and 14 you can work it out. I do believe that with the child offenders – the minor offenders or whatever you want to call them – under the age of 12 there is room to move. It is rare. I mean, I remember the poor little boy that was murdered in the UK by the two 10-year-olds.

A member: James Bulger.

Jeff BOURMAN: Yes. It is one of the hardest things I think for the justice system to deal with, but two 10-year-olds did murder a boy. I really would not have wanted to be on the jury for that one. To a large degree justice was served; the children were dealt with for a number of years. I think one of them still lives in Australia.

To give children a free swipe is just wrong. I have no problems with rehabilitation. I have no problems with giving people chances, depending on the nature of the crime. If I recall correctly, the original proposal was that up to the age of 14 you could not be held criminally responsible, except for some instances – murder, rape and so on. Well, if you know murder is wrong, then you know theft is wrong. If you know rape is wrong, then you know assault is wrong. It is like having a foot in each camp; you cannot do it. It would have just ended up being a shemozzle. And who ends up paying for it? It is the people out there on the streets. It is the victims out there. The victims are the ones that I think rarely ever get thought of in the pursuit of justice in any state in Australia these days.

I am not for floggings and hangings and all that sort of stuff, but I am for making sure that if someone does something of a serious nature – and again, it is not youthful high jinks, it is not stealing a car and dumping it; it is stealing a car and going on a 190-kilometre-an-hour pursuit. The difference is wild. One is a silly act, and one is a dangerous act. We need to be able to diverge the two. If you get a 14-year-old, and there have been a few of late, that has been involved in a seriously high-speed pursuit with a driver, or they may have been the driver, with zero training because they do not have a licence at that stage, the message has got to be sent – not the message that they have got to think about it, have a little bit of introspection and meditate or whatever it might be, but the message that there are some things you just cannot do. Putting people at risk is one of those things.

I live in a good suburb – it was a good suburb – and of late I have just watched it descend. I cannot put a reason as to why. Mr Batchelor gave me a funny look. We had three stabbings in a month, and two of them were murders. I have been in this place for 16-odd years, 17 now, and we had nothing of the sort up until then. In fact we were in a meeting yesterday and I had one of our locals walking down the middle of the road with a plastic sword, screaming at people. It happens. I think if we were to take a holistic approach, it is not to come down hard, it is to come down properly. People that need help get help. People that need incarceration get incarceration. Everyone starts off as a youth. Everyone hopefully does not start off in the youth justice system, but the youth justice system is also about justice. And what is justice? I suppose justice is about what is right and what is fair, not only for the offender but mainly for the victim. I am getting wildly off track here, but I get a little frustrated when I watch things happen, and to me and in my experience, there are some wild changes. The fact that doli incapax is used well now is a reason why we never needed to change it to 12, if the system is already doing it. It also allows the system, for those aberrations where there is someone that has truly known what they were doing, to not put that presumption on people.

Anyway, we will move it up. I have no doubt this will get through. We will move it up to 12 and then from 12 to 14. The doli incapax will, I guess, apply, but now it will be in legislation. One of the things I have never been fond of is putting something into legislation that has never been in legislation,

because at that stage it becomes straight and narrow, and you cannot really move it around. I am getting a bit off track here. I will not be supporting this bill. I think we should sort out what is going on now and then deal with it, but I look forward to an extensive committee stage.

Ryan BATCHELOR (Southern Metropolitan) (17:47): I am pleased to rise today and speak in support of the Youth Justice Bill 2024. It is an exceptionally significant piece of legislative reform that has been brought before the Parliament today. Far from some of the denigration of the process that previous speakers have made, this is the culmination of many years of work that a lot of dedicated public servants, ministers and experts have put into tackling the sometimes vexing and often difficult question of how best to construct a system of justice for young people in a way that puts them, and any issues that they may be having as young people that may be leading them towards criminal behaviour, at the centre of how we respond. How we view and how we respond to rates of youth offending is by looking at the children and their circumstances and how we can best respond to them. That is exactly what this legislation seeks to do.

It is the culmination of work that really began in earnest with the tabling of the Armytage and Ogloff report in 2017. From that point, the point where the development of this legislation and this framework began, and it is important to go back and anchor the conversation and debate in that, what that report asked for and said that Victoria and Victorian children needed was a standalone piece of legislation that properly and adequately dealt with the range of issues that confronted youth justice and youth offending in this state that was not part of a different set of arrangements and that established – and that is what this legislation will deliver – a robust, end-to-end framework for Victoria’s youth justice system that is all about the children in it. That is exactly what it should do. It is transformational to the way that youth justice will work in this state, transformational to how we think about youth justice in this state. It will help, yes, keep our communities safe, and that is an absolutely fundamental principle that we should always think about when we think about our justice system, but it will also facilitate us thinking about the children who are in it and what they need.

The bill is making some very important alterations to the way youth justice works in addition to being a complete end-to-end system in the legislation, separating youth justice elements from the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 – a standalone framework that allows us to respond to alleged offending by children and young people. Obviously and, I think, very significantly – for those who seek to criticise – this legislation is increasing the age of criminal responsibility for children to 12 without exception, an historic change that builds on the change that Labor made in the 1980s, when legislation that a prior Labor government brought before this Parliament passed this Parliament, passed this chamber, a chamber that the party of government at the time did not control, to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 8 to 10. That Children and Young Persons Act 1989 was a really important marker, and this bill takes the necessary step further to bring the age of criminal responsibility to 12.

Also, and importantly, and this has been raised elsewhere in the debate, it puts into statute the common-law presumption of *doli incapax* for 12- and 13-year-olds, which will add a layer of protection for those children in the system in terms of how they are engaged within the system – and I will get to that in a little bit more detail – and introduces and facilitates the trials of electronic monitoring, alongside enhanced bail and support services and a range of other matters.

We know that there are, unfortunately, some rates of offending by young people. We know that that causes harm to others in the community. So when we think about how best to create a framework for youth justice in this state, we need to be cognisant of all of those issues. What it will absolutely do in terms of the way the legislation is framed, particularly with the codification of the *doli incapax* principles which in chapter 1 of the bill are really a foundational reform, really a foundational principle, what that codification does, means that a 12- or 13-year-old child can only be found to have criminal capacity if the prosecution can prove – so the onus here is on the prosecution to prove – beyond reasonable doubt that the child knew that their conduct was seriously wrong in a moral sense, as opposed to being merely naughty or mischievous. It is a doctrine that has existed for a long time in the common law; it is a fundamental common-law principle that acknowledges children under the age

of 14 often lack the cognitive capacities to inform criminal intent by virtue of their age and relative development.

We know that development occurs in different ways in different children, and so what this principle allows for is, for a prosecution in any particular case where we do have offending by children at that age, a need to prove that those particular children had the requisite mental and moral appreciation that what they were doing was seriously wrong. That is an important thing to be putting into our statute books. It existed in the common law for a very long time and provides that protection for those who are 12 and 13 years old.

For those who seek to have the age of criminal responsibility raised in this state from 10 to 12, you need to support the bill. Voting for this bill supports raising the age of criminal responsibility here in this state, and to do the opposite means the opposite. They are some of the stark choices that we have to confront, as always, as legislators.

One of the other really important things that the bill does, in chapter 4, is to establish and codify some provisions around diversion and restorative justice. Chapter 4 in the bill establishes a framework for diverting children away from the justice system and introduces into the statute books this hierarchy of diversionary responses – youth warnings, youth cautions and early diversion group conferences – which will enable children, using the principles of restorative justice, to help repair the damage and restore the relationships that they have harmed by their course of conduct. These further provisions that we are seeing introduced in this bill enable greater opportunities for restorative justice to be used as a core principle in the youth justice sector. These are really fundamentally important reforms, because at their core they are about the children that we are seeing in our youth justice system. The purpose of the system is not to train them to become better criminals but to give them the support and the services that they require – the structures, the frameworks and the programs – so that they are not reoffending, so that the system when they have offended has legal frameworks and support services to ensure that they are supported to not offend again. If that is what our goal should be – not seeing offences by anyone in the community, but in this case the youth in our community – we need to put into place provisions that we think and know will ensure that does not happen. There is so much evidence now that restorative justice principles can achieve that, and it is exceptionally important that those are in this bill.

The other really important thing that the bill does, particularly following one of the reports from the Yoorrook commission last year, is imbed principles of self-determination inside the new youth justice framework that is being created. It makes explicit in the bill that guiding principles regarding Aboriginal children and young people exist throughout. It puts into law these principles of self-determination that Yoorrook have told us are important in the way our youth justice system engages with Aboriginal children and young people – for example, giving them the ability and the rights whilst in the youth justice system to support their participation in ongoing cultural activities, making sure that the system as it operates and when it operates does so in a way that reflects the principles of self-determination and heeds the advice on this matter coming out of Yoorrook. We think that is an exceptionally important element as well. I think it is important to talk about these aspects of the bill, because in the broader debate some of these exceptionally important changes – the changes to *doli incapax*, the inclusion of the restorative justice principles and the inclusion of self-determination as a guiding principle throughout the bill – should not get lost in the context of other debate.

Obviously the government – the minister, the Premier and the Attorney-General – have made some further announcements in recent days about the way that amendments are going to be brought forward by the government to this bill to enable a strengthening of some of the bail conditions and some of the bail arrangements that exist with respect to young people in this state, responding to quite clear need. I think it is a demonstration of how seriously the Premier, the Attorney and the government as a whole understand the importance of these issues in the community and how they are always looking to make sure that our legal framework is best able to deal with the challenges that are confronting it.

One of the things that the proposed amendments will do is strengthen the bail test to make it crystal clear that bail decision makers must assess both the risk to community safety and the risk of further serious offending when they are deciding bail is appropriate and make it explicit that if they believe a young person poses an unacceptable risk of committing a schedule 1 or 2 offence, then that is a clear reason to refuse bail. We will also call out certain crimes that do pose that unacceptable risk. These will obviously be dealt with in far more detail later in the debate, but it is important I think to mention them here, and also things like the new council on bail rehabilitation and accountability, made up by experts to understand what is driving the actions of the offending and reoffending groups in the community.

I just want to say that obviously we are aware that there are members of the community, and I have been speaking to them across the Southern Metropolitan Region, who are concerned about rates of offending. I have been speaking to people like the wonderful people at the Neighbourhood Watch down in Bayside, supporting how I can their great work. I have spoken directly with some parents, who I will not name here but who will understand who I am talking about, who have had a very personal connection to many of the issues that we are dealing with here. I will always be open and willing to talk about difficult matters with the community and use their experiences in this place and elsewhere to help inform the shape of policy. It is exactly what the government should be doing. This reform is so significant for our state. We must support it if we want to see the youth justice system – the justice system for children in this state – improved.

Gaelle BROAD (Northern Victoria) (18:02): I rise to speak on the Youth Justice Bill 2024. There is no doubt that youth justice is a massive concern to the Victorian community right now. Youth crime is at very high levels, and violent youth crime is at particularly high levels. This is played out every night on the evening news, and it is not just the city and the suburbs of Melbourne that are witnessing this. Just recently Bendigo was named the meth capital of Victoria, with police linking this directly to youth crime. Crime statistics in Northern Victoria are worse than ever, and the community is very concerned.

This bill is close to 1000 pages, so it is quite a body of work. But despite all of this, it does not seem to address two key issues that are at stake here: one is the issue of protection of the community, and the other is the prevention of crime in the first place, along with rehabilitation. It does not do anything to address these issues. One of the key points of this bill is to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12 years, and I note the Premier's position has changed – they have dropped plans to raise the age to 14.

I attended two bill briefings in relation to this bill, but I must admit that I left with perhaps more questions than I had answers. Looking at justice, and youth justice in particular, a report was published in 2017, the *Youth Justice Review and Strategy*. It looked at meeting the needs of young people and reducing their offending. It was classed as a landmark strategy at the time on what was needed for youth justice. The report states:

The Review provides an opportunity to redesign the system to create an evidence-based response to youth offending and youth crime that is reflective of the needs and attitudes of young people and the broader community.

Clearly the authors wanted to reduce youth crime but they also wanted to reflect the needs and attitudes of young people and the broader community, including victims. The report was written years ago but the Allan Labor government has done very little to address youth crime in the intervening years.

This bill is set to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 12. It will also set out new transport powers for Victoria Police for people who are aged 10 and 11. My Liberal–National colleagues in the lower house moved a reasoned amendment to this bill in the hope that it would create better outcomes for both the young people concerned and the community at large. The reasoned amendment required:

- (1) a comprehensive, fully developed and fully funded program to target and divert at-risk individuals and cohorts of young people to prevent crimes occurring is agreed to by all stakeholders;

- (2) community safety concerns about the current level of youth crime in Victoria are addressed; and
- (3) further assessment of and consultation on more binding powers to manage young people where it is deemed their behaviour poses a risk to the safety of others is completed.

We have not seen a comprehensive strategy to target at-risk youth from this government. There is none. Instead of working to prevent crime the Allan Labor government has cut funding from crime prevention in Victoria. In the recent state budget the government cut \$20 million from crime prevention at a time when crime is reaching record levels in Victoria. My colleague Evan Mulholland spoke to many of the statistics, and they are alarming. These cuts directly impact on delivering programs that are meant to help. It is cutting money from community-based offender supervision. It is cutting money from youth diversion programs. This is all because the government has lost control of the budget and is scrambling to make savings, but these so-called savings will actually cost Victorians. It does cost nearly \$6000 to keep a young person in custody for one day, and this does not take into account the cost to the community as a result of youth crime.

The second part of the amendment focuses on community concerns around the rise in youth crime, particularly violent crime. In my hometown of Bendigo new data released by the Crime Statistics Agency in June found Bendigo had become the meth-trafficking capital of Victoria. The data found a massive spike in meth trafficking, with offences recorded over the past 12 months reaching a 10-year high. The figures showed total drug trafficking rose by a massive 353 per cent in Bendigo, and the suburb of Strathdale recorded 128 of the city's 204 offences. A Victoria Police spokesperson told the *Herald Sun* meth was a significant driver of crime across the state, particularly for young people. I quote:

"For this reason, detectives within the Bendigo Divisional Response Unit and Crime Investigation Unit are dedicated to tracking down and prosecuting those involved in the production and distribution of illicit drugs," they said.

...

"We understand that illicit drug use can act as a springboard to more serious criminal behaviour, which can have devastating consequences in our community ...

The data also shows that in 2023 the rate of offenders between the ages of 10 and 17 spiked at 646 – that is 174 more than 2022, so it is definitely going up. The *Bendigo Advertiser* reported that crime statistics reflected growing concerns in the community about the number of aggravated burglaries and car thefts being reported to police. According to the newspaper, and I quote:

Bendigo residents have told the *Bendigo Advertiser* they are living in fear in their own home.

In February 2024, around 200 people attended a community meeting in Strathfieldsaye to discuss what they could do to improve safety ...

in their neighbourhoods.

Inspector Tim Tucker, the Local Area Commander at the Bendigo Police Station, said the rate of aggravated burglaries and car thefts had only gone up in the last three months. "It's definitely a priority on our radar," he said of the rate of young offenders.

Police told the newspaper the primary purpose of the aggravated burglaries was to steal cars which were often used in other crimes. Stealing from a vehicle was the second most common crime in Bendigo.

Other areas of my electorate of Northern Victoria are also experiencing a spike in youth crime. In Mildura, for example, my colleague Ms Benham reported that crime is up another 9.8 per cent on top of increases in recent years. In Shepparton my colleague Ms O'Keeffe highlighted increasing crime rates in Shepparton, where a string of serious incidents had occurred. These included multiple break-ins at an Italian restaurant which has been targeted three times in one month. The restaurant faced significant losses not just in terms of stolen stock but also in terms of damage to the property, and this was a heartbreaking situation for the business owners, who are simply trying to make a living and contribute to Shepparton's hospitality. These situations are extremely distressing to the

community, and they must be addressed. Raising the age of criminal responsibility when you have children committing serious crimes simply will not work. I note Jeff Bourman, a former policeman, spoke on this bill, and he said that raising the age is a disaster waiting to happen.

The Liberals and Nationals – we are opposed to this bill. More work is desperately needed to address these issues. I know that in a previous contribution Evan Mulholland spoke to the failures of the bail laws, which were weakened by the government earlier this year, and I also remember speaking on a bill earlier this year about the need to ban machetes and have them removed from our streets and from sale. I am very concerned that just recently in Bendigo and also in Swan Hill we have had incidents involving machetes, but again we see this government does not take action. They need to listen to local communities and address rising youth crime and rising violent crime. This bill is a backward step for Victoria, and we oppose it.

Michael GALEA (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (18:10): I rise tonight to speak on a very important bill, the Youth Justice Bill 2024. At the outset, I would like to acknowledge the considerable volume of work that has gone into what is in many ways landmark legislation. Indeed to date Victoria is actually one of the few jurisdictions of its type that does not have a specific youth justice act. Obviously there have been sufficient laws and regulations in the past which have covered various different aspects of youth justice and they have been taken in from various different other acts, but having a singular, specific act for youth justice is a very important step. It is an important step because it is one that allows government to take even more of a holistic approach when it comes to this issue.

At the outset too, I would like to acknowledge the immense work that has gone into this bill, including by the Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes, by the Minister for Youth Justice and Minister for Victim Support Enver Erdogan and indeed the Minister for Police Anthony Carabines, as well as of course the Premier herself.

It was the former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair who made famous the lines ‘Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime’. No jurisdiction can have any hope of being tough on crime if it does not address the things that cause it to happen. That is an approach that is at the heart of the Youth Justice Bill which is before us today. We know that if we were to implement an excessively punitive approach, incarceration at whatever the cost, that we would see an increase in crime. We would see recidivism skyrocket. The number one determinant to decide whether you end up in prison is to be a former prisoner. We need to break that cycle. Indeed the work that has already been undertaken by this government is already breaking that cycle.

Over the long term we have seen rates of general offending, but especially youth offending, come down and I think that is an important thing to note. It does not for one moment take away any of the gravity for anyone who has been a victim of crime, but it is important to look at the broader scope and see that the policies have actually been having the desired outcome. Not putting in incarceration at all costs has actually led to better outcomes; through diversions, and opportunities these programs are working. There is more to be done – there always is – that this bill will help us to achieve.

It is vitally important that, especially when we are talking about our youngest Victorians, we talk about what is causing them to become engaged with the criminal justice system at such a young age. It is vital that we as a state – and I say that in reference to obviously the state government but also to us as a state, as a people – are mindful of why it is that someone at such a young age would be committing crime and provide them with every opportunity to rectify their lives and every opportunity for diversion. The worst thing that we could do is to throw them away and not worry about them, because the people they will connect with will be the people that will want them to continue that life of crime. It would be to effectively abandon a generation of young Victorians if we were to take such a measure. That is what is at the heart of the bill that is before us today.

Providing opportunities must remain at the centre of what we do, and that is exactly what this bill does. But providing opportunities requires another thing to happen; it requires that those opportunities be

taken. We know from all the evidence we have that in the majority of cases those opportunities are taken – maybe not the first time, maybe not even the second. But by providing those opportunities for young people to improve and make their lives better, they do get taken, and they are taken at an increasing rate. And that is something that we should be very proud of as a state, because every one of those people who take that opportunity is someone who has turned their life around, who is going to be a force for good in society, whether they go on to work or start a business or whatever else they may wish to do.

There are a very small number that will never take that opportunity. We must always provide those opportunities, but where those opportunities will not be taken that is the reason for some further steps to be taken. That is why I am also very proud of what was an incredibly courageous decision by our Premier, mindful that there are a very, very small number of these offenders who will not take these opportunities or who will take advantage of those opportunities and use them to reoffend. In those rare cases, and we are talking less than 200 in a state of 6 million people, there are further steps that need to be taken. That is why, as has already been discussed in this place, some of the components of this bill include electronic monitoring and surveillance for those offenders. It is to know where they are, not as a punitive measure but to keep them safe and to keep other people safe.

The community as a whole has a right to feel safe. No amount of statistics and no amount of positive long-term trends when it comes to this issue are enough if you are in the face of that yourself, if you are in the face of being a victim of a crime, whoever the offender. That is why I am very pleased to see bail reforms announced by the Premier just this morning which will address not just for young offenders but for adult offenders as well those serious crimes, that serious level of offending that poses a genuine and real risk to the safety and security of everyday Victorians that is not to be tolerated, and that is what these amendments will put into the Youth Justice Bill, again noting that they are for youth offenders but also for adult offenders when it comes to bail. I ask that my amendments now be circulated amongst the chamber.

Amendments circulated pursuant to standing orders.

Michael GALEA: Members will no doubt be aware of the content of these amendments which I am proud to move on behalf of the government today. As I say, it is important that we are listening to the community, but it is important that we are doing everything that we can to keep the community safe. That is exactly what has been front of mind for our Premier – everyday Victorians, who have a right to go about their business in full safety.

This bill is going to achieve many great things, and it is going to achieve many great things for those people who find themselves at the harsh end of the criminal justice system at a young age. It is a bill that is designed to continue those diversionary programs, those opportunities that will give them a chance at a better life, and that is one of the most important things about this bill. This bill also achieves through these amendments better peace of mind for our community and safer outcomes.

I am called to remember relatively recent reporting of an incident in my electorate where a young offender – I think he was 16 years old; it was not with any of the age discussions that I will come to shortly – had been bailed for stealing a car, or carjacking. The very next day that same young offender went to the same place and carjacked another person. At the same time, or a few hours after, a young family was driving down a local high street in a very busy area with their five-year-old daughter in the back of the car. This family had their car crashed into by that offender driving the stolen car at a very high speed. We are all eternally grateful that there was no loss of life, although the five-year-old did sustain injuries. So for the parents and many parents like them in all our electorates who want their kids to be safe too, these amendments will go a very significant distance to actually achieving that, to ensuring that where bail is to be refused it is for very serious reasons and only where there is a genuine risk to other people. We saw with some of the incidents several years ago, including deaths in custody, how things can go very badly wrong when you go too far the other way. When you take a more punitive approach when it comes to bail, you can find people who are in remand for shoplifting dying

in custody. That is not acceptable. Those sorts of offences will not be captured by these amendments that are here before us today.

These amendments are very specific, very highly targeted, to the types of offending that pose a real risk to community safety, and they come from a strong and courageous decision that has been taken by our Premier – a Premier who is always going to put Victorians first, a Premier who has demonstrated in the short time that she has been in that office that she is always prepared to listen and to implement expert advice but to do so in a way that keeps the community at heart and that keeps, in this case, community safety at heart as well, because that is what good Labor governments are about. Again, it is good to be tough on crime, but if you take that overly punitive approach, you are not tough on crime at all, because by being tough at the first instance you are setting people up for a life of recidivism. To be truly effectively tough on the causes of crime, you need to invest in those opportunities, those diversions. That is what we have been doing and that is exactly what this bill seeks to achieve. But you also must do so in a way that keeps the community safe, and that is what these amendments announced by the Premier this morning will achieve.

This bill also, very significantly, raises the age of criminal responsibility to 12. It does not raise the age to 14, but nor was it ever stated that it was going to. What was said previously about a potential increase to the age to 14 was that it would only happen in the first instance after the age was raised to 12, in the second instance dependent on the results of that, and in the third instance subject to various exclusions for serious crimes. What this legislation actually does achieve is codifying *doli incapax* into law. For the first time – again, going to what I mentioned at the start of my speech about this being the first youth justice act, or youth justice bill, as it is now – *doli incapax* will actually be codified into that law. I also note that it is a very good thing that we currently have in the state of Victoria not a single young person under the age of 14 in custody. We have seen many highly reported issues –

Members interjecting.

Michael GALEA: If you were listening, Dr Heath, you would know that the case I was talking about was actually that of an older teenager. But what we are seeing is that those diversionary programs are especially effective at those young ages, and it is completely reckless for people to be coming into this place and saying that the first approach should be to lock kids up, especially if they are aged 10 or 11 and especially if it is not for serious offending. So I will not be lectured by those opposite, but what I will say is that this is a sensible reform. It is a nation-leading reform, and we are indeed the first state – not the first territory but the first state – in the Commonwealth of Australia to implement it. It is sensible. It is not raising the age to 14, it is raising the age to 12. I would ask those opposite to think of the 10- and 11-year-olds in their lives, and I am sure that you would say that they are far more child than adult. Most importantly –

Bev McArthur interjected.

Michael GALEA: Again, if you were actually here to listen, Mrs McArthur, you might know what I was talking about in a considerable part of my speech.

What I will say to conclude is that this is a very significant piece of work. It is a bill that strikes the right balance. It provides better justice outcomes for young people, and it keeps the community safe. I commend the bill to the house.

Joe McCracken (Western Victoria) (18:25): I move:

That debate be adjourned until the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned until next day of meeting.

Adjournment

Ingrid STITT (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (18:25): I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union

Richard WELCH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (18:25): (1035) My adjournment is an action I call for from the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop. Last week while walking around my electorate in Glen Waverley, I walked past a Suburban Rail Loop construction site and was astounded to see it was fully adorned with CFMEU flags everywhere, alongside the SRL branding. Community members were rightfully wondering how much of the SRL's \$7 billion blowout and how much of the state's \$40 billion blowout can be ascribed to the criminal practices of the CFMEU and the government's complicity in those practices. Even the federal government is worried about the CFMEU. The workplace relations minister has announced a review into all CFMEU enterprise agreements connected to the Big Build, including for the SRL. We also know that the federal police have created their own investigation into the CFMEU. In fact there is such a number of concurrent inquiries now into the CFMEU you would have to wonder why they are not bundled up into a royal commission. Naturally that is the logical thing that should be done in this instance.

The corrupt and disgusting practices of brown paper bags and of onsite intimidation by the CFMEU have been writ large across every newspaper in the land, but the only people who do not seem to be reading those headlines and aware of them are the government themselves. We would like to see the government do something about it. The action I would ask of the minister is to provide an audit of how much of the SRL's blowouts are a consequence of the CFMEU's corrupt and illegal practices and commit to ensuring individuals with bikie gang organised crime affiliations are not allowed on taxpayer-funded sites. Finally, will the minister mandate that CFMEU flags no longer fly above state-funded sites?

Maternity services

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (18:28): (1036) My adjournment matter for the Minister for Health concerns the shock closure of Camperdown Hospital's maternity services. I use the word 'shock' advisedly. The announcement last week came as a bolt from the blue, not just for the local community but even for the doctors and midwives providing the service. Even to say 'announcement' overstates it. There was no public comment from South West Healthcare, let alone a consultation. On 5 August, without warning, Camperdown clinicians were informed with immediate effect that maternity services would be indefinitely downgraded from level 3 to level 1, ending all planned births. A terse statement quoted in the *Camperdown Chronicle* on 9 August was attributed simply to a South West Healthcare spokesperson. There was no media statement. The only outlet given the story was the *Camperdown Chronicle*.

The background seems to be this: a woman due to give birth at Colac Area Health was told she could not, as they had no obstetrician and declared themselves on bypass. The Camperdown midwife established that as the patient was not yet in labour and her previous medical history suggested some chance of haemorrhage it was safer to travel 20 minutes further to attend the larger maternity unit at Warrnambool, which operates a blood bank. Unfortunately, the rapid progression of her labour meant she gave birth in the Warrnambool hospital car park – safely, however, and with no adverse consequences for mother or child.

The Camperdown service did the right thing, yet without seeking input from clinicians involved, unidentified South West Healthcare bureaucrats immediately closed the service. The supposed review has no timeline, and the anonymous decision and failure to communicate reinforces the local belief that South West Healthcare wants to close its rural maternity service. Maternity in Camperdown has an excellent safety record. It is an important pillar of a rural hospital, yet South West Healthcare appear

hell-bent on closing it. Management have accorded the doctors involved no respect, with no communication in writing, nor have they consulted the community or even made a public announcement. Local medical practitioners are furious, and a walkout in solidarity is a serious possibility, with crippling results for Camperdown health care.

The action I seek is for the minister to intervene to answer some very basic questions: who made this decision? Why was it made? Why is it communicated to the professionals and public so poorly? And does the indefinite suspension imply a predetermined review to facilitate the amalgamation, which will end maternity services – by stealth – in Camperdown for good?

Electoral reform

Gaelle BROAD (Northern Victoria) (18:30): (1037) My adjournment matter is for the Premier, following the recent tabling of the Electoral Matters Committee inquiry report into the conduct of the 2022 Victorian state election. It was positive to see the Liberals and Nationals' proposal to reform group voting tickets for the Legislative Council adopted as a recommendation in this report. However, reforms to group voting tickets were also an accepted recommendation from a parliamentary review into the 2018 Victorian state election, but the state government took no action to implement these reforms.

The action I seek is for the Premier to ensure that these reforms are implemented before the next state election in November 2026. There are people who hold a seat in this chamber with less than 2 per cent of the vote. Victoria is now the only state where group voting tickets continue to operate. Every other state and the federal government have made reforms. The Nationals support measures to improve transparency, accessibility and fair representation across our electoral system. A fair and transparent voting system is foundational to our democratic system of government. We need to eliminate group voting tickets for upper house voting and allow preferences above the line so people know who they are voting for and where their vote is going. I have spoken to many people who are shocked that we currently have a system where an individual can do deals behind the scenes to manipulate the voting system and receive funds to help people get elected to this chamber.

I raised the need for reform on this issue almost 12 months ago in this house. The Premier replied that she would consider the committee's report when it was tabled in Parliament and would respond in due course. Now is the time for that response and for the Labor state government to ensure that reforms to the upper house group voting system are in place before the next state election.

Broadmeadows train station

Evan MULHOLLAND (Northern Metropolitan) (18:32): (1038) My adjournment is to the Minister for Planning and Minister for the Suburbs in the other place, and the action I seek is for more information on the so-called Broadmeadows train station working group as part of the Broadmeadows Revitalisation Board. The City of Hume's website describes the Broadmeadows station as:

An outdated facility with poor accessibility and an unkempt appearance negatively impacts perceptions of safety ...

It definitely does. We know that the station was recently ranked as Victoria's fifth-worst train station in the RACV On Track survey. The council recently announced meetings of the so-called Broadmeadows train station working group, which is bringing communities, police and tenants together with the Department of Transport and Planning to advocate for funding from the government, which includes the member for Broadmeadows. I found this strange, as I note there was no acknowledgement of this working group on the department's website. Is the council freelancing?

The Minister for Public and Active Transport has previously advised that the redevelopment of Broadmeadows station is planned as part of their Suburban Rail Loop North, which is not due to be delivered until 2052. Do residents of Broadmeadows have to wait another 28 years to see their station rebuilt, or does this new working group mean that things are finally happening?

The Hume community has been hoodwinked on a train station upgrade before, and all I see is another brazen attempt to deceive the community that Labor is doing something when there is no funding. The former member for Broadmeadows – and I know that we all miss him – Mr Frank McGuire long campaigned for an upgrade. In 2018 he said a solution was coming soon. Hopefully ‘soon’ is not 2052. He also said in advocating for this project:

Such bias against Broadmeadows must change, especially given that it has the greatest need and would deliver higher value ...

Well, we see no such frank criticism from the current member for Broadmeadows. He also then announced that the train station upgrade was possible through the state government’s own Growing Suburbs Fund but later had to backflip and retreat from that as they did not meet the guidelines for that fund. So the action I seek from the minister is to advise what funding is being provided to support the working group, what funding has been provided to rebuild the station and when will the government get on with the job of improving Broadmeadows station?

Wildlife crime

Georgie PURCELL (Northern Victoria) (18:35): (1039) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Environment, and the action I seek is for the government to fund a community-based wildlife crime prevention program modelled off the longstanding Neighbourhood Watch program in Victoria. It is no secret that this government does not value Victorian wildlife. They allow a shameful bounty to kill dingoes, a keystone species ingrained in cultural history; they order the slaughter of kangaroos in staggering numbers under government-funded programs; and they shamefully gave the green light to continue their annual slaughter of our native waterbirds. And as recent data reported, up to 10 million native animals die due to road strike on our roads every year, but this government is doing absolutely nothing to address it.

While I am supportive of the new Crime Stoppers Victoria wildlife crime reporting campaign, more needs to be done to encourage the value and importance of recognising wildlife as victims of crime. Fifty-four of Victoria’s 79 local government areas currently have Neighbourhood Watch groups operating within them. This community-based crime prevention program works to reduce the incidence of preventable crime and provides a safer community for all Victorians. In taking modelling and structure from this program and introducing a community-based participation component to solving wildlife crime, with additional financial reward for information leading to convictions, we can begin to put the importance of protecting our wildlife back on the agenda.

Year after year duck rescuers report shooter noncompliance to the Game Management Authority. We hear evidence of burial pits where bag limits are exceeded, the attempt to hide carcasses of endangered or protected species, wounded birds being left for dead and non-game species being caught up in the carnage. Yet the consequences of these acts are rarely, if ever, treated like the wildlife crimes that they are. In 2018 a farm worker poisoned 406 native birds, including 136 native wedge-tailed eagles, in one of the most horrific mass killings of wildlife our state has ever seen. The clearing of a Cape Bridgewater property in 2020 caused unimaginable suffering to many koalas, and ultimately the death of 81 whose homes were destroyed.

These cases undoubtedly had preventable aspects in which community and accountability should have played a major role. The fact that only one person has been jailed for breaches of the Wildlife Act 1975 for killing wildlife in 45 years speaks volumes for the weakness of the act and community awareness around wildlife crime. Protecting native wildlife is everyone’s responsibility, and the community plays a vital role in solving wildlife crime. I hope that the minister will take seriously the proposal to implement a community-based wildlife crime prevention program, which will undoubtedly encourage those to come forward and be aware of this serious form of crime.

Energy policy

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (18:38): (1040) My adjournment for tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources. The government has an energy efficiency program, which has had lots of trouble, as people will remember. We had the multiple fridges – all sorts of programs are being mismanaged. But one of the points I want to draw to the minister's attention tonight is the industry that supplies film on the inside of house windows. It is an industry that has good science behind it, well-established science, that can reduce up to 40 per cent of incoming radiation. Some films can actually provide up to 15 per cent protection from heat going out as well. This is an energy efficiency step that is deserving of support.

The coalition government in 2011, in our version of the scheme, actually had this supported. Sadly, in March last year, 2023, the minister for energy cut all of these programs that supported lining, or films on windows in domestic premises. They were cut to nothing. Many other programs are supported by the government's energy efficiency programs, but these ones were cut. And yet the science is very strong. In that circumstance, I am asking as an action tonight for the minister to meet with the industry and to reconsider the ban that she put in place in March 2023. As part of those energy efficiency programs that the government supports with rebates, the Victorian energy efficiency schemes, I ask that the minister make sure that the films that are put on the inside of these windows by reputable companies with proper science behind them do actually have some support.

I think that this has been a foolish step by the minister. She has been out on ideological frolics on a whole range of different issues and yet here is a well-grounded, scientifically supported technology that actually at modest cost provides that energy efficiency addition. Now, it in no way replaces double glazing, I make it quite clear, and double glazing is in many respects preferable, but it is also vastly more expensive, and the support that was provided previously actually ensured that more Victorians had those energy efficiency treatments to their windows. I therefore ask the government to reverse their unfortunate ban.

Health services

Sheena WATT (Northern Metropolitan) (18:41): (1041) It is a great privilege for me to be part of a community that looks after its neighbours. Victorians bring hot meals to friends who are feeling sick, and they check in on the elderly couple next door to see if they need anything from the shop. Victoria's strong sense of community is what makes this state, in my opinion, the best place in the country to live and work, and that community spirit is why Victoria has some of the best healthcare services in the world. This government makes bold investment in Victorian health care because we are committed to that same spirit of community care. I myself led campaigns, before this place, at the Stroke Foundation, where I contributed to getting more ambulances on the roads so more Victorians could benefit from the life-saving work of our world-class paramedics. The one, though, that I am particularly proud of is the nation-leading stroke ambulance, and you can see that right around this neighbourhood. Today I am really proud to be part of a government that is investing an additional \$1.5 billion in our hospital system. My experience in the healthcare system has shown me that making bold investments in our staff, in our services and in our facilities will give Victorians the best possible outcomes when accessing their hospitals and GPs. It is true to say that there is so much that we can do and will do here in the northern suburbs. My matter is for the Minister for Health and that is to please update me on how our hospitals will be transformed to help Victorians' health and wellbeing through the Allan Labor government's \$1.5 billion investment announced last week.

Hospital security

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (18:43): (1042) My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Health, and it is regarding security, especially around hospitals across the state, but I want to highlight an issue at Frankston Hospital, which was an appalling situation last week. On 1 August, Jamie, a young mother with her sick four-month-old baby in the car, was confronted by a hooded machete wielding teenager at 11 pm in the car park of Frankston Hospital. It was terrifying

for her. She was completely traumatised by this frightening incident, and she said on radio that the young offender left her alone after he saw she had a baby.

For a young mother who was taking her baby to an emergency department to seek care to be confronted by this thug, this violent young thug, is completely and utterly unacceptable. The police later released a statement around this incident and said that it was a 15-year-old who had been charged with multiple offences, including threat to inflict serious injury, and was released on bail. This is exactly the issue we have in this state – a crime situation that is out of control – and we are debating the Youth Justice Bill 2024, but I completely do not agree that it is going to fix this problem because of what is going on.

In relation to security at Frankston Hospital, last year I was contacted by the father of a security guard – I was contacted by the father of somebody working in the hospital, I should say – who told me that despite increases in security incidents they were told the number of security guards had been reduced due to the hospital's budget constraints.

The action I seek is for the minister to provide assurances to the house that there are adequate security measures in place to protect staff and patients in the vicinity of emergency departments in public hospitals across Victoria. We know there is an increasing crime issue across the state generally, but the number of violent assaults against doctors, nurses, paramedics and orderlies, those that are attending to people in the hospitals, is also increasing, and it is completely unacceptable. The government brought in legislation around this – I do not know how many people have actually been charged with an offence for attacking frontline personnel – but nevertheless my action is around the security of hospitals to ensure that patients and staff are safe.

Energy policy

Sarah MANSFIELD (Western Victoria) (18:45): (1043) The action I am seeking from the Minister for Planning is to rule out approving any gas import terminals in Victoria, support households to make the switch to electric appliances, establish schemes for renters to participate in remote solar projects and reap some rewards, work with the regions to develop place-based renewable energy projects with meaningful community benefit, invest in green hydrogen technologies and properly fund the SEC so it can support our path to 100 per cent renewables by 2034. These are the types of actions we should be taking in order to safeguard our climate for the future. Locking Victoria into climate catastrophe by approving new fossil gas projects is not one of them. The science is clear: governments must end our reliance on fossil fuels if we are to have any hope of limiting warming to a level compatible with a habitable earth.

In 2022, after years of campaigning by environmental advocates, community groups and many Geelong residents, a proposal by Viva Energy to establish a floating gas import terminal in Corio Bay was sent back to the drawing board. But over the coming days Viva will release the details of a new environment effects statement for the same import terminal. If the advice of our climate scientists does not already make it clear why this project must be stopped, the immediate impacts of this project on the surrounding community alone should be enough to put a halt to it. The risk to the environment from marine dredging, percussive noise and air pollutants would have significant implications for human, animal and plant life, not to mention the very real risks to residents of the northern suburbs of Geelong posed by a catastrophic explosion or vapour leak.

When it comes to community calls to end coal and gas in Victoria, the Greens have come to expect the same old, tired lines from the Labor government about shortfalls. Over 80 per cent of the gas we produce is for export purposes, with more gas being used to turn it into LNG for export than is used in all of Victoria's households combined. The business case for gas exports does not stack up. In reality we sell our gas off so cheaply that countries such as Japan go on to sell imported gas from Australia on the international market at a much higher price. Victorians and the environment are being ripped off, and it is about time that these large export contracts were scrapped.

If this Labor government is going to allow a gas import terminal to cast its shadow over Geelong, I have a warning for them: the community knows how to mobilise; they are ready to fight tooth and nail against this project. With a new environment effects statement from Viva looming, this government have a choice, and I would ask that the government listen carefully to the community before making theirs.

Commonwealth Games

Renee HEATH (Eastern Victoria) (18:48): (1044) This morning it was reported that Glasgow will host the Commonwealth Games and it will cost as little as \$300 million, yet Victoria paid almost double that to cancel it. To rub salt in the wound, most of that \$300 million is coming from Victoria. How devastating that Victorian taxpayers will have to foot the bill for a Commonwealth Games that is going to be hosted on the other side of the world and will not have any of the benefit. This is a classic example of Labor's complete disregard for the taxpayer and their money – \$200 million of the \$300 million comes from the fee that the Victorian government paid to cancel the contract to host the games here. The other \$100 million is predicted to come from ticket sales. So that means it will cost their taxpayer nothing, yet we are going to be paying. While families are struggling to put food on their tables, they are footing the bill for Labor's financial incompetence.

The sad irony is I spoke to a mum yesterday in Pakenham who said because of the cost-of-living crisis this government has created her kids are now going to have to choose between sport or a musical instrument, and those kids chose a musical instrument. I mention that to remind people in this chamber that decisions made in this place actually mean something. They actually have consequences, and we are not the ones that feel those consequences, because we are on a lot more money – in fact three times the average salary in Victoria. It is the people that put us here that are bearing the brunt of Labor's financial mismanagement. That is Labor for you – a complete inability to manage money, a complete inability to take responsibility and a complete inability to own up to the mess that they have made in this once great state. We see this every question time, where they refuse to answer questions. They just humour what people are saying, and they make light of the suffering of Victorians.

Labor have destroyed this state's credibility. They have racked up so much debt that our children will be born into this debt, and they will die paying it off. They will never pay it off in their lifetimes. As a result of the Commonwealth debacle promises have been broken in Gippsland, Shepparton, Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong, and Victoria's reputation has been trashed. My adjournment is for the Premier, and the action that I seek is for her to appear before the select committee into the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games to answer the questions, for her to release all the documents in relation to the cancellation, including briefing papers, contracts and memos, and for her to share any other advice she has received.

Epsom Primary School

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (18:52): (1045) My adjournment matter is for the Premier because it concerns the safety of a school drop-off and pick-up zone in her own electorate but is also something that will require the action of more than one department. The action that I seek is for the Premier to take all steps necessary to ensure that the Epsom Primary School has a safe and fit-for-purpose pick-up and drop-off zone. Parents of children who attend the Epsom Primary School in the Premier's own electorate are worried about the chaotic and dangerous scenes that occur every morning and afternoon as hundreds of cars crowd into Howard Street to deliver their precious children to school.

The safety issues at Epsom Primary on Howard Street have been known about for a long time. In fact 24 years ago, on 5 April 2000, the member for Bendigo East, Premier Jacinta Allan, spoke in Parliament about the problems with traffic around the school. She noted the great volume of traffic and that there was only one main entry and exit point. She also recounted how she personally witnessed a number of illegal U-turns across double lines while parents were trying to cross the road. You would think that the member for Bendigo East would make sure that a school in her own electorate would

have the funding and support to upgrade a pick-up and drop-off zone to a safe standard. But Labor have been in government for 20 of the 24 years since Jacinta Allan complained about safety at Epsom Primary School, and the problems that the Premier outlined back then have still not been resolved because Labor just does not care. Over those 24 years the issues have only become worse.

In 2011 the population of Epsom and Huntly was only 4100, and it has now more than doubled to 8600. In 2009 Epsom Primary School had only 90 to 100 students, but now there are almost 500 enrolments. A nearby sportsground on the corner of Howard Street and the Midland Highway has been turned into the bustling Epsom Village shopping centre, increasing traffic along Howard Street, which was already struggling with congestion. Enrolments are up, traffic is up, incidents are up, but the action by the government is not going up. There have been collisions near the school, and children have been injured in accidents on Howard Street.

The nearby intersection of Howard Street and the Midland Highway has just been named the most dangerous intersection in Victoria, but what does not make the news are all the near misses that parents say occur regularly throughout the week. It is just a matter of time before something tragic happens. The school council has a solution to the problem which would involve the state government acquiring land next to the school. I urge the Premier to pay attention to the pleas of the school and parents and assist them in securing land and funding for an upgrade to the Epsom Primary School pick-up and drop-off zone to ensure the safety of the students and the school community.

Health services

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (18:55): (1046) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health, and it relates to declining access to public health in the Wonthaggi area. The action I seek is for the minister to address the glaring health crisis in the Bass Coast region, including but not limited to extra resources and funding. The Wonthaggi community is justifiably concerned that dwindling access to health care exists in the town. Residents have contacted me, and they are highly distressed and calling for help. One of the fastest growing areas in regional Victoria, Wonthaggi has got a population of almost 12,000 people, and this is set to grow and double over the coming years. It is a great place to live and raise a family, but locals tell me they are struggling to access primary health care. When unwell they often have no option but to present at the hospital emergency department or wait for six to seven days to see a GP.

One constituent of many who have contacted me, Rae Vaessen-Geritz, manages a residential house for people with disability. She is struggling to get her clients in just to get scripts, let alone securing new appointments for new conditions. There are only two GP clinics in Wonthaggi, and one GP clinic of six doctors is down to one very valuable doctor. These were the clinics that the government was actually going to tax before pressure from the Liberals and Nationals made the government backflip. Unsurprisingly, Bass Coast health services have had an escalation in people presenting to the emergency department. The presentations have almost risen by 100 per cent in the last four years. The wait times in emergency have increased to over 100 per cent, and people are spending 56 minutes longer in ED than they were five years ago. It is struggling to meet demand, despite the best efforts of our doctors, our nurses and our allied staff, who have the highest respect from locals, myself included, and I am sure all here.

The community want to know why the government has allowed access to health care in the Bass Coast to deteriorate to such levels at the same time they are planning to grow this community. The minister has staved off the hospital mergers, but there is still an overhanging concern that there will be mergers within the Gippsland region. The Australian Medical Association president Michael Page has said the best way that state governments can help make sure pressure is off GPs and to improve access to health care is to ensure that there are more trained general practitioners in the community. I call on the government to focus on this community and provide extra resources and funding for better health care.

Community Abundance

Ann-Marie HERMANS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (18:58): (1047) My adjournment is to the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, and the action I seek is to have the government provide the necessary funding for the Community Abundance program immediately. This program, among other projects, runs the men's behaviour change – MBC – program in Dandenong. Community Abundance provides services for NDIS support, family and individual counselling and the men's behaviour change program. I understand that the Labor government provided \$200,000 for three years, which runs out at the end of this month, for one of the programs that Community Abundance runs, and that is the healing African communities through respectful communications project. But no money has ever been provided for the MBC program, which sees 12 to 15 men attend once a week for 2 hours and is conducted solely by volunteers – that is right, volunteers.

The MBC program has been in operation since 2014 and is now at risk of being cancelled because the volunteers are exhausted and just cannot keep up with the demands. Clearly this government does not care to reward or support selfless community volunteers. This is outrageous, since the courts are mandating that these people attend this program and there are no funds to resource it. This is typical of this chaotic, tired and irresponsible government. Currently there are eight men who have perpetrated violence and have been on the waitlist for the past three months. According to Deng Kor, a family violence practitioner who runs the programs, some of the issues are cultural, because some of these men come from refugee backgrounds, and because of life experience violence has become part of their lives. Part of the role of this program is to help men see that any form of control over a partner is also a form of abuse.

I have to say that we have to look at some of the statistics as well in terms of places like Casey, and I get statistics from police data. In the City of Casey alone 12 family incidents are dealt with every day by Victoria Police, which equates to 4369 incidents per year. Family violence is on the rise in Casey, and those aged 25 to 44 are at the highest risk of both being victim and perpetrator. The City of Casey ranked highest for family violence incidents in Victoria in the year ending March 2023, and it had 5417 reported cases. It is constantly on the increase, with a 16.5 per cent increase in reported family incidents since 2019. I have to ask the minister: if we are looking at data, let us also consider nearby shires like Cardinia, with a 24.9 per cent surge, and the City of Greater Dandenong, where my office is, which had an 11.3 per cent rise.

Minister, it is simply not good enough. Are you able to please continue funding for Community Abundance, which will add additional funding for the much-needed men's behaviour change program?

Responses

Ingrid STITT (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (19:01): There were 13 adjournment matters to seven separate ministers, and answers will be sought.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you for your patience.

House adjourned 7:01 pm.