The Governor
The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor
The Honourable KEN LAY, AO, APM

The ministry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Premier</td>
<td>The Hon. DM Andrews, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Mental Health</td>
<td>The Hon. JA Merlino, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney-General and Minister for Resources</td>
<td>The Hon. J Symes, MLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Transport Infrastructure and Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop</td>
<td>The Hon. JM Allan, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Higher Education</td>
<td>The Hon. GA Tierney, MLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Industrial Relations</td>
<td>The Hon. TH Pallas, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads and Road Safety</td>
<td>The Hon. BA Carroll, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Solar Homes</td>
<td>The Hon. L D’Ambrosio, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Child Protection and Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers</td>
<td>The Hon. LA Donnellan, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services and Minister for Equality</td>
<td>The Hon. MP Foley, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, and Minister for Fishing and Boating</td>
<td>The Hon. MM Horne, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice and Minister for Victim Support</td>
<td>The Hon. NM Hutchins, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development and Minister for Veterans</td>
<td>The Hon. SL Leane, MLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Water and Minister for Police and Emergency Services</td>
<td>The Hon. LM Neville, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, Minister for Trade, Minister for Business Precincts, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, and Minister for Racing</td>
<td>The Hon. MP Pakula, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services and Minister for Creative Industries</td>
<td>The Hon. DJ Pearson, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, and Minister for Small Business</td>
<td>The Hon. JL Pulford, MLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Community Sport and Minister for Youth</td>
<td>The Hon. RL Spence, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Workplace Safety and Minister for Early Childhood</td>
<td>The Hon. I Stitt, MLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon. M Thomas, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon. G Williams, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Planning and Minister for Housing</td>
<td>The Hon. RW Wynne, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Ms S Kilkenny, MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OFFICE-HOLDERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION

Speaker
The Hon. CW BROOKS

Deputy Speaker
Ms JM EDWARDS

Acting Speakers
Ms Blandthorn, Mr J Bull, Mr Carbines, Ms Connolly, Ms Couzens, Ms Crugnale, Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Halfpenny, Ms Kilkenny, Mr McGuire, Ms Richards, Mr Richardson, Ms Settle, Ms Suleyman, Mr Taylor and Ms Ward

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier
The Hon. DM ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier
The Hon. JA MERLINO

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition
The Hon. MA O’BRIEN

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party
The Hon. LG McLEISH

Leader of The Nationals and Deputy Leader of the Opposition
The Hon. PL WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals
Ms SM RYAN

Leader of the House
Ms JM ALLAN

Manager of Opposition Business
Mr KA WELLS

Heads of parliamentary departments
Assembly: Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms B Noonan
Council: Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A Young
Parliamentary Services: Secretary: Mr P Lochert
## MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Member</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addison, Ms Juliana</td>
<td>Wendouree</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Maas, Mr Gary</td>
<td>Narre Warren South</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie</td>
<td>Bendigo East</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan</td>
<td>Owens Valley</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael</td>
<td>Mulgrave</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>McChic, Mr Stephen John</td>
<td>Melton</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick</td>
<td>Forest Hill</td>
<td>LP</td>
<td>McGuire, Mr Frank</td>
<td>Broadmeadows</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batin, Mr Bradley William</td>
<td>Gembrook</td>
<td>LP</td>
<td>McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye</td>
<td>Eildon</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackwood, Mr Gary John</td>
<td>Narracan</td>
<td>LP</td>
<td>Merlino, Mr James Anthony</td>
<td>Monbulk</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne</td>
<td>Pascoe Vale</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Morris, Mr David Charles</td>
<td>Mornington</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brayne, Mr Chris</td>
<td>Nepean</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Neville, Ms Lisa Mary</td>
<td>Bellarine</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britnell, Ms Roma</td>
<td>South-West Coast</td>
<td>LP</td>
<td>Newbury, Mr James</td>
<td>Brighton</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooks, Mr Colin William</td>
<td>Bundoora</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>North, Mr Russell John</td>
<td>Morwell</td>
<td>Ind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bull, Mr Joshua Michael</td>
<td>Sunbury</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>O’Brien, Mr Daniel David</td>
<td>Gippsland South</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bull, Mr Timothy Owen</td>
<td>Gippsland East</td>
<td>Nats</td>
<td>O’Brien, Mr Michael Anthony</td>
<td>Malvern</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald</td>
<td>Hastings</td>
<td>LP</td>
<td>Pakula, Mr Martin Philip</td>
<td>Keyborough</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbines, Mr Anthony Richard</td>
<td>Ivanhoe</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Pallas, Mr Timothy Hugh</td>
<td>Werribee</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carroll, Mr Benjamin Alan</td>
<td>Niddrie</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Pearson, Mr Daniel James</td>
<td>Essendon</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheeseman, Mr Darren Leicester</td>
<td>South Barwon</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Read, Dr Tim</td>
<td>Brunswick</td>
<td>Greens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connelly, Ms Sarah</td>
<td>Tarneit</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Richards, Ms Pauline</td>
<td>Cranbourne</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couzens, Ms Christine Anne</td>
<td>Geelong</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Richardson, Mr Timothy Noel</td>
<td>Mordialloc</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cregnale, Ms Jordan Alessandra</td>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Riordan, Mr Richard Vincent</td>
<td>Polwarth</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coper, Ms Ali</td>
<td>Mildura</td>
<td>Ind</td>
<td>Rowswell, Mr Brad</td>
<td>Sandringham</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D’Ambrosio, Ms Liliana</td>
<td>Mill Park</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Ryan, Stephanie Maureen</td>
<td>Euroa</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimopoulos, Mr Stephen</td>
<td>Oakleigh</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Sandell, Ms Ellen</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Greens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony</td>
<td>Narre Warren North</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Scott, Mr Robin David</td>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edbrooke, Mr Paul Andrew</td>
<td>Frankston</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Settle, Ms Michaela</td>
<td>Buninyong</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards, Ms Janice Maree</td>
<td>Bendigo West</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Sheed, Ms Suzanna</td>
<td>Shepparton</td>
<td>Ind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eren, Mr John Hamdi</td>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Smith, Mr Ryan</td>
<td>Warrandyte</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fokey, Mr Martin Peter</td>
<td>Albert Park</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Smith, Mr Timothy Colin</td>
<td>Kew</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fowles, Mr Will</td>
<td>Burwood</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Southwick, Mr David James</td>
<td>Caulfield</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fregon, Mr Matt</td>
<td>Mount Waverley</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Spence, Ms Rosalind Louise</td>
<td>Yuroke</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Green, Ms Danielle Louise</td>
<td>Yan Yean</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Stakos, Mr Nicholas</td>
<td>Bentleigh</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guy, Mr Matthew Jason</td>
<td>Bulleen</td>
<td>LP</td>
<td>Staley, Ms Louise Eileen</td>
<td>Ripon</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn</td>
<td>Thomastown</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Suleyman, Ms Natalie</td>
<td>St Albans</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall, Ms Katie</td>
<td>Footscray</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Tak, Mr Meng Heang</td>
<td>Clarinda</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halse, Mr Dustin</td>
<td>Ringwood</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Taylor, Mr Jackson</td>
<td>Bayswater</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harner, Mr Paul</td>
<td>Box Hill</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Theophanous, Ms Katerina</td>
<td>Northcote</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hennessey, Ms Jill</td>
<td>Altona</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne</td>
<td>Macedon</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hibbins, Ms Samuel Peter</td>
<td>Prahran</td>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>Tilley, Mr William John</td>
<td>Benamba</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hodgett, Mr David John</td>
<td>Croydon</td>
<td>LP</td>
<td>Vallence, Ms Bridge</td>
<td>Evelyn</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horne, Ms Melissa Margaret</td>
<td>Williamstown</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Wakeling, Mr Nicholas</td>
<td>Ferntree Gully</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutchins, Ms Natalie Mary Anne Sykes</td>
<td>Sydenham</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay</td>
<td>Murray Plains</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kairooz, Ms Marlene</td>
<td>Kororoit</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Ward, Ms Vicki</td>
<td>Eltham</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kealy, Ms Emma Jayne</td>
<td>Lowan</td>
<td>Nats</td>
<td>Walls, Mr Kimberly Arthur</td>
<td>Rowville</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy, Mr John Ormond</td>
<td>Hawthorn</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Williams, Ms Gabrielle</td>
<td>Dandenong</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilkeneny, Ms Sonya</td>
<td>Carrum</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Wynne, Mr Richard William</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP—Labor Party; Greens—The Greens; Ind—Independent; LP—Liberal Party; Nats—The Nationals.
Legislative Assembly committees

**Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee**
Ms Addison, Mr Blackwood, Ms Couzens, Mr Eren, Ms Ryan, Ms Theophanous and Mr Wakeling.

**Environment and Planning Standing Committee**
Ms Connolly, Mr Fowles, Ms Green, Mr Hamer, Mr McCurdy, Mr Morris and Ms Vallence.

**Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee**
Mr Battin, Ms Couzens, Ms Kealy, Ms Settle, Mr Southwick, Ms Suleyman and Mr Tak.

**Privileges Committee**
Ms Allan, Mr Carroll, Mr Guy, Ms Hennessy, Mr McGuire, Mr Morris, Mr Pakula, Ms Ryan and Mr Wells.

**Standing Orders Committee**
The Speaker, Ms Allan, Mr Cheeseman, Ms Edwards, Mr Fregon, Ms McLeish, Ms Sheed, Ms Staley and Mr Walsh.

**Joint committees**

**Dispute Resolution Committee**
*Assembly*: Ms Allan, Ms Hennessy, Mr Merlino, Mr Pakula, Mr R Smith, Mr Walsh and Mr Wells.
*Council*: Mr Bourman, Ms Crozier, Mr Davis, Ms Mikakos, Ms Symes and Ms Wooldridge.

**Electoral Matters Committee**
*Assembly*: Mr Guy, Ms Hall and Dr Read.
*Council*: Mr Erdogan, Mrs McArthur, Mr Meddick, Mr Melhem, Ms Lovell, Mr Quilty and Mr Tarlamis.

**House Committee**
*Assembly*: The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr T Bull, Ms Crugnale, Ms Edwards, Mr Fregon, Ms Sandell and Ms Staley.
*Council*: The President (*ex officio*), Mr Bourman, Mr Davis, Mr Leane, Ms Lovell and Ms Stitt.

**Integrity and Oversight Committee**
*Assembly*: Mr Halse, Ms Hennessy, Mr Rowswell, Mr Taylor and Mr Wells.
*Council*: Mr Grimley and Ms Shing.

**Public Accounts and Estimates Committee**
*Assembly*: Ms Blandthorn, Mr Hibbins, Mr Maas, Mr Newbury, Mr D O’Brien, Ms Richards, Mr Richardson and Mr Riordan.
*Council*: Mr Limbrick and Ms Taylor.

**Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee**
*Assembly*: Mr Burgess, Ms Connolly and Mr R Smith.
*Council*: Mr Gepp, Ms Patten and Ms Watt.
## CONTENTS

### ANNOUNCEMENTS
- Acknowledgement of country .......................................................... 3811
- COVID-19 ......................................................................................... 3811

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE
- Standing and sessional orders ......................................................... 3811

### MEMBERS
- Minister for Ports and Freight ......................................................... 3814
- Minister for Prevention of Family Violence .................................... 3814
- Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change .................. 3814
- Assistant Treasurer ........................................................................... 3814
  - Absence ......................................................................................... 3814
- Shadow ministry ................................................................................ 3815

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE AND MINISTERS STATEMENTS
- Belt and Road Initiative .................................................................... 3815
- Ministers statements: COVID-19 ...................................................... 3816
- Economy ......................................................................................... 3816
- Ministers statements: COVID-19 ...................................................... 3818
- Economy ......................................................................................... 3818
- Ministers statements: education funding ......................................... 3819
- Youth justice system ....................................................................... 3820
- Ministers statements: community sport ........................................... 3820
- Budget 2020–21 ............................................................................... 3821
- Ministers statements: public transport ............................................. 3822

### CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS
- Euroa electorate .................................................................................. 3823
- Ivanhoe electorate ............................................................................. 3823
- Rowville electorate ........................................................................... 3823
- Pascoe Vale electorate ...................................................................... 3824
- Sandringham electorate ................................................................... 3824
- Burwood electorate ........................................................................... 3824
- Shepparton electorate ....................................................................... 3825
- Wendouree electorate ....................................................................... 3825
- Polwarth electorate ........................................................................... 3825
- Hawthorn electorate ......................................................................... 3825

### BILLS
- Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020.......................................................... 3826
  - Introduction and first reading .......................................................... 3826
  - Statement of compatibility ............................................................... 3826
  - Second reading ............................................................................... 3826
- Summary Offences Amendment (Decriminalisation of Public Drunkenness) Bill 2020 ..................................... 3830
  - Introduction and first reading .......................................................... 3832
  - Education and Training Reform Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2020 ....................................................... 3833
  - Introduction and first reading .......................................................... 3833

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE
- Notices of motion and orders of the day .......................................... 3833

### PETITIONS
- Bushfire preparedness ......................................................................... 3833
- Five Ways intersection, Warrandyte ................................................ 3834

### COMMITTEES
- Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee .................................. 3834
  - Alert Digest No. 13 ........................................................................ 3834

### DOCUMENTS
- Documents ....................................................................................... 3835

### BILLS
- Human Tissue Amendment Bill 2020 ................................................ 3836
- Justice Legislation Amendment (Drug Court and Other Matters) Bill 2020 ......................................................... 3836
- Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 ..................................... 3836
- Council’s agreement ........................................................................... 3836
- Energy Legislation Amendment (Licence Conditions) Bill 2020 ........ 3836
- Food Amendment Bill 2020 ............................................................... 3836
- Human Tissue Amendment Bill 2020 ................................................ 3836
- Justice Legislation Amendment (Drug Court and Other Matters) Bill 2020 ......................................................... 3836
Marine Safety Amendment (Better Boating Fund) Bill 2020 .................................................. 3836
Parks and Crown Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 .................................................. 3836
Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 ......................................................................... 3836
Royal assent .......................................................................................................................... 3836
Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020 ................................. 3836
Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020 .............................. 3836
Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Provisional Payments) Bill 2020 .......................................................... 3836
Appropriation ....................................................................................................................... 3836

COMMITTEES
Environment and Planning Committee .................................................................................. 3837
Membership ......................................................................................................................... 3837

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE
Program .................................................................................................................................. 3837

MEMBERS STATEMENTS
Holodomor commemoration ............................................................................................... 3843
East African Sisters ............................................................................................................... 3843
Scott Jackman ..................................................................................................................... 3844
Lalor Valley mine rehabilitation ......................................................................................... 3844
Sunbury electorate schools funding .................................................................................... 3844
COVID-19 ............................................................................................................................ 3845
Rossville electorate schools funding .................................................................................. 3845
Pascoe Vale electorate schools ............................................................................................ 3845
Budget 2020–21 .................................................................................................................... 3845
South Barwon electorate schools ....................................................................................... 3846
Rex McConachy ................................................................................................................... 3846
Mount Evelyn and districts community bank ................................................................. 3846
City of Kingston .................................................................................................................. 3847
Mordialloc electorate infrastructure projects .................................................................... 3847
Polwarth electorate achievements ..................................................................................... 3847
Balnarring electorate schools funding .............................................................................. 3847
Energy policy ....................................................................................................................... 3848
Geelong electorate schools funding .................................................................................. 3848
1st/14th Brighton Sea Scouts ............................................................................................... 3849
Elwood Community Choir ................................................................................................. 3849
Bayside U3A ........................................................................................................................ 3849
Felicitations .......................................................................................................................... 3849
Melton train station ............................................................................................................. 3849
Narrare Warren South electorate student leadership awards ........................................... 3850
Felicitations .......................................................................................................................... 3850
Macedon electorate ............................................................................................................ 3850
Broadmeadows electorate revitalisation ............................................................................ 3850
Carolyn Ingvarson ............................................................................................................. 3851

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE
Notices of motion .................................................................................................................. 3851

BILLS
Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020 .......................... 3851
Second reading ...................................................................................................................... 3851
Third reading ........................................................................................................................ 3883

MOTIONS
Budget papers 2020–21 ....................................................................................................... 3883

ADJOURNMENT
Grampians National Park ..................................................................................................... 3900
Celeste Manno ..................................................................................................................... 3900
Natimuk Lake weir ............................................................................................................. 3901
Le Page Primary School ..................................................................................................... 3902
Co-working industry ............................................................................................................ 3902
Northcote High School ....................................................................................................... 3902
Kensington Primary School ............................................................................................... 3903
Le Mana Pasifika youth project ......................................................................................... 3904
Nepean Highway-Mount Eliza Way-Wooralla Drive, Mornington, traffic cameras .............. 3904
Elonera Preschool ............................................................................................................... 3905
Responses ............................................................................................................................. 3906
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tuesday, 8 December 2020

Tuesday, 8 December 2020

The SPEAKER (Hon. Colin Brooks) took the chair at 12.02 pm and read the prayer.

Announcements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The SPEAKER (12:02): We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to them, their culture, their elders past, present and future, and elders from other communities who may be here today.

COVID-19

The SPEAKER (12:02): I just wanted to indicate to the house that I have had a number of queries around the wearing of masks in the chamber and in the precinct. Members will remember that in line with advice from the chief health officer previously, we had ruled that the wearing of masks in the chambers here at Parliament was required except when members were taking their turn to speak. However, as members will be aware, health directions on the wearing of face masks changed over the weekend or yesterday, such that the wearing of masks is not mandatory except in a number of situations. So consistent with those directions, members are no longer required to wear masks while on precinct, including in the chamber. However, I do ask members to be courteous to each other, particularly to staff, who might have health concerns, and consider wearing a mask in situations where they are unable to socially distance, such as when moving around the chamber or speaking to, for example, a clerk at the table.

I would like to thank members across the chamber for their patience and cooperation as we have been able to move through the health pandemic and keep the Parliament operating over the last six months or so. I am particularly grateful to both the Leader of the House and the Manager of Opposition Business and to the crossbench for their support in that regard.

Business of the house

STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for the Coordination of Transport: COVID-19) (12:04): I move, by leave:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow the following arrangements to come into effect immediately and to remain in place until 11 December 2020:

A revised order of business

(1) The order of business is:

Wednesday

Formal business

Statements by members

Statements on parliamentary committee reports

Government business

Question time—1.00 pm

Government business continued

Lunch break and cleaning in the chamber—2.00 pm to 3.00 pm

Matter of public importance or grievance debate—3.00 pm

Government business continued

Thursday

Formal business
Statements by members
Government business
Lunch break and cleaning in the chamber—1.00 pm to 2.00 pm
Question time—2.00 pm
Government business continued
General business.

(2) The Speaker may order additional breaks to facilitate cleaning in the chamber.

Times of meeting

(3) Unless otherwise ordered, the house will meet on Wednesday at 10.00 am and Thursday at 9.30 am.

(4) The Speaker will interrupt business under sessional order 2 for the adjournment at 7.00 pm on Tuesday, 7.30 pm on Wednesday and 5.00 pm on Thursday.

Remote participation

(5) Members may participate in debate remotely using an audio link or audiovisual link as follows:

(a) the Chair must be satisfied that the quality of the audio link or audiovisual link allows the Chair to verify the identity of that member and for the member to participate;

(b) a member participating remotely is not counted for the purposes of a quorum and may not vote;

(c) members may only participate remotely to speak on:

(i) motions;
(ii) bills, including consideration in detail;
(iii) members statements;
(iv) statements on parliamentary committee reports;
(v) question time—to ask questions only;
(vi) grievance debates;
(vii) debates on a matter of public importance;
(viii) a personal explanation;
(ix) adjournment debates—to raise a matter only—

if they are included in the order of business;

(d) members participating remotely may only speak when given the call, must comply with all the usual rules of debate and may not:

(i) refuse leave;
(ii) respond to questions without notice, make ministers statements or respond to matters raised in the adjournment debate;
(iii) call the Chair’s attention to the state of the house;
(iv) take, or speak on, a point of order unless it is taken by another member during their speech or relates to the answer to a question they have asked;
(v) move a motion (except an amendment to a motion or bill when they have the call);
(vi) interject;
(vii) chair the debate;

(e) members participating remotely may circulate amendments to bills under standing order 64;

(f) in order to assist members participating remotely, the Chair will use a formal call list to allocate the call for each debate where practical and members wishing to participate remotely may seek the call by:

(i) informing their whip, or the whip’s representative, who will inform the Chair in advance—for a government or opposition member;
(ii) informing the Clerk, who will inform the Chair in advance—for any other member;

(g) when a member participates remotely, the Chair may exercise all their usual powers to control the debate;
(h) the Chair is given any additional powers necessary to facilitate the smooth running of the house and/or to address any technical issues, including but not limited to:
   (i) stopping the clock;
   (ii) returning to a member’s contribution;
   (iii) re-ordering business; and
   (i) the Speaker may issue guidelines about remote participation.

Other business to be published in Hansard

(6) Members who are not in attendance on the parliamentary precinct for a sitting day may submit:
   (a) members statements;
   (b) statements on parliamentary committee reports;
   (c) constituency questions; and
   (d) adjournment matters—
      for that day by emailing them to the Clerk by the adjournment of the house.
(7) The Clerk will accept matters up to the number usually given in the house minus any matters verbally given in the house each day, and as allocated between the parties and Independents in accordance with the call lists approved by the Speaker.
(8) The house authorises and requires these matters to be published in Hansard at the point in the proceedings/order of business that the item would have occurred and after any contributions (if any) that have been given in the house:
   (a) subject to the Hansard editorial policy; and
   (b) if any matter contains unbecoming expressions or does not comply with the rules of debate, the Speaker may direct that the matter be removed or amended before it is published.

Members to incorporate their speeches for bills and motions

(9) If a member is not in attendance on the parliamentary precinct for a sitting day and they wish to incorporate their speech—
   (a) for any bill on the government business program, they must email their speech to the Clerk by the time set down for consideration of that bill under the government business program; or
   (b) for any substantive motion considered by the house that day, they must email their speech to the Clerk by the adjournment of the house.
(10) Incorporated speeches will be published in Hansard—
    (a) for bills, after the relevant second-reading speeches made in the house (if any) and before the minister’s reply (if any); and
    (b) for substantive motions, after the relevant speeches made in the house (if any) and before the mover’s reply (if any).
(11) If any matter contains unbecoming expressions or does not comply with the rules of debate, the Speaker may direct that the matter be removed or amended before it is published.

Reduced number of members in the chamber to assist with physical distancing

(12) Subject to paragraphs (16) and (17), the chamber will be composed of the Chair and no more than 24 other members, being 13 from the government, seven from the opposition, one Greens member and three Independent members.
(13) Except as provided for in paragraphs (16) and (17), if more members than those listed in paragraph (12) vote in a division, the Clerk will not count their vote.

Quorum

(14) The house gives the Chair further discretion in ringing the bells to form a quorum under standing order 29, provided the Chair is confident that a quorum is present within the parliamentary precinct.
(15) If, under paragraph (14) and standing order 29(1), the bells are rung to form a quorum, the provisions under paragraph (12) are suspended until a quorum is formed.
(16) If, under standing order 29(2), there is found not to be a quorum during a division:
    (a) the provisions under paragraph (12) are suspended;
(b) the bells must be rung for a further 4 minutes;
(c) the chamber will be composed of the Chair and no more than 40 other members, being 23 from the government, 13 from the opposition, one Greens member and three Independent members for the remainder of the sitting day; and
(d) if more members than those listed in paragraph (c) vote in the division, the Clerk will not count their vote.

Divisions

(17) For questions relating to the passage of bills on the government business program, the provisions under paragraph (12) are suspended and divisions will take place as follows:
(a) members will vote in up to four voting groups;
(b) for each voting group:
   (i) no more than 24 members, in addition to the Chair, the Leader of the House and Manager of Opposition Business (or their representatives), will be permitted into the chamber;
   (ii) the Chair will direct that the doors be locked and state the question being voted on;
   (iii) the Chair will ask members who are voting ‘aye’ to stand in their place and, in turn, will ask members who are voting ‘no’ to stand in their place;
   (iv) the Clerk will count the votes and the Chair will announce the number of votes cast for the ‘ayes’ and ‘noes’ in that group;
   (v) subject to sub-paragraph (d), all members except the Chair must then leave the chamber;
   (vi) the Chair will then ask the Clerk to ring the bells for 1 minute to call members to the chamber for the next voting group, or to resume the make-up of the chamber as set out in paragraph (12), as required;
(c) subject to sub-paragraph (d), members will only be permitted to enter the chamber once for each division and any member present in the chamber must vote;
(d) the Leader of the House and Manager of Opposition Business, or their representatives, may remain in the chamber for the entirety of the division, but can only stand to vote in one group; and
(e) at the conclusion of the four voting groups, the Chair will announce the result of the division.

Register of opinion on division questions

(18) If a division has taken place, a member not in attendance for the division can register their opinion on the question:
(a) any members wishing to do so must notify the Clerk in writing of their opinion (either ‘aye’ or ‘no’) on the same day the division took place by no later than 1 hour after the house adjourns; and
(b) any such opinion will be published, separately from the results of the vote, in *Hansard* and the *Votes and Proceedings*.

Motion agreed to.

Members

MINISTER FOR PORTS AND FREIGHT

MINISTER FOR PREVENTION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

MINISTER FOR ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

ASSISTANT TREASURER

Absence

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (12:04): I rise to inform the house that today I will answer questions for the following portfolios: consumer affairs, gaming and liquor regulation, ports and freight, fishing and boating; Aboriginal affairs, prevention of family violence, women; energy, environment and climate change, solar homes; and Assistant Treasurer, regulatory reform, government services, creative industries.
SHADOW MINISTRY

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (12:05): I am pleased to inform the house of changes to the shadow ministry.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier!

Mr M O'BRIEN: I have added the position of Shadow Minister for COVID Recovery to my responsibilities. The Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party and member for Eildon is now the Shadow Minister for Tourism, Major Events and Sport as well as the Shadow Minister for Regional Cities. The member for Bulleen is now the Shadow Minister for Finance, Shadow Minister for Jobs and Trade and Shadow Minister for Business Precincts. The member for Croydon is now the Shadow Minister for Education, Shadow Minister for Early Childhood, Shadow Minister for Higher Education and Shadow Minister for Training and Skills. The member for Mornington is now the Shadow Minister for Public Sector Integrity and Transparency as well as the Shadow Minister for Bay Protection, Shadow Minister for Fishing and Boating and Shadow Minister for Ageing. The member for Warrandyte is now the Shadow Minister for Manufacturing and Innovation as well as the Shadow Minister for Energy and Renewables and Shadow Minister for Resources.

In the Legislative Council I can announce that Mr Gordon Rich-Phillips is now the Shadow Minister for Government Services, Shadow Minister for Regulatory Reform and Shadow Minister for the Digital Economy as well as Shadow Minister for Aviation.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (12:06): My question is to the Premier. On Sunday the federal Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs said:

We have said we would not sign up to the BRI. We have made clear our position on that. Our position is different from that of the Victorian Labor government.

What information does the Premier possess about the national security risks posed by Belt and Road that Senator Penny Wong does not have?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (12:07): I do thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question, and can I make it plain to him that I am in no position to attest to what information Senator Wong does or does not have, which then makes your question, I think, well, very difficult to answer. I cannot stand here—the way this question has been designed and constructed as an act of tactical genius—I cannot speak for what information, briefing, state of mind or positions are held by Senator Wong. I am not Senator Wong.

Mr M O’BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (12:07): Serious China experts such as the director of defence, strategy and national security at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Michael Shoebridge, have characterised the Premier’s stance on China as naïve, dated and ‘to misunderstand China under Xi’ and the Chinese Communist Party. Premier, why are these national security experts wrong?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (12:08): Again I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The link between the two questions is not quite obvious to me, but still, what I would say is that there are many different views, there are many different opinions, on Australia’s relationship with China. One view and opinion—one fact indeed that should be beyond any doubt at all, and debate—is that this relationship is not in a good place, and that is not good for any Victorian worker, any Victorian business or for our state. That is not good news for any Victorian, unless of course your only motivation—not jobs, not exports, not wealth, not prosperity—is politics. If that is your only motivation—and who might I be referring to—
Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Stand up and take a bow. Always the politics and never the—

Mr M’O’Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question. His Belt and Road deal has failed to protect Victorian jobs in barley, in wine, in education, in—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I ask the Premier to come back to answering the question.

Mr ANDREWS: The Leader of the Opposition is suggesting that the deterioration in Australia-China relations is somehow the fault of our government here in Victoria. Really, you may have elevated some people but you are back down the low road again.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: COVID-19

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (12:09): I am delighted to be able to confirm that today is the 39th consecutive day with zero cases of coronavirus across our community. This is a testament to every single Victorian, whether they be in metropolitan Melbourne right in the centre of the city, the suburbs of Melbourne, regional cities or the smallest of country towns. Every single Victorian across the board has shown character, courage, conviction and, in some respects most importantly, they have shown a compassion toward each other that is a point of pride for their fellow Victorians and most certainly a point of pride for our government.

On Sunday, because of the amazing efforts of the Victorian community, we were able to make very significant announcements about the further easing of restrictions to lock in a COVID-safe summer. It is our anticipation that we will not need to make further changes for a couple of months. We will have a look at these matters of course off the best public health advice. There may be further changes in January, but this is a period of relative stability and indeed a series of restrictions that I think exceeded the expectations of many, which has led to some very positive commentary and support from many across industry and across Victorian communities.

However, a COVID-safe summer is not a normal summer. This virus is still with us across our nation. Many parts of the world are literally on fire with quite tragic consequences as we look forward to their winter. Thirty-nine days is not the same as a vaccine, but the changes in hospitality, changes in home gatherings, changes for weddings and funerals, changes for faith gatherings—across the board these are the results of following the doctors, the data and the science, not being distracted by the loudest voices, not being distracted by the perennial critics but instead having the courage of your convictions to set a strategy and get the job done. That is what Victorians have achieved and I am proud of every single one of them.

ECONOMY

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (12:11): My question is to the Treasurer. Standard & Poor’s has attributed the loss of Victoria’s AAA credit rating to the Labor government’s massive debt, massive deficit and inability to get on top of expenses. Now Victoria has the worst credit rating of any state, yet the Treasurer has dismissed these concerns as being of little consequence. How is Victoria losing this clear advantage to every other state not important?

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (12:12): Well, I genuinely do thank the member for Ripon for her question, because there could have been no more selective reading of Standard & Poor’s assessment or indeed the assessment—

Members interjecting.
Mr PALLAS: Well, okay. I am being invited to give you my assessment. How about this: Standard & Poor’s said that the economic recovery that is underway in Victoria will be supported by the government spending initiatives—number one. Number two—Standard & Poor’s said, in talking about the state of Victoria and the Victorian economy, its ‘wealthy and diversified economy’, its ‘strong financial management’ and its ‘exceptional liquidity’—that is what Standard & Poor’s actually said. They must have missed that bit. Also, Standard & Poor’s talked about:

… the economy is recovering and remains structurally wealthy and diverse on a global scale.

Further, they considered ‘Victoria’s strong financial management’. Again they talk about strong financial management, they were showering us with accolades about how we have managed this:

… ensure liquidity coverage is comprehensive during this period of disruption. Australia’s extremely supportive and predictable institutional framework continues to support the rating.

Now, importantly, Standard & Poor’s were not on their own. They were supported in many respects in recognising that this is an economic event that is having impacts right across the world. In practical terms we know where the leadership of this nation is at as opposed to where the base politics of this state is at. The leadership of this nation is saying, ‘Get out and invest. Increase debt, because if you don’t increase debt, you effectively compromise the future’. That is exactly what we are doing. And to quote the governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia, of course:

A downgrade of credit rating does not concern me—
the governor of the Reserve Bank. He went on to say:

What is of more concern is that people don’t have jobs.

So there is our priority writ large, and we are out there doing it. This government knows how to create jobs. The only jobs they create is for their back bench to keep them away from the member for Malvern. He went on to say on 14 August that:

… I think preserving credit ratings is not particularly important. What’s important is that we use the public balance sheet in a time of crisis to create jobs for people.

And that is exactly what we are doing. But of course it is well-known that many economic commentators agree with that view.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (12:15): Yesterday S&P downgraded Victoria’s credit rating by two steps, losing the AAA. When asked if he had a time frame to return Victoria to AAA, the Treasurer said yesterday, ‘Well, no’. Having had 24 hours to reflect on that answer, when does the Victorian government plan to return Victoria’s credit rating to the equivalent of our major competitor, New South Wales?

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (12:15): Well, Speaker, to be very clear, and I will be clear about this, this government is not setting its policies of economic recovery and job creation on the back of credit worthiness assessments by international credit agencies. We are making the decisions that are important for Victorians, providing them with the support that they need at this vital time. We are growing jobs and we are also growing the economic efficiency of this economy. That will be our—

Ms Staley interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ripon!

Mr PALLAS: But the member for Ripon asked the question: when would we anticipate that we return to AAA? That will be a matter for the ratings agencies. What I can assure you is—

Ms Staley interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ripon will come to order.
Mr PALLAS: the economically responsible approach that we have taken and was underpinned and recognised by Standard & Poor’s will continue to be a feature of this government’s approach.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: COVID-19

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (12:17): I rise today to update the house on the resumption of flights for return travellers to Victoria. Yesterday I had the opportunity to be airside at Melbourne Airport and see many of the Australians and Victorians who were returning home, all very joyful about the opportunity to get back home before Christmas. We are seeing another 128 who are due today. During that period yesterday, I was able to meet with our infection control workers, our healthcare workers, our COVID-19 Quarantine Victoria staff and police, who are all in action at the airport and also at our hotels, taking passengers through a very strict process—sometimes a long process but a very strict process—to ensure their safety and the safety of our communities. They have been training and preparing for this for many months now, and the day went to plan, as today is going to plan.

Victorians can be assured that this hotel reset, the reset of the hotel quarantine program, is not only completely overhauled but it is the best in the country: no private security—the only place in the country without private security; police playing a significant role around security and enforcement; ADF providing assistance; ID of all staff, testing of all staff, exclusivity of all staff working at one site; all contracts under one department and one minister; testing of families where we need to; and contact tracing and infection prevention and control embedded in the program. This model has been given the tick by Professor Jane Halton, who said, in fact in the Sunraysia Daily the other day, that during this time we have thought about every single element of the system: ‘they have done a … good job of redesign’. Also, the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee gave it a gold tick, a gold standard. This is a new program delivering better benefits to passengers and to our Victorian community.

ECONOMY

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (12:19): My question is to the Treasurer. In stripping Victoria of our longstanding AAA credit rating, Standard & Poor’s noted:

… the Victorian government’s path to fiscal repair will be more challenging and prolonged than other states because of the significant increase in debt …

The government places stabilising debt as the final step in a medium-term scheme. When does the government plan to start repaying the debt?

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (12:19): I thank the member for Ripon for her question. I make the bleedingly obvious point, I suppose it would be, that if you do not adopt a four-pronged approach, a four-stage strategy, then you cannot distort the steps by which you actually get to debt stability. The first step has to be we grow the economy and we create jobs, otherwise you do not get the vitality in the economy.

The second thing we do is deliver an operating cash surplus. The third thing we do is operate a surplus, and the final thing that the state does is deal with debt stability. You cannot stabilise your debt profile if you are running deficits, so you have to do it in this order. Like for New South Wales, who are running a deficit through the entire forward estimates period—just like us—debt will continue to be an issue until we get to a position where we are running surpluses.

We are reducing 75 per cent of our debt position over the forward estimates period, so clearly we are demonstrating that we are stabilising the position, and we expect that we will grow jobs and we will grow the economy due to the massive investment that is contained in this budget. We are following the invocation that the Reserve Bank governor, the deputy governor, the federal Treasurer and every state and territory treasurer has endorsed, and that is we must invest in the community. Of course many economic commentators have stated that.

If ever there was a good time to lose a AAA credit rating, it is right now …
said Terry McCrann.

There are three big reasons why in 2020 it’s not that big a deal …

Terry McCrann—not a noted supporter of Labor governments, might I say. He went on to say:

Now, any increase would be all-but insignificant in cost.

On the fundamental proposition the Wall Street Journal journalist, James Glynn, in today’s Australian—again, not a noted supporter of this government—said that:

If all that happens in the face of the biggest economic shock in nearly 100 years is that a few states are downgraded slightly, that’s really not a big deal.

Well, it is only a big deal for those who want to make politics their principal mode of operation and the welfare of the Victorian people a secondary consideration. Let it be known and let it be clear: our priority is the welfare and wellbeing of Victorians. We are making the necessary investments to support them. Those investments will grow our economy, and we will eventually reach a stable operating position.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (12:22): Noting Labor’s trifecta of debt, deficit and ballooning expenditure, which generation will begin the arduous task of repairing Victoria’s economic future?

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (12:23): This is a 100-year, once-in-a-lifetime event. Let me be very clear: if you are worried about our debt, you must be absolutely mortified about the federal government’s debt as they rapidly approach $1 trillion, or 44 per cent of GDP, as opposed to Victoria, which at the end of the forward estimates still hits 29 per cent debt to gross state product. So there can be no doubt that this government is adopting an approach that every responsible government in the nation is applying, and only an irresponsible opposition would start to talk about intergenerational deficits. Let us be clear: young people will be the beneficiaries of the investments we are making now. As we quadruple infrastructure spending we grow the infrastructure for the future, and we will help them get into accessible and affordable housing.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (12:24): I rise to update the house about how the Andrews Labor government is supporting Victorian schools to recruit and retain teachers. Late last year I announced a $244.6 million package, and that included financial incentives of up to $50 000 to encourage teachers to work in hard-to-staff positions in schools right across Victoria and, to support Victoria’s best school leaders, a further 40 executive principals to take on the most challenging and specialised roles. This includes a yearly retention amount of up to $9000 for three years to encourage teachers to remain in those positions for longer, and this was part of the biggest ever investment in teaching quality in Victoria’s history.

I can advise the house that we are well on track with our targets and so far have appointed 147 teachers at hard-to-staff schools, 40 maths and science teachers, 12 special education teachers and 21 English teachers. From 21 July a further 250 teachers will be recruited, bringing the total to 450 teachers recruited as part of this program. I can advise the house that 70 per cent of these appointments are in rural and regional Victoria—absolutely consistent with the commitment that we made—and of course we are recruiting 4100 teachers as part of the tutor program.

When it comes to recruiting and retaining teachers, there are other approaches. There are some who in their very first speech in Parliament talked about their desire to sack teachers—none other than the opposition’s new Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education. When it comes to teachers, we are looking to hire; those opposite are always looking to fire. There is a stark difference always when it comes to education.
YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM

Dr READ (Brunswick) (12:26): A question for the Attorney-General: the state has fined at least 2000 children under 18 for coronavirus-related offences this year, and children from low-income families have been disproportionately hit by fines—some of $1600, some of even $5000, amounts higher than even the Children’s Court can impose—and they can only be contested in the adult Magistrates Court. Many teenagers now have large unpaid fines threatening their futures, and many have no realistic prospects for paying them. Will the government now waive these fines for children?

Ms HENNESSY (Altona—Attorney-General) (12:27): I thank the member for Brunswick for his question. Of course the government does not make decisions around waiving fines. The imposition of a fine is usually made by an enforcement body. There are processes where fines can be appealed, and there are supports for many people—from the community legal sector through to those that support disadvantaged communities that can assist people should they have a compelling case to challenge a fine or to have a fine withdrawn—but the government has no intention of withdrawing fines that have been lawfully imposed.

Dr READ (Brunswick) (12:27): I thank the Attorney-General for the answer. The state’s new youth justice strategy says that interactions between youth and the criminal justice system should be kept to a minimum. Given the Attorney-General’s answer, what plans does the government have to protect these children from adverse outcomes resulting from attempts to extract payment for these fines?

Ms HENNESSY (Altona—Attorney-General) (12:28): Again may I thank the member for Brunswick for his question. A minute would not give me enough time to talk about the reform and the investment that this government is making around early intervention and changing the lives of young people. From the work and the investment that is being done in the education sector to things like the intervention that is occurring in places like the Children’s Court—things like the family and children’s drug court to divert and support people; things like the youth justice strategy that is being led by the Minister for Youth Justice, which is very focused on intervention and diversion; things like fundamentally expanding and investing in things like child protection and investing in things like the prevention of and protection from family violence, where children are so often the silent victims, ensuring that we are able to support law reform that protects children where we have got things like mandatory reporting—the investment goes on and on, and we are not done yet. It is something that we will continue to commit to because we believe that every child in this state deserves a rich and fulfilling future.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: COMMUNITY SPORT

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke—Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Youth) (12:29): I rise to provide an update on the continued record investment in community sport by the Andrews Labor government highlighted in the Victorian budget. This budget is all about putting people first, and people are at the heart of community sport right across Victoria. Whether it is the participants or coaches, volunteers or officials, trainers or umpires, community sport is a foundation stone of local communities right across the state, and this budget continues to invest in community sport to the tune of $164 million. This includes $110 million for another round of the community sport infrastructure stimulus program and $27 million for various local infrastructure programs, including the successful Female Friendly Facilities Fund. Together this $137 million investment takes the government’s total investment in community sport infrastructure to more than $1.05 billion since 2014.

But it does not end there. This government knows that families and sporting clubs have done it tough during the pandemic and money is tight. We do not want to see cost as a barrier to participation in local sport, something so fundamental to our way of life and so important for the health and wellbeing of our children. That is why the Andrews Labor government is investing $21 million in the Get Active kids voucher program, a first for any Victorian state government. This will see 100 000 eligible children obtain vouchers of up to $200 for membership fees and subscriptions and uniforms or equipment. And we are also investing another $6 million in the popular sporting club grants program.
so that sporting clubs can purchase new uniforms and equipment to ensure that they have what they need for their players so they can operate in a COVID-safe way. These investments are critically important, and they are made possible by this Andrews Labor government.

**BUDGET 2020–21**

**Ms STALEY** (Ripon) (12:31): My question is to the Treasurer. Victoria’s budget deficits over the next four years total $47.9 billion—more than the budget deficits of every other state combined. Victoria is not even one quarter of the national economy. Why is Victoria’s deficit greater than all of the other states combined?

**Mr PALLAS** (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (12:31): Well, I do thank the member for Ripon for asking me this question because it gives me the opportunity to contextualise the debt and the deficit in the state of Victoria. Perhaps I could contextualise it by putting the size of the state debt of the state of Victoria as less, even accounting for different accounting treatments, than the deficit this year alone for the federal government. Let us try and get our head around that number. You could not even—

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Manager of Opposition Business!

**Mr PALLAS:** So isn’t it funny that those opposite are so worried about debt and deficit, of course except when it affects the federal government. But the federal government, the federal Treasurer and this government are as one on this matter. We understand that we have to fire the fiscal guns to effectively create jobs and opportunities for this state.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr PALLAS:** As I have indicated today, of course the *Wall Street Journal*, through the *Australian* and an article by James Flynn, said this:

> If all that happens in the face of the …

biggest hundred-year shock

… is that a few states are downgraded slightly, that’s … not a big deal.

But he then went on to say that—

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I just ask the Treasurer to cease for a moment. I need to be able to hear the Treasurer’s answer, and I cannot hear parts of it because of the shouting coming from across the table.

A member interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Treasurer has the call.

**Mr PALLAS:** It does give us a great opportunity to reflect upon the strategies that many people bring to the table around how we assist this state and this community in healing and dealing with economic opportunity. James Flynn—Glynn rather—went on to say—

**Ms Staley:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I asked the Treasurer about comparisons to other states and their deficits, and we are nowhere near that. I would ask you to bring him back to relevance.

**Ms Allan** interjected.
The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the House! The question that rounded off that question was why the Victorian budget deficit is greater than all the other states combined. It is a broad question, and the Treasurer is being relevant to it.

Mr PALLAS: There is no doubt that the approach that this government is adopting is one that certainly has the support and indeed the compliance of other jurisdictions. We are all doing the heavy lifting to assist the economy, and we will continue to do that, because ultimately if you do not you consign the future to higher levels of inactivity. And lesser economic activity means less jobs. So I think one of the interesting comments was from the Reserve Bank governor, who spoke before a parliamentary committee earlier this month where he said:

I think preserving credit ratings are not particularly important.
We should use the public balance sheet to create jobs for people, not preserve credit ratings …
and that is exactly what we are doing. We are using the public balance sheet to preserve and to assert the opportunities for the Victorian people.

But there is an alternative strategy. We can seek to run surplus budgets like those opposite, as the member for Malvern actively sought to encourage us to do. You would consign the future to a much, much more difficult economic outlook going forward if we had.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (12:35): At the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee the Premier admitted he did not have a plan to return Victoria to a balanced budget, saying that, and I quote—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on both sides of the house!

Ms STALEY: I quote:

I am not able to provide you with a long-term repayment plan. I am simply able to point out to you … I hope, that we will service our borrowings …

Treasurer, what year will Victoria’s budget return to balance?

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (12:36): Well, I do not accept the proposition in the question. The Premier was very much aware of and continues to support the strategy that was contained in the budget, and we will continue to do that. Of course the first step in our four-step path is to grow economic recovery and jobs, and that will determine the time lines by which we get to operating cash surplus, operating surplus and of course we stabilise debt. That is the four-pronged approach that we are adopting. The Premier has been instrumental in formulating that strategy with me as Treasurer, and it is one that this government will single-focusedly pursue.

Ms Staley: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this question really only needed a one-word answer, and it is what year. I would ask you to ask the Treasurer to address that.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer is being relevant to the question.

Mr PALLAS: I have been asked this question on a number of occasions, and we know that New South Wales will not be in surplus in their forward estimates period. But we would anticipate that in years five to eight of the next set of forward estimates we will return to surplus. That is our intention. The fact that we have reduced our deficit by 75 per cent over the forward estimates period gives a very clear indication of where we are heading.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie—Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (12:38): I rise to update the house on the steps the Andrews Labor government is taking to keep Victorians moving as we enter COVID normal and return passengers to the public transport system
and invest in our $70 billion Big Build. Last week I announced 450 additional services each week would be added to our metropolitan network and our regional network as part of our major timetable upgrade to be launched on 31 January. These new services will be added on our busiest routes, but also, as something the Public Transport Users Association have long campaigned for, is the biggest investment ever in our off-peak services. To make it even easier for metropolitan travellers we are providing a 30 per cent discount to incentivise off-peak travel for three months. These services will improve frequency, reliability and consistency across our network and really get us on the path to that turn-up-and-go system.

Of the 450 new services, 280 will be on the metropolitan network and 170 on the regional network, and we are reaping the benefits of the massive Ballarat upgrade. I congratulate the transport infrastructure minister for her work on this very important initiative, but also the members for Wendouree, Buninyong and Melton are very excited about this change. Last week I travelled on the Frankston line to meet the member for Frankston, and we are adding another 90 services on the Cranbourne-Pakenham line, 45 on the Frankston line and 45 additional services on the Geelong line.

The coronavirus pandemic has dramatically changed the way Victorians are moving around and the way they are travelling. These additional services to incentivise off-peak travel will support travellers in the Victorian community as we move towards a COVID normal—more room on our trains, more room on our platforms, targeting investment in dwell time and really making sure we capitalise on the record investment in our city-shaping Big Build.

Constituency questions

EUROA ELECTORATE

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (12:40): (5074) My question is to the Minister for Education. Over the weekend the community of Puckapunyal lost their primary school in a fire. About 80 per cent of the school was destroyed. My heart goes out to the students, the teachers and the families at that school, which has a reputation for excellence under the leadership of its principal, Kevin Warne. They have endured a year of great destruction, like students everywhere. But now Pucka students will have to complete their school year at Seymour College, and I would ask: will the minister outline the time frame for rebuilding the school and commit to allowing the school to keep the $207 000 grant they received in this year’s budget from the Minor Capital Works Fund? This money was going to be used to improve the play area out the back of the school by laying artificial turf, so I ask the minister to ensure this project proceeds in addition to providing the funding that the school needs in order to completely rebuild.

IVANHOE ELECTORATE

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (12:41): (5075) My constituency question is to the Minister for Housing. Firstly I would like to congratulate him on the $5.3 billion investment in the 2020–21 state budget with regard to public housing and in particular for the funding arrangements that will allow 130 new townhouses and apartments to be built in Tarakan Street, West Heidelberg. I would like an update from the minister on the Bell Bardia public housing estate and how those funds that have been outlined in the budget will be providing the opportunity for us to redevelop that Bell Bardia public housing estate in West Heidelberg. I seek an update on that project—a project for which I was fortunate enough to chair the West Heidelberg public housing renewal project consultative committee, which has seen this commitment for the Tarakan estate of 130 dwellings that we will be building there out of this $5.3 billion commitment. But I know that my community is keen to see how the Bell Bardia estate will also benefit from this announcement.

ROWVILLE ELECTORATE

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (12:42): (5076) My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, when will the schools in my electorate of Rowville receive much-needed funding? Scoresby, Karoo, Carrington, Heany Park, Rowville, Lysterfield and Park Ridge primary schools as well as Rowville Secondary and Scoresby Secondary College have all received zero funding in this year’s state budget.
How is it fair on the students, the teachers and all the hardworking staff? This government boasts about funding and Victoria being the Education State, yet many of these schools are in desperate need of upgrades and have been consistently neglected by the state Labor government. I specifically raised the urgent need for Carrington Primary School to receive much-needed funding back in June this year, and this has still been ignored. This government claims to govern for all, but this is clearly not the case.

**PASCOE VALE ELECTORATE**

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) (12:43): (5077) My consistency question is to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, and the question I ask is: what support will be made available through the 2020–21 Victorian budget to VFL clubs like the Coburg Lions football club for their future growth and development? The Coburg Football Club is a great football club, a great tradition in Coburg, and it was very excited to be able to continue its operations as a standalone club. But this year has been incredibly tough, particularly for local sporting clubs and for clubs like the Coburg Lions football club. It is experiencing these challenges as a standalone VFL club, competing against those clubs that have the support of an AFL club alongside their VFL club. As we continue to sustain our COVID-safe practices in Victoria and pave the way for recovery, local clubs like Coburg are doing a lot of hard work to transition back and prepare for a stronger future, and I am so pleased to see that our Andrews Labor government’s $3 million investment in transforming the Coburg Football Club’s home base is progressing and complementing all the great work that they are doing both on and off the field. But I am keen to communicate back to the club what other support there is.

**SANDRINGHAM ELECTORATE**

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (12:44): (5078) My constituency question is to the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, and I ask: will the minister provide me with a detailed account of the Victorian Labor government’s engagement with Highett, Cheltenham and Pennydale residents prior to announcing the commencement of the Suburban Rail Loop at the Sir William Fry Reserve? In a press release dated 16 November 2020 the government stated that the Suburban Rail Loop’s locations:

… have been determined following … consultation with local stakeholders and the community.

This was reiterated in a letter which I received from the minister on 30 November, when she asserted that:

Residents in and around Cheltenham have been overwhelming supportive … of the project. So why then have I received dozens of emails from residents to say that they had no warning about the works at Sir William Fry Reserve? It begs the question: what consultation has actually taken place, and how can the government assert overwhelming support for a project that local residents have not been consulted about? In my view the residents of Highett, Cheltenham and Pennydale deserve much better than this.

**BURWOOD ELECTORATE**

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (12:45): (5079) My question is directed to the Minister for Suburban Development in the other place, the Honourable Shaun Leane. Minister, the City of Boroondara in my electorate of Burwood was recently successful in its application to the Neighbourhood Activity Centre Renewal Fund for revitalisation works on Highfield Road in Camberwell, specifically the installation of new footpaths, street furniture, public seating areas, trees and greenery, a new mural and expanded outdoor dining areas. This is a great little shopping strip typical of the many leafy, local and loved neighbourhood shopping precincts right across the eastern suburbs, including my electorate of Burwood. Next to Highfield Park, falling between Riversdale and Toorak Roads, it is home to a great range of cafes and restaurants as well as personal and health services. Labor’s investment will ensure the long-term survival of this strip and many like it. Minister, could you please advise the next steps to deliver these works at this important shopping district in the electorate of Burwood and outline the benefit of Labor’s support for local shopping strips to all Victorians?
CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS
Tuesday, 8 December 2020
Legislative Assembly

SHEPPARTON ELECTORATE

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (12:46): (5080) My constituency question is to the Minister for Government Services. Minister, what is the government doing to support regional Victorian businesses to manufacture and grow jobs locally through the government’s procurement system? It is good to see that the government has created this new portfolio. As the Independent member for Shepparton, a number of regional businesses have made representations to me about their inability to get government preferred supplier list access. One example is SPC. They supply fruit and vegetables to a number of Victorian public hospitals, and while they have had some success in this, they still have to struggle to get entry in a number of ways. Ensuring regional suppliers and businesses have preferred supplier status for government goods and services is one way to support regional businesses who have been hit hard this year by the coronavirus.

WENDOUREE ELECTORATE

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (12:47): (5081) My question is directed to the Minister for Regional Development in the other place. It is about how the Andrews Labor government is supporting regional communities by creating jobs, supporting local businesses and building our economy. I wish to thank the minister for her strong, strategic, ongoing support of regional development projects in my community of Ballarat. My question is: how will the 2020–21 Victorian budget deliver economic growth and job growth for my electorate of Wendouree? I welcome the $8 billion committed in the 2020–21 Victorian budget for regional Victoria to support communities like mine to recover after COVID and be even stronger than before. I am so proud to be a part of the Andrews Labor government, with ministers such as the Attorney-General, that puts people first in all that it does by investing in health, education, tourism and community sport to create jobs and build regional communities and also support the law in my community.

POLWARTH ELECTORATE

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (12:48): (5082) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Can the minister confirm that in his recent announcements of much-needed catch-up road funding in the south-west for tourism and dairy, immediate announcements for the Lavers Hill-Cobden Road in the Corangamite shire will be made? In only a few short weeks the local councillor of the area, Cr Jo Beard, and her community have gathered 989 signatures of support for this important road, which carries both heavy local produce of milk and cattle, feed and agricultural machinery and also, in non-COVID times, thousands of visitors to our region who are unfamiliar with the poor and treacherous road conditions. The locals in this area are tired of the continuing trend of state government road officials using speed signs as an almost permanent solution to poor road surfaces. Great lengths of this supposedly 100-kilometre-an-hour road are limited to 80-kilometre, 60-kilometre and even 40-kilometre road signs in a feeble attempt to keep people safe. The Simpson-Cobden farming community needs this investment immediately.

HAWTHORN ELECTORATE

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (12:49): (5083) My question is for the Minister for Housing concerning the government’s unprecedented investment in public and community housing. Building more than 12,000 new homes, the investment ensures that thousands of Victorians have a place to call home and thousands more have a job. It will deliver secure, modern and affordable homes built to 7-star energy efficiency standards, which makes them more comfortable during summer and winter as well as saving on power bills. I am pleased that the redevelopment site of Bills Street in Hawthorn will host some of these new homes. My question is: how many buildings will be built at Bills Street, and when will construction commence? I look forward to the minister’s response.
BILLS

Legislative Assembly
Tuesday, 8 December 2020

Bills

PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING AMENDMENT (QUARANTINE FEES) BILL 2020

Introduction and first reading

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (12:50): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 to provide for quarantine fees, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

Ms NEVILLE: Under standing order 61(3)(b) I advise the house that the other parties and Independent members have been provided with a copy of the bill and a briefing in accordance with the standing order. I therefore move:

That this bill be read a second time immediately.

Motion agreed to.

The SPEAKER: I ask the house to pause while the bill is circulated.

Statement of compatibility


Opening paragraphs


In my opinion, the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with human rights as set out in the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview

The Bill seeks to make amendments to the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 to allow the charging of fees for mandatory quarantine for international travellers.

Importantly, the Bill enables the Victorian Government to make regulations relating to the prescribing of fees payable in relation to a quarantined person’s period of detention, which must be reasonably referable to costs incurred by the State, and to the waiving and paying of those fees. The amendments will be made by inserting new sections 238A to 238E, 247 and 248, and a new Part 14 into the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, to enable these regulations to be made. As the amendments are specific to the impacts of COVID-19 on the State, the amendments will be temporary and will be repealed on 31 December 2021.

The Bill provides that a ‘quarantined person’ is liable to pay to the State prescribed fees relating to their detention at a specified place of detention. The fees will be payable in manner, or method, as specified in the regulations which will be made at a future date. This includes allowing the regulations to make provision for instalment or payment plans, concessional fees, waivers, the imposition of conditions for instalment or payment plans, and manner in which applications may be made relating to those matters.

A quarantined person is defined as a person:

1. who has arrived in Victoria from overseas, or another State or a Territory after travelling directly to Victoria after arriving from overseas in that State or Territory, and
2. who, for the purpose of eliminating or reducing the serious risk to public health posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, is detained under section 200(1) of the Public Health and Wellbeing
Act 2008 at a place specified by an authorised officer pursuant to that section on or after the commencement of that clause of the Bill.

The majority of the charter impacts will be assessed when the regulations are made.

Human Rights Issues

For the following reasons, I am satisfied that the Bill is compatible with the Charter and, if any rights are limited, those limitations are reasonable and demonstrably justified having regard to the factors in section 7(2) of the Charter.

The Bill itself will only have minimal effects on the Charter rights of persons. However, the regulations imposed under the powers may have an effect on the Charter rights of persons when the regulations are made. The impact that any regulations made under the Bill might have on the rights of individuals will be considered when a human rights certificate is developed for the regulations.

The measures in the Bill are designed to support the State’s overall public health framework by allowing the State to recover the reasonably referrable costs of services provided by the State to ‘quarantined persons’ to manage public health risks from the COVID-19 pandemic. The government is obliged to use all means necessary to protect the health and life of all persons in Victoria and these reforms support the State’s obligations to do so.

Where the Bill may have impacts on Charter rights, an overview is provided below.

Right to life

The amendments in the Bill promote the right to life in Victoria by supporting the State’s response to the risks posed by COVID-19. Section 9 of the Charter provides that every person has the right to life and has the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of life:

In the present circumstances, the COVID-19 virus is life threatening and continues to be a present and real threat to life. The Bill furthers these rights, particularly in relation to vulnerable members of society who are at particular risk from a broad and unrestricted spread of COVID-19, by supporting the State’s existing regulatory framework to enforce mandatory quarantine on them by ensuring the State can recover the reasonable cost of providing mandatory quarantine imposed on ‘quarantined persons’. The Bill therefore supports the State’s overall regulatory framework which allows for the promotion of individuals’ right to life, health, and the broader public health of the Victorian community.

The impact of the reforms is reasonable and proportionate in all the circumstances and compatible with the right to life, and the impact of the regulations on the right to life will be considered when a human rights certificate is developed for the regulations.

I consider the Bill to be consistent with the right to life in section 9 of the Charter.

Right to property

Section 20 of the Charter provides that a person must not be deprived of their property other than in accordance with law. There are three elements to this right:

1. the interest interfered with must be ‘property’, which includes all real and personal property interests recognised under the general law;
2. the interference must amount to a ‘deprivation’ of property, that is, any ‘de facto expropriation’ by means of a substantial restriction in fact on a person’s use or enjoyment of their property; and
3. the deprivation must not be ‘in accordance with law’ in that the law must be adequately accessible and formulated with sufficient precision to enable the person to regulate their conduct.

The regulations made under the reforms in the Bill may require the payment (deprivation) of fees in the form of money, which is a form of property interest recognised by law. However, as the regulations will require the payment of the fees in accordance with the law, and there will be significant flexibility as the Bill provides for the ability for the regulations to allow fees to be waived (in part or full), and for the payment of fees by way of payment plans or instalments, this will be ‘deprivation’ in accordance with law. The flexible payment arrangements will minimise the impacts on the right to property held by quarantined persons. The fees imposed by the regulations must also be reasonably referrable to the costs of goods and services incurred by the State in detaining a quarantined person at a specified place in detention.

While the fees may be collected retrospectively under the regulations from 7 December 2020, this will not be an unreasonable or disproportionate impact because the Government will have announced the imposition of the fees ahead of the commencement of this Bill. The announcement allows the fees to be generally accessible in a way so that persons who may be required to pay fees, and know this in advance before the implementation of the regulations that they will need to pay fees if they are a returning overseas traveller to Victoria, or if they
need to be detained for the purpose of eliminating or reducing the serious risk to public health posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Any such measures imposed under the regulations will need to be reasonable and proportionate in all the circumstances in order to be compatible with the right to property under the Charter and the impact of the regulations on the right to property will be considered when a human rights certificate is developed for the regulations.

In addition, the retrospective operation of any regulations to be made will not impose retrospective criminal laws (section 27 of the Charter).

I consider the Bill to be consistent with the right to property under section 20 of the Charter.

Right to Equality

Section 8(2) of the Charter provides that every person has the right to enjoy their human rights without discrimination. Section 8(3) of the Charter provides that every person is entitled to equal protection of the law without discrimination and has the right to equal and effective protection against discrimination. The purpose of this component of the right to equality is to ensure that all laws and policies are applied equally, and do not have a discriminatory effect. ‘Discrimination’ under the Charter is defined by reference to the definition in the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (EO Act) on the basis of an attribute in section 6 of that Act, which includes age, race, sex, disability and parental status amongst many others.

It is possible that the fees imposed under regulations made under the Bill on ‘quarantined persons’ may potentially amount to either direct or indirect discrimination under the EO Act because of the differential effect that their use may have on certain groups of people. Indirect discrimination occurs where there is a requirement, condition or practice imposed that is the same for everyone but disadvantages a person, or is likely to disadvantage a person, because they have one or more of the protected attributes, and the requirement, condition or practice is not reasonable. Direct discrimination occurs where a person treats a person with an attribute unfavourably because of that attribute.

As any imposition of fees under any proposed regulations under the Bill’s reforms may give rise to direct or indirect discrimination and they will need to be reasonable and proportionate in all the circumstances in order to be compatible with the right to equality. The Bill provides for the ability for the regulations to allow fees to be waived, in part or full, and for the payment of fees by way of payment plans or instalments. This provides significant flexibility to minimise direct or indirect discrimination against ‘quarantined persons’. The fees imposed by the regulations must also be reasonably referable to the costs of goods and services incurred by the State in detaining a quarantined person at a specified place in detention. It is also reasonable that these costs may vary depending on the relevant needs of different quarantined persons. The Bill allows the regulations to include minimum, maximum or scaled fees as appropriate to minimise the effects of any direct or indirect discrimination caused by the regulations.

Therefore, the impact of the reforms are reasonable and proportionate in all the circumstances and compatible with the right to equality, and the impact the regulations on the right to equality will be considered when a human rights certificate is developed for the regulations.

I consider the Bill to be consistent with the right to equality in section 8(3) of the Charter.

Freedom of movement

The right to freedom of movement is contained in section 12 of the Charter and applies generally to a person’s movement within Victoria. It applies to persons lawfully within Victoria and is made up of the following components: the right to move freely within Victoria, the right to enter and leave Victoria, and the right to choose where to live. The right has been described as providing protection from unnecessary restrictions upon a person’s freedom of movement. It extends, generally, to movement without impediment throughout the State and a right of access to places and services used by members of the public, subject to compliance with regulations legitimately made in the public interest.

Relevantly, the right to freedom of movement will be engaged where a person is: required to move to, or from, a particular place or is prevented from doing this; subject to strict surveillance or reporting obligations relating to moving; or directed or ordered where to live.

The powers in the Bill to make regulations for fees for the quarantine of persons in specified places will not directly impact on the right to freedom of movement, but the regulations that are made under the power may indirectly impact on the right when the imposition of fees under the power are combined with the impact of public health orders under Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 on ‘quarantined persons’ t. However, this impact is reasonable and proportionate in all the circumstances and compatible with the right to movement, and the impact the regulations on the right to freedom of movement will be considered when a human rights certificate is developed for the regulations.
I consider the Bill to be consistent with the right to movement in section 12 of the Charter.

Rights to privacy, family and home

Section 13(a) of the Charter provides that a person has the right not to have their privacy unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. Section 13(a) contains internal qualifications; namely, interferences with privacy only limit the right if they are unlawful or arbitrary. An interference will be lawful if it is permitted by a law which is precise and appropriately circumscribed, and will be arbitrary only if it is capricious, unpredictable, unjust or unreasonable, in the sense of being disproportionate to the legitimate aim sought.

‘Privacy’ is a right of considerable amplitude. The fundamental values which the right to privacy expresses are the physical and psychological integrity, individual and social identity, and autonomy and inherent dignity, of the person. It protects the individual’s interest in the freedom of their personal and social sphere. Relevantly, this encompasses their right to establish and develop meaningful social relations. The right to privacy may also potentially incorporate a right to work of some kind and in some circumstances.

The ‘family’ aspect of section 13(a) is related to section 17(1) of the Charter, which states that families are entitled to protection by society and the State. However, whilst the two rights overlap, they are not co-extensive. Section 13(a) is a negative obligation that only prohibits unlawful or arbitrary interferences with family; whereas section 17(1) is a positive obligation on society and the State.

The ‘home’ aspect of section 13(a) refers to a person’s place of residence, regardless of whether they have a legal interest in that residence. What constitutes an interference with this aspect of the right to privacy has been approached in a practical manner and may cover actions that prevent a person from continuing to live in their home, as well as interferences with the home itself.

The powers in the Bill to make regulations for fees for quarantine of persons in specified places will not directly impact on the three aspects of this right but the regulations that are made under the power to impose fees may indirectly impact on the right when the imposition of fees under the power are combined with the impact of public health orders under Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 on a ‘quarantined person’. This is because the imposition of fees will contribute to overall impacts on personal autonomy and private relationships, may require the disclosure of private information (particularly for the making of statutory declarations for waivers of fees or for the instalment or payment plans), affect the ability of families to gather with members who are quarantined due to diagnosis with an infectious disease (including COVID-19), and the ability of people to reside in their own homes if they are quarantined at another location.

However, this impact is reasonable and proportionate in all the circumstances in order to be compatible with the right to privacy, family and home, and the impact the regulations on the right to privacy, family and home will be considered when a human rights certificate is developed for the regulations.

I consider the Bill to be consistent with the rights to privacy, family and home in section 13 of the Charter.

Right to liberty

Section 21 of the Charter protects the right to liberty. The liberty rights in section 21 reflect aspects of the common law right to personal liberty, which has been described as the most elementary and important of all common law rights. In particular, section 21(2) prohibits a person from being subjected to arbitrary detention, whilst section 21(3) prohibits a person from being deprived of their liberty except on grounds, and in accordance with procedures, established by law. Together, the effect of section 21(2) and (3) is that the right to liberty may legitimately be constrained only in circumstances where the deprivation of liberty by detention is both lawful, in that it is specifically authorised by law, and not arbitrary, in that it is reasonable or proportionate in all the circumstances.

The scope of the right in section 21 extends beyond detention as part of the criminal justice system to protective or preventative forms of detention, including to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Whether a particular restriction amounts to a ‘deprivation of liberty’ for the purpose of the right in section 21 is a question of degree or intensity. Detention or deprivation of liberty does not necessarily require physical restraint; however, the right to liberty is concerned with the physical detention of the individual, and not mere restrictions on freedom of movement.

The powers in the Bill to make regulations for fees for the quarantine of persons in specified places will not directly impact on the right to freedom of liberty, but the regulations that are made under the power may indirectly impact on the right when the imposition of fees under the power are combined with the impact of public health orders under Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 on ‘quarantined persons’. As set out elsewhere in this Statement of Compatibility, there is significant flexibility in the Bill to allow the regulations to be flexible in their application to individuals. However, this impact is reasonable and proportionate in all the circumstances and compatible with the right to freedom of liberty, and the impact of the regulations on the right to liberty will be considered when a human rights certificate is developed for the regulations.
I consider the Bill to be consistent with the rights to liberty in section 21 of the Charter.

**Humane treatment when deprived of liberty**

Section 22(1) of the Charter recognises that all persons deprived of liberty must be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person. Further, section 22(3) recognises that a person who is detained must be treated in a way that is appropriate for a person who has not been convicted.

The powers in the Bill to make regulations for fees for the quarantine of persons in specified places will not directly impact on the rights in relation to human treatment in section 22 of the Charter, but the regulations that are made under the power may indirectly impact on the rights when the imposition of fees under the power are combined with the impact of public health orders under *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* requiring a ‘quarantined person’ to quarantine in a specified place. However, this impact is likely to be reasonable and proportionate in all the circumstances and compatible with the rights in section 22 of the Charter, and the impact the regulations on those rights will be considered when a human rights certificate is developed for the regulations.

I consider the Bill to be consistent with the rights in section 22 of the Charter.

**Protection of families and children**

Section 17(1) of the Charter recognises that families are the fundamental group unit of society, and entitles families to protection by the society and the State. Section 17(1) is related to the section 13(a) privacy right and an act or decision that unlawfully or arbitrarily interferes with a family is also likely to limit that family’s entitlement to protection under section 17(1).

The Charter does not define the term ‘family’; however, it is given a broad interpretation. It at least includes ties between near relatives, with other indicia of familial relationships including cohabitation, economic ties, and a regular and intense relationship. Cultural traditions may be relevant when considering whether a group of persons constitute a ‘family’ in a given case. In this respect, the cultural right in section 19(2)(c) of the Charter, which states that Aboriginal people must not be denied the right to maintain their kinship ties, is also relevant.

Section 17(2) of the Charter provides that every child has the right, without discrimination, to such protection as is in their best interests and is needed by them by reason of being a child. It recognises the special vulnerability of children, defined in the Charter as persons under 18 years of age. ‘Best interests’ is a complex concept which must be determined on a case-by-case basis. However, the following elements may be taken into account when assessing the child’s best interests: the child’s views; the child’s identity; preservation of the family environment and maintaining relationships; care, protection and safety of the child; situations of vulnerability; the child’s right to health; and the child’s right to education.

The powers in the Bill to make regulations for fees for the quarantine of persons in specified places will not directly impact on the rights in relation to protection of families and children, but the regulations that are made under the power may indirectly impact on the rights when the imposition of fees under the power are combined with the impact of public health orders under *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* on ‘quarantined persons’. However, as set out elsewhere in this Statement of Compatibility, there is significant flexibility in the Bill to allow the regulations to be flexible in their application to individuals. This will include the ability for the regulations to prescribe fees, payment methods or waivers to differentiate between individuals, families and the broad variety of different personal or familial relationships that exist. Therefore, this impact is reasonable and proportionate in all the circumstances and compatible with the right in relation to protection of families and children, and the impact the regulations on those rights will be considered when a human rights certificate is developed for the regulations.

I consider the Bill to be consistent with the rights in relation to the protection of families and children in section 17 of the Charter.

I consider that the amendments in the Bill only affect or limit Charter rights in ways that are reasonable and demonstrably justifiable.

**Hon Lisa Neville MP**  
Minister for Police and Emergency Services

*Second reading*

**Ms NEVILLE** (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (12:52): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I ask that my second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard*. 
Incorporated speech as follows:

Victoria has made significant achievements in recent months in the face of an unprecedented challenge presented to us by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

However, there are thousands of Victorians overseas who are ready to come home, and now is the time for Victoria to put in place laws that support a nationally consistent mandatory quarantine scheme.

In the absence of significant developments that alter the risk profile of COVID-19 to the Victorian community (such as the delivery of an effective vaccine with community-wide uptake), individual and population-based interventions remain critical to reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

This includes mandatory quarantine for international arrivals under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008.

The Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020 will make amendments to the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 to allow regulations to be made that permit the charging of fees for mandatory quarantine for international travellers.

International arrivals to Victoria will have resumed (subject to necessary caps) by the time the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020 is debated by this house. Therefore, Victoria needs to take the necessary steps to ensure that our public health framework and mandatory quarantine fee scheme is generally consistent with the approach taken in other Australian jurisdictions.

The Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020 will enable the Victorian Government to charge fees for mandatory quarantine from all international passengers arriving in Victoria, including Australian Citizens and Australian permanent residents. This is consistent with other States and Territories and the approach agreed by National Cabinet in July this year with respect to mandatory quarantine.

There is currently no identifiable power for the State to charge these fees and to offset the costs of a mandatory quarantine program.

Mandatory quarantine is delivered at significant costs in all Australian jurisdictions, including Victoria. The proposed amendments enable the State to collect fees to offset some of the costs to the State of implementing a mandatory quarantine program.

As with other States and Territories, these charges will be provided for in legislation as a fee for services rendered by the State. The fees to be prescribed in regulations made under the proposed amendments will be based on the types of reasonably referable costs associated with quarantine such as accommodation, food and cleaning. The fees to be prescribed will be in line with those charged by other Australian states and territories within their mandatory quarantine programs.

On 1 December 2020, the Government established a dedicated agency, COVID-19 Quarantine Victoria (CQV) which will oversee all elements of our new and stronger mandatory quarantine program.

CQV will be instrumental in supporting the State’s response to the impacts of COVID-19 by overseeing responsibility for the COVID-19 Accommodation program and ensuring that Victorians and visitors can enter safely into Victoria from overseas.

Under this Bill, CQV will be provided with important responsibilities to implement the fee scheme (to be established in regulations to be made).

The Government acknowledges that charging fees for mandatory quarantine will have differing impacts on individuals and families arriving in Victoria from overseas, and will include international travellers and visitors as well as returning Australian citizens and permanent residents. These people will come from differing backgrounds and many may have suffered significant hardship this year. Therefore, the Bill also provides for the making of regulations to set out a process for determining the waiver of fees or concessional fee arrangements to be made, as well as payment plans to account for a person’s individual personal or financial circumstances. The fee scheme will seek to balance the need to reduce costs to the State of the mandatory quarantine program with the cost and impact of fees on individuals and families arriving in Victoria.

CQV will have the important task of ensuring that persons impacted by these fees can access fair and reasonable payment plans, waivers or concessions as necessary for those who suffer significant financial or other hardships. It is implicit in the amendments that CQV will be responsible for ensuring this balance is struck appropriately.

As I am the responsible Minister for the reforms in this Bill it is expected that regulations will be made within coming weeks to implement the fee scheme for mandatory quarantine.

The proposed Bill enables the amendments and any regulations made pursuant to the amendments (once passed and assented to) to take retrospective effect on 7 December 2020.
A retrospective clause is necessary as the Bill will not be passed by this Parliament before international flights into Victoria resume, and will require a minimum number of days following passage through Parliament for Royal Assent, to take effect.

Retrospective commencement from 7 December 2020 also enables equitable treatment of international arrivals entering into Victoria regardless of when they secure flights to Victoria. By enabling the scheme to take effect from the date of resumption of international flights, the Bill allows for the most equitable approach, so that travellers who arrive later are not ‘penalised’ in comparison to those who are able to secure earlier flights into Victoria.

As we have announced these fees already, returning international travellers have been put on notice that they may be charged fees for mandatory quarantine, and this will minimise the negative impacts of any regulations made to take retrospective effect.

It also ensures Victoria’s approach is consistent with other Australian jurisdictions, and reduces any inequities if international travellers return to Victoria instead of another State or Territory.

The proposed amendments include clauses disapplying certain requirements of the Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 (SL Act) for regulations to be made under the proposed amendments. In particular, the requirements for consultation and completion of a regulatory impact statement (RIS) are disappplied. This has not been done lightly. Inclusion of these clauses is required because of the strong public interest in having a fee scheme for mandatory quarantine in place as soon as possible upon resumption of flights, to reduce costs to Victorians of mandatory quarantine for international arrivals.

In balancing the strong public interest of operationalising a fee scheme promptly with the need for appropriate scrutiny of laws and regulations by the Parliament, the proposed amendments to the Bill (including the SL Act disapplication clauses) have been drafted to have limited operation and the reforms will be repealed on 31 December 2021, apart from some transitional provisions that are necessary to be retained.

Should a fee scheme continue to be required for mandatory quarantine beyond 31 December 2021, the Government will bring a future Bill to the Parliament to enable more permanent laws and regulations to be made. This is consistent with the approach the Government has taken with other COVID-19 specific laws that the Parliament has considered, and the important responsibility the Parliament has in overseeing the State’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Victorians can be proud of the significant achievements that we have made as a community in the face of unprecedented challenges, changes and tragedies in our daily lives.

This Bill will ensure our public health regulatory framework for mandatory quarantine is aligned with other Australian jurisdictions, and will support Victorian’s ongoing efforts to continue the fight against this wicked virus.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:52): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT (DECRIMINALISATION OF PUBLIC DRUNKENNESS) BILL 2020

Introduction and first reading

Ms HENNESSY (Altona—Attorney-General) (12:52): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Summary Offences Act 1966 to repeal offences relating to public drunkenness, to make consequential amendments to the Bail Act 1977 and the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:53): Could I ask for a brief explanation of the bill.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFORM AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2020

Introduction and first reading

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (12:53): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to further provide for the duties, functions and powers of the Victorian Institute of Teaching in relation to the approval of a program or course of study that leads to qualifying as a teacher; to amend the process for investigating the conduct, competence and fitness to teach of teachers and early childhood teachers; to make amendments in relation to teacher registration; to further provide for the disclosure and collection of information; to amend the minister’s powers to issue policies, guidelines or directions to the Victorian Institute of Teaching; to make consequential and other minor amendments and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (12:54): Could I request from the minister a brief explanation of the bill.

Mr MERLINO: The bill seeks to amend the Education and Training Reform Act to clarify and enhance the powers of the Victorian Institute of Teaching with respect to the approval of initial teacher education programs to grant new powers with respect to the approval of pathway programs into initial teacher education programs. So we have set the ATAR at 80. We have got non-academic qualities for teaching into ITE. We want to make sure that the pathway programs are equally high quality and get registered or approved via VIT. And there are express powers with respect to the endorsement of continuing education programs for school and early childhood teachers. The bill introduces new information-sharing powers to the institute and makes technical amendments to improve the efficiency of the institute’s operating processes and procedures with respect to teacher registration processes, investigation processes and delegation of power and accountability to the minister.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION AND ORDERS OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER (12:56): I wish to advise the house that general business, notice of motion 38 and orders of the day 1 to 5, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 5.00 pm today.

Petitions

Following petitions presented to house by Clerk:

BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS

TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF VICTORIA

The Petition of

Residents in the Warrandyte electorate draws to the attention of the House, and notes—

That the government has neglected to proactively manage the Warrandyte State Park, and surrounding public land, which has led to an excessive build-up of fire fuel loads.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria—

Ensures that the Andrews Government commits to the residents of Warrandyte, Warrandyte South, North Warrandyte and Wonga Park that in the months leading to the 2020/21 fire season a greater focus will be
Given to the build-up of these excessive fire fuel loads and, further, ensure those fire fuel loads are cleared through a prescribed burning program, slashing and/or any other methods the government deems fit as a priority in order to keep residents safe.

By Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (16 signatures).

FIVE WAYS INTERSECTION, WARRANDYTE

TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF VICTORIA

The Petition of

Residents in the Warrandyte electorate draws to the attention of the House

That the government has neglected to maintain and upgrade the dangerous and congested intersection of Croydon Road, Brumbys Road, Ringwood-Warrandyte Road and Husseys Lane in Warrandyte South—locally known as Five-Ways.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria

Ensure that the Andrews Government takes urgent steps to ensure the Department of Transport begin the process of improving this extremely dangerous intersection before a fatal accident occurs.

By Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (15 signatures).

Tabled.

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (12:56): In respect to the first petition enunciated by the Clerk, can I say it is an indictment of the minister to not actually acknowledge the safety of this issue. On the issue of the second petition, the fact that we are moving into fire season with so little preparation is also an indictment of the government. As such I move:

That the petitions be considered on the next day of sitting.

Ms Allan: On a point of order, Speaker, I seek that you may review the transcript and give some guidance to the house on the forms that taking note of petitions should be made in. There is no problem if members want to debate the content of the petitions, which is the purpose of the take-note mechanism; however, they should not be using the procedural mechanism to undertake a content debate, and the member for Warrandyte has been here long enough to know that.

Mr R SMITH: On the point of order, Speaker, there is nothing in the standing orders, nor are there any rulings from the Chair, that preclude me from actually making a statement to support why I in fact want my petition to be made an order of the day on the next day of sitting, so certainly I think that the house in many ways deserves an explanation for me moving that motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! The issue for members, when raising a petition and moving a motion that it be taken into consideration on the next day of sitting, is that the house may vote in any way it wishes, so I just raise that for the member. He has raised the wording of that motion, and members of the house are now free to vote as they see fit.

Motion agreed to.

Committees

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 13

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (12:58): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being Alert Digest No. 13 of 2020, on the following bills:

Appropriation (2020–2021) Bill 2020
Appropriation (Parliament 2020–2021) Bill 2020
Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020
State Taxation Acts Amendment Bill 2020
Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Provisional Payments) Bill 2020
together with appendices and extract from proceedings.

Ordered to be published.

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT—The Clerk tabled the following documents under Acts of Parliament:

Adult, Community and Further Education Board—Report 2019–20
Planning and Environment Act 1987—Notices of approval of amendments to the following Planning Schemes:
   Ballarat—C222
   Colac Otway—C97
   Darebin—C195
   East Gippsland—C160
   Greater Bendigo—C222
   Greater Geelong—C396, C413
   Latrobe—C125
   Manningham—C132
   Melbourne—C370
   Mornington Peninsula—C277
   Port Phillip—C171
   Victoria Planning Provisions—VC180, VC187, VC190
Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants (five documents)—Ordered to be published
Statutory Rules under the following Acts:
   Cladding Safety Victoria Act 2020—SR 133
   Legal Profession Uniform Law (Victoria)—SR 131
   Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008—SR 132
   Supreme Court Act 1986—SR 131
   Water Act 1989—SR 130
Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:
   Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 131, 132
   Documents under s 16B in relation to the:
      Liquor Control Reform Act 1998—Orders declaring a designated area (five orders)
      Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983—Specification of vehicle limits for overdimensional vehicles crossing tracks
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001—Notice of request to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council for advice on aspects of public land use information under s 26C.
PROCLAMATIONS—Under Standing Order 177A, the Clerk tabled the following proclamations fixing operative dates:

- **Cladding Safety Victoria Act 2020**—The provisions of that Act other than ss 57A, 57B, 57C, 57D, 57E, 57F and 58A—1 December 2020; Remaining provisions—1 February 2021 (Gazette S624, 1 December 2020).
- **Police and Emergency Legislation Amendment Act 2020**—Whole Act other than ss 3 and 4 and Parts 4 and 5—2 December 2020 (Gazette S624, 1 December 2020).

Bills

**HUMAN TISSUE AMENDMENT BILL 2020**

**JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DRUG COURT AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2020**

**TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2020**

_Council’s agreement_

The SPEAKER (13:00): I have received messages from the Legislative Council agreeing to the following bills without amendment: the Human Tissue Amendment Bill 2020, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Drug Court and Other Matters) Bill 2020 and the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2020.

**ENERGY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (LICENCE CONDITIONS) BILL 2020**

**FOOD AMENDMENT BILL 2020**

**HUMAN TISSUE AMENDMENT BILL 2020**

**JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DRUG COURT AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2020**

**MARINE SAFETY AMENDMENT (BETTER BOATING FUND) BILL 2020**

**PARKS AND CROWN LAND LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2019**

**TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2020**

_Royal assent_

The SPEAKER (13:00): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Energy Legislation Amendment (Licence Conditions) Bill 2020, the Food Amendment Bill 2020, the Human Tissue Amendment Bill 2020, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Drug Court and Other Matters) Bill 2020, the Marine Safety Amendment (Better Boating Fund) Bill 2020, the Parks and Crown Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 and the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2020.

**CHANGE OR SUPPRESSION (CONVERSION) PRACTICES PROHIBITION BILL 2020**

**PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING AMENDMENT (QUARANTINE FEES) BILL 2020**

**WORKPLACE INJURY REHABILITATION AND COMPENSATION AMENDMENT (PROVISIONAL PAYMENTS) BILL 2020**

_Appropriation_

The SPEAKER (13:01): I have received messages from the Governor recommending appropriations for the purposes of the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020, the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020 and the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Provisional Payments) Bill 2020.
COMMITTEES

Tuesday, 8 December 2020
Legislative Assembly

Committees

ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Membership

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (13:01): I move, by leave:

That Ms Connolly be a member of the Environment and Planning Standing Committee.

Motion agreed to.

Business of the house

PROGRAM

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (13:01): I move:

That:

(1) the order of the day, government business, relating to the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020 be considered and completed by 5.00 pm on Tuesday, 8 December 2020; and

(2) the order of the day, government business, relating to the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020 be considered and completed by 5.00 pm on Thursday, 10 December 2020.

In making a few brief comments on the government business program that I have just put to the house, can I acknowledge that this is the final sitting week—not that I probably need to remind anyone in the house that this is the final sitting week—for 2020. At the outset can I acknowledge the cooperation of all members of the house, with the great support and assistance from the clerks and the parliamentary staff, to get us to this end of the year in what has been a really challenging year on so many fronts, and the continued operation of the Parliament and the consideration of legislation and the debate and the questioning that accompanies the normal sitting weeks of Parliament have been able to continue throughout the course of this year—which brings me to the government business program that I have just put to the chamber.

Members will note that it is a two-part government business program. With the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020 that has just been first and second read, it is the government’s desire to see that debate concluded by 5 o’clock today in order for it to progress immediately to the upper house for their consideration and, hopefully, support. There has needed to be some expediency to accompany the passage of this bill through the Parliament. I think it is well understood that international arrivals recommenced yesterday. There has been a lot of work, as the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has been publicly articulating in recent days—there has been a huge amount of work—to reset this program, and those arrangements were finalised over the course of the last week, which is why this bill has come to the Parliament and to this place in that form with the need to expedite it in the course of one day. I understand all the appropriate briefings have been undertaken for members in this chamber and the other chamber that enable us to consider this bill today and to have it, at least in this place, completed by 5 o’clock this afternoon.

The final bill that is on the government business program will be debated on Thursday. In between today and Thursday, amongst all the other regular business of the chamber, there will be significant time devoted for members to debate the budget through the take-note mechanism on the budget. Given there is a hell of a lot to talk about in this wonderful budget, the 2020 budget that is only still a couple of weeks old, there is still plenty to discuss and plenty to debate.

I am sure members will be grateful for the opportunity and grabbing the opportunity to talk about what the budget means for them in their local communities. Whether it is schools that are being rebuilt, roads that are being upgraded, housing that is being built, jobs that are being supported or families that
are being assisted through the various cost-of-living measures, there is a lot to talk about with this budget, and it is a firm stamp on the way this government wants to support families and the Victorian community as we rebuild even stronger after what has been a very, very difficult year in Victoria, at a national level and internationally. We are seeing internationally that it continues to be very, very difficult. We are continuing to see in those countries where they have not got on top of the health crisis how it continues to pose great challenges and great issues for those countries. We are in a very different place at the end of 2020, and that is thanks to the tremendous hard work of all Victorians. The budget is recognising that we are there to support them both through the immediate impacts of the pandemic and also as we go through the rebuilding and recovery phase.

With those few comments, there is a lot to debate and discuss over the course of this week. I again thank the assistance of all members of the house to enable us to continue to sit in slightly different forms. It is something we have become used to, but obviously we will consider over the summer what the Parliament arrangements might look like as we return in the new year. With those few comments I commend the government business program motion to the house.

**Mr WELLS** (Rowville) (13:06): I rise to speak on the government business program. We will be opposing the government business program and calling a division. Let me explain why. Last week I actually was keen to make the recommendation that we not oppose the government business program because it seemed to be reasonably straightforward. We had the take-note motion for the budget papers, which we were going to debate on Tuesday and Wednesday, and then we were going to debate the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020 on Thursday. So it seemed to be reasonably straightforward, and we were accepting that in the last week of Parliament there would be that air of cooperation and that we would get on with it and make sure that all of our speakers on the opposition side, the Liberals and Nationals, would be able to speak on the budget—so we were satisfied with that. We were also satisfied that there would be a Christmas message from the Leader of the House and me—that before the adjournment on Thursday we would do the thank yous for the hardworking parliamentary staff, gardens and catering, and we would go through that list.

But then late on Friday afternoon, it must have been about 5.30, I received a phone call from our Shadow Minister for Police, the member for Caulfield, who said that he had just been told by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services’ office that there is a brand new bill to come into the chamber for next week. I said, ‘Well, no, that can’t be right, because it’s not on the government business program’. The government business program comes out at about 4 o’clock on Thursday through agreement, and then I send that out to all the relevant shadow ministers and then the whips in turn send those emails out to all the MPs so we prepare. To getting this phone call at, say, 5.30 on Monday afternoon to say there is a brand new bill that we are going to be ambushed with and it is called the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020—we had no idea, absolutely no idea.

So I said to the Shadow Minister for Police that the first thing we have got to do is organise a briefing, because we have got to get that through our processes—we have got to go to shadow cabinet, then we have got to take it to the coalition room and we need to be able to get an understanding of it to debate it properly. At 4 o’clock—can you believe it—on Monday afternoon the Shadow Minister for Police and others were invited to attend a bill briefing, and it just goes to show how chaotic and shambolic the Andrews Labor government actually is. It is something of such great significance—hotel quarantine fees. When people are coming back from overseas they have to go into hotel quarantine for 14 days and they are charged for that quarantine cost. We do not have an issue with that, but why would you wait until the very last moment? Why are you that shambolic and that unorganised? You have no idea what is going on—absolutely no idea. And even in the briefing, when they were asking the bureaucrats and the public servants questions, there were still unanswered questions—‘Oh, we’ll deal with that in regulation. We’ll deal with that in regulation’. The government has no idea of what is going on—absolutely no idea.

The whole idea of the Coate inquiry, I thought, was to do an investigation about what went wrong in the second wave in hotel quarantine but also to make suggestions and put guidelines to the government
so that when they restarted hotel quarantine they would not make the same mistakes. This was not any surprise. The Coate inquiry for months has been investigating what has been going on. It actually brought out a report saying this is the way that hotel quarantine should run in the future, so the government will be looking at that, and surely part of that would have been about hotel quarantine fees. But no, it was completely forgotten and completely missed—too busy politicking. In the end we have got this shambolic situation where we get ambushed last Friday night about a bill and where we get briefed at 4 o’clock on Monday, and it is for that reason the opposition will be opposing the government business program.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (13:11): It is really unfortunate to learn that the opposition are today, again in this last week, opposing our very important government business program. I would like to remind the member for Rowville that I think it was only a few weeks back where he talked about ‘that COVID thing’. That COVID thing has affected 67.3 million people worldwide—1.5 million people have lost their lives to COVID—and here in Victoria the Andrews Labor government has been busy governing for all Victorians and ensuring that we are managing to the very best of our abilities this global pandemic. This is a very important government business program, and it is very important that we bring the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020, the amendment to the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, to this house today to ensure that we are ready to enjoy a COVID-safe summer and that we have everything in place to ensure that our hotel quarantine program is gold standard, as we are assured that it will be.

So it is very disappointing that in this last sitting week the opposition could not bring themselves to support the government business program. I note that the member for Rowville talked about the Andrews Labor government apparently being busy politicking. We are not politicking; we are governing. I look forward to the debate on the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020, because who knows where the opposition will be on that important bill. I might say it was an election commitment made by the Andrews Labor government to deliver this bill to ensure that the practices that are very, very disturbing and have very severe impacts on LGBTI members of our community are made unlawful.

They do not even know right at this moment, at a quarter past 1, what they are going to be doing. Well, the papers—thank you for reminding me what the papers are telling us—are telling us that the member for Kew actually thinks that the party should support the bill. There are of course members of the Liberal backbench who want to take a conscience vote on this, so who knows what is going to happen. They have had a couple of years to develop a position—

Mr Wells: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the government business program is an opportunity for wideranging debate, but this is ridiculous. I would ask you to bring the member for Macedon back to the government business program.

Ms THOMAS: On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, I am happy to continue on the government business program.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will rule on the point of order. I do ask the member for Macedon to return to the government business program.

Ms THOMAS: Look, it is an important government business program. It is a good one to end the year on. I, for one, look forward to having my opportunity to speak on the take-note motion, and I know, like many on this side of the house, 15 minutes will not be enough to talk about the very many ways in which the Andrews Labor government 2020–21 budget is going to benefit the members of my community. It is a budget that is about jobs, education, recovery and going forward, not to mention housing. I very much look forward to that.

Finally, can I just take the opportunity to thank again the clerks and the parliamentary staff. It really has been a very challenging year. I felt incredibly well supported in my role as an MP throughout this year.
by our parliamentary staff, and I thank them very much for that. I commend this business program to
the house, and, as I said, I look forward to making contributions myself on a number of bills this week.

Mr D O’BRIEN (Gippsland South) (13:16): On the day after the government restarts its hotel
quarantine program, bringing back overseas travellers to Victoria, the people of Victoria and the
Parliament of Victoria want to have some idea that the government is on top of it, that the government
is competent and that the government has got it under control, whether that is the hotel quarantine
program itself or the business of governing. The government business program that we have before
us, with the addition—as the member for Rowville said—at the very, very last minute of the Public
Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020, does not give the community of
Victoria that confidence. The member for Macedon might say, ‘We are getting on with governing’.
Well, with the greatest respect, not very well—the government is not governing very well. And the
fact that this piece of legislation had to be rushed into this Parliament is an indictment on the
management of government and governance by the Andrews Labor government.

The decision at national cabinet for states and territories to start charging returned travellers for hotel
quarantine was taken on 10 July. So nearly six months ago states and territories had started the process
of moving towards charging for hotel quarantine, and yet it is not until Friday, 4 December, before the
final sitting week, that the government realises, ‘Oh, we haven’t got the power to do that’. And it wants
us on the other side here, and the people of Victoria, to have confidence that the government is on top
of this. It is really quite concerning that this has been such a shambles, and it is not just this.

We have seen the same situation with the expiration of the COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency
Measures) Bill 2020, which was originally introduced back in April, and indeed the extension of the
state of emergency. I am reminded of the flak I copped from certain people in the community back in
about August or September when I called for Parliament to be sitting and was told that: ‘It’s not safe.
You shouldn’t be sitting, and it’s outrageous that you dare question the dear leader, the Premier of this
state’. And lo and behold, Parliament got recalled because we had to extend the state of emergency
bill, which was no great surprise to anyone because we knew that that was coming up.

Likewise, we are here again today: yes, it has been a crisis; yes, there has been difficulty; and yes, I
am sure there has been chaos on the government’s side trying to deal with the ever-evolving process
of the pandemic. But six months ago national cabinet made a decision about the charging of returned
travellers, and at 5 o’clock on a Friday night the opposition gets advised, ‘Oops, the government needs
to quickly rush some legislation through’. That is why we are opposing this government business
program, because it highlights that the government is not on top of the issues, on top of the absolute
very basics. And it does give cause for concern, for me and I am sure for many other Victorians, that
if the government have not worked out this element of the hotel quarantine program, what else haven’t
they got right? And I hope to God, for all Victorians’ sakes, that no stone has been left unturned in
making sure that the hotel quarantine program works this time, because the failure of the hotel
quarantine program in Victoria that caused the second wave has cost 800 jobs, it has damaged our
economy and it has damaged lives. It has cost—

Mr Rowswell interjected.

Mr D O’BRIEN: Sorry, it has cost 800 lives. Thank you, member for Sandringham. It has cost
thousands of jobs and thousands of businesses and yesterday ultimately saw us downgraded not once
but twice in the state’s credit rating. That will mean it is something that we will be paying for a long
time because, yes, the damage has been great across the world, it has been great across the country,
in terms of the economic damage of the pandemic, but in Victoria it has been doubly so, as seen by the
double downgrade of our credit rating yesterday. So I hope that the government has got itself better
organised with the actual hotel quarantine program than it has with the legislative program and the fact
that it did not have the power to charge people for hotel quarantine.
On the rest of the business program, I have had my say on the budget but I am sure there will be plenty more from others. I look forward to speaking on the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020, which is a difficult bill and one where there is significant nuance, but again, we will be opposing this government business program.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (13:21): This government business program addresses vital and urgent issues. It can be handled by this Parliament. The opposition is raising that it will oppose the bill that is about introducing fees for hotel quarantine. Now, this has been supported by the national cabinet. It already has bipartisan support. Who is opposing, and why? Manufactured outrage is not going to be able to address the key issues that we need to be done. This is what the Victorian government is doing. This can be handled in this time.

Mr Wells interjected.

Mr McGUIRE: You are opposing the government’s program. On this opposition, I am—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Through the Chair.

Mr McGUIRE: I was just wanting to address the proposition being put by the Manager of Opposition Business. I really just want to make the point, though, that there is clarity nationally about this legislation. There is no opposition at national cabinet, which is bipartisan. So this is being done. Of course we can handle it in the time that is necessary. That is the key point. It can be expedited—one day in this chamber and it can be passed through the upper house as well. They are the key issues to address that proposition.

The next key bill is the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020. This is founded on a defining principle of do no harm. It is important because the bill aims to denounce and prohibit harmful LGBT conversion practices referred to as change or suppression practices in Victoria. The reason why this is of significance as well is that change or suppression practices are harmful practices which seek to change or suppress an individual’s sexual orientation or gender identity. Now, we need to highlight that there is no scientific evidence to suggest that sexual orientation or gender identity can be forcibly changed. Medical bodies warn that change or suppression practices are effectively and potentially severely harmful.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Broadmeadows, you cannot go into detail on the bill. You need to speak to the government business program.

Mr McGUIRE: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I did want to make those points because I think that is really the key foundation and it is significant. On the other matters that we will be addressing in the government business program, we have the opportunity for all of the members to address the take-note part of the budget to give their response on behalf of their constituents about this budget. It was a record investment, a $49 billion spend, to try and help us get through this time. So we have had a year like no other. It has been a journey without maps. We have now got to a stage where we have been able to address the coronavirus which has effectively and officially been declared eliminated in the state of Victoria, which has been an enormous effort by everybody. Then there is the investment that we have seen in the budget to try and help the recovery through new investments in industries and jobs, right across the entire community, taking care of families and individuals. So it is important for each member to be able to have their time and their say in this house.

This is really in the way that the government is looking to wind up the legislative part of the year. There is still more work to be done, and this has been a 24/7 government. I want to take this opportunity to thank everybody involved—the Premier and the cabinet, all the ministers, the parliamentary secretaries, all the colleagues—and reach across the aisle to say to the opposition that it has been a tough, tough year for everyone. To all members of the Parliament, to everybody who works in this house—for the extra efforts that they have gone out of their way to make to help everyone—I think it has been an outstanding achievement, if we can place it in that way, that we have survived this year.
The budget is trying to set us up to thrive next year, and on that basis I want to commend the government business program to the house.

**Mr ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (13:26): As the member for Rowville, my colleague the Manager of Opposition Business, put so eloquently, the reason why the opposition on this occasion is choosing to oppose the government business program as presented by the manager of government business is that it is symptomatic of the government being in an absolute shambles.

Members interjecting.

**Mr ROWSWELL**: I am thrilled that government colleagues around the chamber think that is so funny. You might get a little bit more humour if you pay a little bit more attention to the contribution that I am trying so desperately to make. They are a shambles, and we have seen that. We have seen that through what happened with hotel quarantine mark 1. If this government, this Labor government, took seriously the second hotel quarantine program, which is currently in operation in this state, why, oh, why was the opposition presented with the proposition of a bill that determined substantively the elements of the hotel quarantine program on Friday last week? On Friday last week! As the member for Rowville, my colleague, pointed out, we then received a bill briefing on this particular bill, the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020, at 4.00 pm on Monday, the evening before an irregular sitting of the shadow cabinet in order to further determine our position on these bills.

Now, as my colleagues did point out, in substance we have no issue with the bill as proposed, but we oppose this business program because of the way in which the government has chosen to go about proposing this government business program. For not one second can the government say that they are under-resourced. I myself have effectively 2.5 effective full-time staff who do their very best to service the 46,000 electors of the Sandringham district. But the government, and government ministers, do not just have their own electorate staff; they have their private ministerial staff. They have got available to them, at their disposal, government departments—hordes and hordes of people I am sure are doing wonderful work on behalf of government ministers and for the people of Victoria.

What is the excuse? What is the excuse for bringing what appears to be a particularly important part of the hotel quarantine program, now reset by the government, to the house in such a late fashion? Why has this bill been brought here at the last minute? That is the issue that we have. That is the concern we have. If the government, with all the resources that the government has, cannot get these things right—please, God, that this reset program does not follow the same fate of the first program, where this state saw 800 of our fellow Victorians die, and the flow-on economic effects of that. One in five of our fellow Victorians is now unemployed or underemployed. The people who are most affected by that? There are more women than men that are affected by that. My goodness. So here is hoping that through bringing on this bill so late in the piece, which seems to be a linchpin in this particular program and the success of it, there are not other elements of this reset hotel quarantine program that the government has forgotten in the process—here is hoping.

I do look forward with great vigour and enthusiasm to speaking on the take-note motion this week in relation to the budget. For my own electoral district of Sandringham on behalf of my community I submitted a number of matters for government funding consideration, and surprisingly the vast majority of those have not been determined worthy by this government. I look forward to the opportunity to speak on that matter, and I also look forward to making a contribution to the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020 and addressing some of the nuances within that bill as well.

**House divided on motion:**

*Ayes, 14*

Addison, Ms  Fowles, Mr  Richards, Ms
Allan, Ms  Hall, Ms  Settle, Ms
Bull, Mr J  Halse, Mr  Sheed, Ms
MEMBERS STATEMENTS
Tuesday, 8 December 2020
Legislative Assembly

Cheeseman, Mr
Couzens, Ms

Kennedy, Mr
McGuire, Mr

Thomas, Ms

Noes, 9

Blackwood, Mr
Burgess, Mr
Cupper, Ms

Kealy, Ms
Newbury, Mr
Northe, Mr

O’Brien, Mr D
Rowswell, Mr
Wells, Mr

Motion agreed to.

Register of opinion on motion

Ayes

Mr Andrews, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Brayne, Mr Carbines, Mr Carroll, Ms Connolly, Ms Crugnale, Ms D’Ambrosio, Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Donnellan, Mr Edbrooke, Mr Eren, Mr Foley, Mr Fregon, Ms Green, Ms Halfpenny, Mr Hamer, Ms Hennessy, Ms Horne, Ms Hutchins, Ms Kairouz, Ms Kilkenny, Mr Maas, Mr McGhie, Mr Merlino, Ms Neville, Mr Pakula, Mr Pallas, Mr Pearson, Mr Richardson, Mr Scott, Ms Spence, Mr Staikos, Ms Suleyman, Mr Tak, Mr Taylor, Ms Theophanous, Ms Ward, Ms Williams, Mr Wynne

Noes

Mr Battin

Members statements

HOLODOMOR COMMEMORATION

Mr GUY (Bulleen) (13:37): Last week Victoria’s Ukrainian community commemorated and remembered one of the most heinous acts of the 20th century, the Ukrainian famine of 1932–33, known in Ukrainian as Holodomor. The Holodomor was the deliberate starvation of between 7 million and 11 million Ukrainians by the communist Stalin regime, a genocide that wiped out much of the productive workforce of Ukraine as well as many of its children, its elderly and its families. The Holodomor was deliberate, it was targeted, it was brutal. It was a genocide.

Across the world Ukrainians gathered on the fourth Saturday in November in what has become Holodomor Remembrance Day to remark with sadness and remember this event. Vigils were held in Kiev, Kharkiv, Odessa, Lviv, Dnipropetrovsk and right across Ukraine as well as across the world, with Ukrainian diaspora in cities like New York, Toronto, Buenos Aires, Lisbon and of course here in Australia. In Melbourne our strong and proud Ukrainian community held vigils particularly at the St Peter and Paul Catholic Church in North Melbourne, where Ukrainians of all faiths and denominations remembered and acknowledged the genocide that was the Holodomor.

On a personal note my grandmother’s brother was a victim of the Holodomor. I remember my grandmother telling me they would find people dead who had gone missing months before, only finding them when the snow had melted. They had died of hunger literally where they fell and then were covered by the snow. I was particularly touched and proud of this Parliament in 2008 when former Greens MP Greg Barber and former Labor MP Matt Viney joined me in passing a motion to acknowledge the Holodomor in the Legislative Council, making this one of the first parliaments of the world to do so. It meant so much to our Ukrainian community, and they remain deeply grateful.

Ukraine remembers, the world acknowledges. Slava Ukraini.

EAST AFRICAN SISTERS

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Creative Industries) (13:38): I rise to speak of the exciting news of the first Somalian chilli sauce commercially produced in Australia hitting the market. The makers of this stunning sauce, known as basbaas, are Safiya and Fahan. Safiya, born in Ethiopia, and Fahan, who
fled civil war in Somalia, formed a tight bond when they met 15 years ago in Melbourne. Between them they have 11 children and speak five languages. Earlier in 2020 Safiya and Fahan participated in the Food Business Boost incubator program, a collaboration between Moonee Valley City Council, Flemington Works and Sustain: the Australian Food Network, funded by the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions through Small Business Victoria. The program provided workshops and mentoring specific to starting food businesses. From this training and development opportunity East African Sisters hasbaas was born:

We call our business East African Sisters because our connection is as strong as sisters … Fahan says.

We support each other and we support other women as well. Everyone helps each other.

Last month I was delighted to attend the launch of East African Sisters products at Macca Halal Meats in Flemington and purchase the very first jars of the red and green chilli sauces Somalians add to almost every dish. The launch received some media coverage, including an article this week on SBS Food. The joy on the faces of these two women as they launched their business and sent their jars of commercially produced sauce out into the culinary market was an absolute sight to behold. This kind of outcome from a very small investment shows just why we must as a government, as a community, keep providing opportunities for our diverse communities to thrive and thrive. Congratulations, East African Sisters.

SCOTT JACKMAN

**Mr PEARSON:** And on a note, happy birthday to Scott Jackman— *(Time expired)*

LATROBE VALLEY MINE REHABILITATION

**Mr D O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (13:40): Time is ticking on the Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy and indeed what happens to Latrobe Valley coalmine voids. Hazelwood closed in 2017, and on its current schedule, next month Engie will start filling the Morwell open-cut mine void. There are still many community concerns unresolved as to what actually happens with the mines, and particularly it is becoming quite pressing now with the closure of Hazelwood and a decision that needs to be made as to how the mine void is going to be rehabilitated. The only option that Engie is considering, the owner of the mine, is to fill it with water and to create a pit lake. That was also the government’s only plan until the release of the strategy in the middle of this year, which indicated that the government was indeed having second thoughts about the source of water and about whether there could be alternatives to a pit lake. The biggest questions that still remain for the government to answer are: where will the water come from if the mines are to be filled with water, what are the other options and what are the implications for those users downstream? And that is one area that I am most concerned about, given the number of irrigators on the Latrobe River who are concerned about what will happen to their supplies if water is taken from the Latrobe and indeed from groundwater to fill the mines. There is an opportunity to expand the area of irrigation and to help us transition away from coal with new jobs in long-term irrigation, but the government needs to answer questions now on the mine rehabilitation.

SUNBURY ELECTORATE SCHOOLS FUNDING

**Mr J BULL** (Sunbury) (13:41): It was fantastic to join the principal of Kismet Park Primary School, Glenn McConnell, and students last week to announce that the Andrews Labor government will provide over $460 000 to create an all-weather sports precinct at this terrific local school in my electorate. This is fantastic news for our local community, and I want to thank everyone who helped make it happen. The kids have challenged Glenn and me to a race. I have already started training, but I am sure I will be left wanting when that happens. On the same day I was delighted to attend Sunbury West Primary School to hand over a cheque for $10.5 million as announced in the budget to upgrade Sunbury West Primary School, a terrific local school in my electorate, and I cannot wait to see what this upgrade will deliver.
COVID-19

Mr J Bull: As this is the final sitting week for 2020, a year like no other, I do wish to acknowledge all of the incredible work that has been done by so many in our community to get through the pandemic. I want to acknowledge and thank the leadership of the Premier, Deputy Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Health, Leader of the House, Leader of the Government in the other place and all of the work of ministerial staff, cabinet ministers, caucus colleagues and of course electorate office staff, who have done an extraordinary job right throughout the year. I also want to thank my team—Adam, Jarrod, Josh and Almendra—for all of the work that has been done in the office and extend my thanks to the local community, who each and every day have done a wonderful job in fighting the pandemic and making the very best of what has been an incredibly difficult 2020.

ROWVILLE ELECTORATE SCHOOLS FUNDING

Mr Wells (Rowville) (13:43): This statement condemns the state Labor government for the total lack of adequate funding for the schools in my electorate of Rowville. The schools in my electorate have been neglected for far too long. This government boast how they govern for all, yet they have constantly let down my constituents with a lack of funding for not only schools but also public transport infrastructure. I have received many concerns from principals and teachers at local primary and secondary schools in my electorate, including old buildings that are falling apart. These schools need and deserve urgent upgrades. This year has been extremely difficult for everyone, but it has been particularly hard for students who have missed out on months of face-to-face education. The students, principals and teachers at Scoresby, Karoo, Carrington, Heany Park, Rowville, Lysterfield and Park Ridge primary schools, as well as Rowville and Scoresby secondary colleges, deserve a safe environment to learn, teach and interact in. Despite some schools in my electorate receiving a minor capital works grant, it is clearly not enough to fix the Rowville electorate schools long term.

PASCOE VALE ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Ms Blandthorn (Pascoe Vale) (13:44): Every year I hold a competition to design my Christmas card. We get nearly 1000 entries from students in local Catholic primary schools right across my electorate. The artistic talent and creativity of students is so impressive. Picking just one design every year, whilst one of my favourite things to do, is no easy task, and this year was no exception. Yesterday I was pleased to visit St Oliver Plunkett Primary School in Pascoe Vale to announce that this year’s winner is one of their prep students, Mia Didomenicantonio. This year I asked students to represent peace and joy in their design. Mia drew a beautiful angel in the colours of the rainbow. What better expression of peace and joy can there be in times like these? This image will brighten the letterboxes of my constituents this year, whether they are preparing for Christmas, like my family and me, or whether they are simply hopeful of a more peaceful and joy-filled 2021.

As well as awarding an overall winner for my Christmas card competition I also award a ‘best in school’ each year. This year I cannot visit every school as I usually do, so I would like to announce that the following students received the best in their school award: Tiyana in grade 2 at Antonine College, Coburg; Nainika at St Francis de Sales, Oak Park, grade 3/4; Heath in LA7 at St Mark’s, Fawkner; Rick in grade 3/4 at St Paul’s, Coburg; Amelia in grade 3/4 at St Fidelis, Pascoe Vale South; and Nicholas in grade 3/4 at Corpus Christi, Glenroy, which of course is where the Premier went to primary school. All of these students, all of these winners, receive a voucher for the fabulous children’s bookshop in Coburg, Pictures and Pages. Congratulations to all local students who participated, and thank you to all of the school communities, principals, teachers, support staff and families. You have done it very hard but well this year.

BUDGET 2020–21

Mr Morris (Mornington) (13:45): During the last sitting week the Andrews government belatedly delivered its 2020 budget, and unfortunately there was not much, if anything, to say about the Mornington electorate. Apart from a small amount of money for planning and redevelopment of
Mornington Special Developmental School, which is very welcome although long overdue, there is not a single cent in the budget for my electorate. But in many ways that budget was no surprise, because the Australian Labor Party has been in power for 17 of the last 21 years. In 2001 the population in my district was a little over 47 000. By 2019 that figure had increased to almost 67 000, a 42 per cent increase, yet investment in local physical and social infrastructure by Labor has been negligible. Bungower Road, the main access road to the Peninsula Link, remains choked at peak hour, as does the parallel road, Mornington-Tyabb Road. Despite government claims, there has not been significant investment in public transport for the Mornington Peninsula. In fact there was significant investment in the marginal Labor seat of Nepean but not anywhere else. In Mornington not a single new bus service was added, and not a single bus route extension benefits the electorate. Despite the best efforts of the provider, we have a Third World public transport system in the Mornington electorate, and the government is doing nothing to improve it. In education the recently released minor capital works program reveals not a single cent for works has been allocated to local schools. The track record of this government is very clear: if you do not vote Labor, you are forgotten.

SOUTH BARWON ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (13:47): The Victorian budget 2020–21 delivers an unprecedented investment into our state to help our state recover. In fact the Victorian budget delivered an unprecedented investment in education across the state, and I am very pleased of course to have secured two commitments for my electorate—for the primary schools of Grovedale West and Bellaire. Both of these primary schools are located in parts of Geelong’s previous growth corridor from the 1950s, 60s and 70s, and this investment will make a huge difference to those communities. The communities of Highton and Grovedale are well-established suburbs of Geelong. These schools were built a long time ago, and I know that this investment will make a huge difference to those school communities to ensure that every kid from Highton and from Grovedale gets first-class buildings to receive their education in. The news that I was able to relay to both of those schools was fantastic. They were both excited by the opportunity to see their schools rebuilt. They are excited by that investment, and I look forward to working very closely with the school councils from both schools over the coming few months as we further deliver this investment into their schools.

REX MCCONACHY

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (13:48): With sadness I pay tribute to Rex McConachy, who passed away peacefully on 25 November. A Lilydale local, Rex was one of the Liberal Party’s most beloved and hardworking members over several decades, serving in many roles on the Evelyn state electorate conference executive. Rex was passionate about the Liberal Party and our local community and always willing to put up his hand to help out to keep Evelyn blue. From campaigning, fundraising and doorknocking, Rex did it all. His knowledge of the local people and the best places to put up election signs was always greatly appreciated. No job was too big or too small for Rex, always doing what he could to serve the Liberal Party. I will always cherish his loyalty and friendship. My deepest sympathies to his family—his daughters, Sue and Linda; and his grandchildren. Vale, Rex McConachy.

MOUNT EVELYN AND DISTRICTS COMMUNITY BANK

Ms VALLENCE: I pay tribute to the Mount Evelyn and districts community bank, who recently celebrated a tremendous milestone of giving over $3 million back to their community through grants and sponsorships. The Mount Evelyn community bank have the community at their heart. Many groups have benefited over the years, including local preschools, schools and community organisations like Melba disability services, Bridge Builders Youth Organisation, the Mount Evelyn toy library, Mount Evelyn CFA, Mt Evelyn Football Netball Club, Anchor, Mount Evelyn RSL, Lilydale Rotary, local men’s sheds and Mount Evelyn Community House—and community events like the Mount Evelyn street party.
MEMBERS STATEMENTS
Tuesday, 8 December 2020
Legislative Assembly

CITY OF KINGSTON

Mr Richardson (Mordialloc) (13:50): I want to place on record my deep appreciation for the amazing City of Kingston community: 2020 is a year that none of us expected or ever planned for, but the greatest parts of our community coming together to support one another has been a hallmark of our community and this year. Seeing our community come back together to enjoy the love and cherish everything that we have got in our local patch and seeing people back out supporting our local businesses and our community sporting associations is awesome, and I wanted to place on the record my appreciation for my community and the City of Kingston keeping coming forward for testing and keeping vigilant as we embark on a COVID-safe summer.

MORDIALLOC ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Mr Richardson: We have so much to look forward to in our patch with some of the things that when we came to government we promised we would deliver, including the Mordialloc Freeway and the removal of level crossings at Chelsea, Bonbeach and Edithvale getting underway in earnest through that summer period. Of course for the Thames Promenade on-and-off ramps in Chelsea Heights, that work will be underway in the next couple of weeks, and the Mordialloc Freeway is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2021. On those level crossings on the Frankston train line, 18 are going out of the 30 that were there when we came to government. Twelve new stations have been built, and our next targets are Chelsea, Bonbeach and Edithvale—and we are absolutely thrilled to see the progress in works going on. Some 4500 pilings are going into the ground now. It is incredible to see that progress, and we cannot wait to see the big dig-out coming very soon in September and October 2021.

POLWARTH ELECTORATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr Riordan (Polwarth) (13:51): In a year when we have seen lots of bad news and lots of heartache for many people, it is always great to recognise the success stories of this year. I refer to a few just in the Polwarth electorate in recent weeks—first of all to Dinny Goonan’s vineyard in the Deans Marsh area. This year they entered both their shiraz and their riesling into the Melbourne International Wine Competition and received gold medals for both. It is a great sign of the way the food industry is going—the boutique food industry—in the Otway Harvest Trail area.

A big shout-out to our young people in the Colac area with the Colac area Youth Health Hub awards that were handed out last Friday. A big shout-out to young Ryan Nowell for the Sports Award, an international show rider there; the Be a Man group, including Keahan Bromfield-O’Meara, Leon Caluzzi, Alex Mawhinney and Ben Wooding, with the Community Award; Bonni McLaren—Arts Award; Hugh Jefferys—Business (Entrepreneurial) Award; Nathan Barnden—Business (Trainee) Award; Jamie Rogers—Environment Award; Youth Arts Group—Wild Card Award; Makoul Duot—Inspirational Award; and Tayla Buttigieg—Great Mate Award. It is a wonderful thing to see at a time when we cannot get together and celebrate as we much as we might, but with the use of social media and internet all those young people have been well acknowledged and those looking on Facebook can continue to watch the awards for the next month or so.

BUNINYONG ELECTORATE SCHOOLS FUNDING

Ms Settle (Buninyong) (13:53): The local schools in my electorate do so much to give every child the best start in life, and they will see a massive boost in the building programs to deliver school buildings that match the passion of the school community. By reforming schools the Victorian government is transforming communities. Our schools are neighbourhood hubs by sharing sport and community facilities. This year’s investments include $1.978 million for Linton Primary School and more than $900 000 for Cape Clear Primary School. This shows that the Victorian government understands the importance of regional and rural schools and that every schoolkid counts in these communities. School buildings are much more than bricks and mortar. They can make a difference to people’s lives, what they achieve now and what they will achieve in the future.
This budget also saw $1.14 million in small-scale school building projects in my electorate: $119 000 for Gordon Primary School, $146 000 for Lal Lal Primary School and $350 000 for Mount Clear. Mount Pleasant Primary School saw investment as well as Myrniong Primary School, Sebastopol Primary School and Woodmans Hill secondary college, and there was over $10 million for Ballarat Specialist School.

This budget like no other is showing what Labor is really about. It is about investment in our people through our schools and free TAFE places, social housing, better hospitals and creating jobs. We understand that people matter, and our success as a government should be measured in the wellbeing of our people within our electorate. I applaud the schools.

**ENERGY POLICY**

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (13:55): I rise today to speak about the Victorian government’s energy policy and its impact on the Latrobe Valley community. In recent years the government has sought to implement a raft of legislative and regulatory changes that advantage renewable energy generation over traditional generation sources such as coal and gas. As I have stated many times, this is not a renewal versus non-renewable argument but rather what these changes mean for communities like mine. We have to understand what the impacts of government policies such as the Victorian renewable energy target (VRET), emissions reduction targets, EPA licence reviews and sector pledges actually mean for our local community. These policy determinations continue to leave a legacy of uncertainty in and around the Latrobe Valley for employers, workers, families, contractors, businesses and the community more generally. There is no doubt that some, a combination or all of these policies will have a detrimental effect, potentially closing another power station in my electorate.

Despite this, the government cannot bring itself to say that its policies will bring a premature close to Latrobe Valley power stations, and subsequently there is no transition plan. How can you introduce legislation like VRET without understanding what those targets might do to communities like mine? The government derives millions and millions of dollars each and every year from brown coal royalties in the Latrobe Valley, yet when it comes to reinvesting in energy technology the government decides to build a Big Battery in Geelong—go figure. The reality is we have no transition plan and no understanding of the impacts of the government’s energy policies, but what we do have is massive uncertainty, and that is a disgraceful situation that needs to be resolved.

**GEELOONG ELECTORATE SCHOOLS FUNDING**

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (13:56): Geelong teachers and families have done an incredible job in supporting students to learn from home, and I thank them all. I was really pleased to announce that Geelong South Primary School received a $2.3 million upgrade as part of the Victorian budget to deliver a new gymnasium for the school. I was joined by principal Leanne Dowling and students Hamish, Augie, Evie and Ariv to celebrate this exciting news.

There was also a great excitement at Barwon Valley School, which will receive $10.73 million to deliver stage 2 of the school’s master plan. I was joined by principal Anne Hume and students Logan, Hattie and Kaelin to announce that the details of stage 2 will include the replacement of relocatable buildings with a permanent building and an upgrade to the multipurpose building.

I was also pleased to announce that Belmont Primary School will receive just over $57 000 for shade coverings and Chilwell Primary School just over $150 000 for a playground upgrade from the minor capital works fund.

Across the Geelong region the Labor government is delivering school upgrades, investing in new classrooms, fixing old buildings and delivering the learning spaces our kids deserve. Autistic students will get more support in schools and more tailored assistance with their education through an Australian-first strategy launched by the Andrews government—an almost $1.6 billion disability
inclusion investment to transform funding and support for students with a disability in Victorian government schools. For many families in the Geelong region this is a welcome investment.

**1ST/14TH BRIGHTON SEA SCOUTS**

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (13:58): The 1st/14th Brighton Sea Scouts know how to make a difference. Their Street2Bay project, which seeks to combat microplastic pollution and protect our beaches and wildlife, has become a statewide initiative. Five hundred scouts and leaders have spent over 3300 volunteer hours in litter audits. Since the project commenced in 2018, 54 000 items of litter have been collected and categorised; 74 per cent of the litter was plastics and 37 per cent was cigarette butts.

To group leader Janet Cardell and other leaders in the scouting pack: you are making a real difference in protecting our community.

**ELWOOD COMMUNITY CHOIR**

Mr NEWBURY: The Elwood Community Choir recently met online for their end-of-year Christmas concert. Fortunately for all I left my microphone on mute and joined in to sing along with the group as they ended their year. Congratulations to Jeannie Marsh and the wonderful choir.

**BAYSIDE U3A**

Mr NEWBURY: Bayside U3A is a powerhouse in my community. U3A offers short courses for people active in retirement. The group recently invited comedian Denise Scott to celebrate the end of year. We heard how her doctor claims Denise is her favourite comedian but has mistaken her for Denise Drysdale. Congratulations to president Tony Aplin and the team.

**FELICITATIONS**

Mr NEWBURY: Finally, I wish my community of Brighton, Brighton East, Elwood and Hampton a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. I would like to thank my staff—Jade Smith-Love, Grace Sutcliffe and Angie Gledhill—for their hard work. Thank you also to my beautiful family; I am very fortunate to have them in my life.

**MELTON TRAIN STATION**

Mr McGHIE (Melton) (13:59): The historic Melton train station is one of the busiest stations on the V/Line network, with an average of more than 6000 passengers travelling to and from the station on any given weekday. Late last year Melton commuters were fortunate enough to receive a brand new train station at Cobblebank to relieve pressure on Melton. As part of the Ballarat line upgrades, the Melton train station saw a platform change, which has resulted in the platform used for the morning commute into the city now positioned opposite where the current facilities are located. Many constituents have contacted my office to raise with me their concerns, which I have advocated for with the minister.

I was delighted to hear that as part of the Andrews Labor government’s $2.7 billion building blitz to kickstart our economy, Melton station will be receiving much-needed upgrades. Melton station is one of the 16 key train stations to receive a share of $24 million of upgrades to provide improved facilities for commuters. The planning works to upgrade Melton station are now well underway. Boreholes have already been drilled on platform 1 and the adjacent track, giving crews the critical foundation and structure data to help them plan for the installation of additional shelters and a new accessible platform entrance along with platform surface improvements. The additional entrance and shelter will give passengers better access to the platform and reduce crowding at the existing entrance. They will also provide more comfortable spaces while waiting for trains. The station upgrade plan will include an upgrade to the passenger information display screens and relocation of Myki payment devices. During the upgrade special care will be taken to preserve the artworks and historical plaques at the station that have been created by the local community in recent years. I welcome the upgrade to the historic train station that Melton commuters deserve.
NARRE WARREN SOUTH ELECTORATE STUDENT LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (14:01): One of my greatest joys as a member of Parliament is recognising the hard work of our local students with my community spirit and leadership awards. The award recipients are nominated by the local schools on the basis of their dedication, kindness, resilience, enthusiasm and leadership. All of the worthy recipients this year have made a significant contribution to their school and community: Natalie Chamberlain of Strathaird Primary School, Amya Umar of Brentwood Park Primary, Elly Ratanawanieuk of Hampton Park Primary, Cael Katene of Kilberry Valley Primary, Malachi Taylor of Berwick Chase Primary, Tanish Gugnani of Berwick Fields Primary, Alice-Lily Somervell of Hillsmeade Primary, Jirah Salesulu of Coral Park Primary, Hiku Sadlier of River Gum Primary, Hope-Ilinia Tupufia-lakopo of Narre Warren South P–12 College. Senior students recognised for their leadership and understanding of local and global issues are: Manmeet-Kaur Singh-Srur of Hampton Park Secondary College, Olivia Poulton of Kambray College and Joe Fraser of Narre Warren South P–12 College. I would like to congratulate this year’s outstanding winners for their tremendous work and dedication. It is an honour to have such outstanding young leaders in our community.

FELICITATIONS

Mr MAAS: I would also like to do a quick shout-out to my electorate office staff of Myles, Chalo, Laura, Declan and Tamim for a tremendous year’s work.

MACEDON ELECTORATE

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (14:02): What a challenging year we have faced. In this last sitting week I wanted to acknowledge the people of my electorate, the people of Macedon, who I am so privileged to represent. To our neighbourhood house coordinators, Danny Livesidge, Melissa Baker, Michelle Balthazar, Vivien Philpotts, Claire Rawlinson, Tania Sawyer and Carolynne Venn, to your boards and volunteers, I want to say thank you. The support that you have shown for our community this year has been invaluable. Our local government leaders and staff have been excellent in informing and assisting people in our region, so thank you to all the workers at Macedon Ranges, Hepburn, Mount Alexander, Moorabool and Melton shires. Thanks to Margaret McDonald and everyone at Cobaw Community Health. To the organisers and volunteers at the Daylesford Good Grub Club, to Simon and Kerryn at Kyneton Caring Community, to Anita and Julie at Gisborne FoodBank, thank you for supporting the most vulnerable members of our community through this very tough year. To Maree cuddihy and team at Central Highlands Rural Health, I know that people across our region have had nothing but excellent experiences with you and your team at testing sites in Kyneton and Daylesford. Thank you.

To our frontline workers living in Macedon: it is an understatement to say that we could not have done it without you. Whether you are a supermarket worker, cleaner, early childhood educator, ambo, nurse, doctor, teacher, food producer—to everyone who has worked on the front line during the pandemic, I say thank you. And to those who have lost work: the Andrews government is here by your side.

BROADMEADOWS ELECTORATE REVITALISATION

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (14:04): After a journey without maps, we have officially eliminated the coronavirus in Victoria. No-one is immune, but we know the coronavirus stalks inequality. This reality highlights how we are all connected to our most vulnerable communities. Therefore a legacy from this pandemic must be defining Broadmeadows as a priority for a whole-of-government response. This cause defines the essence of duty in public life. Danger is proven, need is compelling, opportunity is outstanding. The Broadmeadows Revitalisation Board 4.0, which I am privileged to chair, seeks collaboration and support for partnerships with the three tiers of government, business, and civil society to deliver evidence-based, solutions-driven, no-regrets investments, including a city deal. The comeback strategy drives Broadmeadows as a prototype for economic and social recovery, creating jobs, attracting investments, facilitating community development and harvesting the benefit for local families.
The strategy coordinates world-leading practice and major institutions, and harnesses technology to drive grassroots benefits. Anchors feature a new virtual hospital delivering health care at home atop a redeveloped Broadmeadows Hospital for acute care. Collaboration with a revamped Kangan Institute would also deliver benefits, including training the next generation of health workers, delivering nurse-to-patient ratios and protection against any new outbreak or pandemic.

CAROLYN INGVARSON

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (14:05): Today I would like to speak about a trailblazer in my electorate of Hawthorn, Carolyn Ingvarson, who has recently stepped down as convener of Lighter Footprints, a non-partisan group promoting climate change awareness in Boroondara and surrounding suburbs. Recently Carolyn was awarded the Australian Conservation Foundation Peter Rawlinson award in recognition of her leadership and determination to grow action on climate change. As someone who has been to numerous Lighter Footprints events, I have seen Carolyn’s dedication, determination and commitment to the cause of making our world a better place to live, not only now but for future generations. Under her leadership Lighter Footprints has grown from a small group meeting in her living room to an incorporated association with over 2500 supporters. Carolyn has worked tirelessly to engage the community and politicians on climate change issues and has supported Lighter Footprints volunteers to be bold in their ambitions to achieve change. It is with great pleasure that I congratulate Carolyn Ingvarson on her exceptional leadership, and I look forward to Lighter Footprints events.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE
NOTICES OF MOTION

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (14:07): I move:

That the consideration of government business, notice of motion 1, be postponed until after the consideration of the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020.

Motion agreed to.

Bills

PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING AMENDMENT (QUARANTINE FEES) BILL 2020

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ms NEVILLE:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:08): I rise to speak on the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020. This should really be, in brackets, the ‘last-minute quarantine fees’ bill, because what we are seeing today is a government that is absolutely scrambling to put something together after the effect. After the greatest policy failure in the state’s history, we have seen over 801 lives lost, livelihoods go to the wall and Victorians in lockdown for an unprecedented period of time of 111 days—a situation that has changed many of our lives. We see, even today, many of the members in the chamber still in the situation of having to wear masks. All of this has happened because the government has failed when it comes to hotel quarantine.

We have the Coate inquiry—which is due to hand down its report very close to Christmas, quite coincidentally—that will hopefully be able to get the bottom of who finally will take responsibility for the botched hotel quarantine program. We have seen through PAEC, through two lots of Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings, that ministers have been before the committee and they have all had collective amnesia. They have been through the Coate inquiry, and they have also had collective amnesia. Up until this point no-one has taken responsibility for the botched hotel quarantine program.
Now fast-forward to today, five months from the period when we had Victoria stop its situation of bringing in returned travellers—five months after the effect when we had national cabinet deliberate and say to all of the states that when we restart the ability for travellers to come from overseas to Australia we will have a hotel quarantine program in which people would be charged. And 24 hours after we started receiving travellers, who started to arrive yesterday, we are debating a bill to charge them today.

So people arrived from overseas yesterday; we have a bill before us to charge them today. This is crazy. This is absolutely crazy. This is a shambolic government in a complete mess that is big on press release but very light when it comes to detail, and it is the detail that has put us into a botched hotel quarantine program and the detail which you would think the government would have been able to get right a second time round. We had the Minister for Police and Emergency Services today stand up in this chamber and say that the government has been preparing for months to get things right, training for months, to ensure that the hotel quarantine mark 2 program would be ready to go—for months! So why are we debating a bill when we are already having people coming into Victoria?

I want to take you through this in a bit more detail, but before I do I say that this is the equivalent of a government that has really smashed the family car and gone out and built a new one without an engine, because that is what we are doing here. We have a hotel quarantine program without a price list—a hotel quarantine program without a fee, without a charge. We have a program that has not been finished with the detail you would expect it to have and a minister that has said, ‘I take responsibility. I’ve sorted it, and we won’t have the same mistakes that we’ve had again’. Well, I remind the government that we have already double-faulted when it comes to the hotel quarantine program restart.

We have the ADF, which should have been organised weeks ago. You would think the call would have been made weeks ago in preparation for the hotel quarantine restart—only to find out that that call went in days before we actually had them on the ground. In fact we had training start for hotel quarantine but the ADF had not arrived or had not been called for. We know that because the government themselves went out and said the ADF would be working alongside Victoria Police patrolling the floors of hotel quarantine—working hand in hand—and we would be having some 250 ADF coming to lend support. And what has happened? We have 192 or thereabouts ADF personnel, and they are not walking the floors but working to triage people into the hotels. So the game has changed, and the details have changed when it comes to use of the ADF, because again the government did not get their act together and put in the request in a timely fashion—just like we have here with this fees situation where we have welcomed guests, we have welcomed returned travellers back to Melbourne, without an invoice, without a fee charge and without any detail. I would like to take you through some of the detail here just to show you how poor this government is and how all Victorians should be very, very concerned in terms of having confidence in a hotel quarantine program going forward when a government is lacking in the detail.

I received a briefing about the hotel quarantine program reset on Friday after requesting that a week or two prior. It was with the new COVID-19 Quarantine Victoria commissioner and corrections commissioner, Emma Cassar. During that briefing we asked a number of questions about how the hotel quarantine program would work. This was lunchtime on Friday. At lunchtime on Friday we went through the details. Then I asked the question—this is at 12 o’clock on Friday—‘What would we be charging people that are returning to Melbourne? What is the fee going to be?’ To which I was, in a delayed response, told, ‘The same as other jurisdictions’. I then asked, ‘Well, we have a number of jurisdictions that are all welcoming back travellers. What jurisdiction are you referring to?’ to which I was told, ‘We’ll get back to you with the details’. Today is Tuesday. This was Friday.

At 4.30 on Friday I got a phone call from the police minister’s chief of staff to say that we need to rush through a bill to be able to enable the government to charge people for hotel quarantine. We need to rush through a bill and in unprecedented times not give it the due consideration that it needs. But we will read it and pass it today so it can be sent up to the upper house today and be put in motion immediately. Why do you think this is being done immediately? Because the government messed it up.
The government have messed it up. The government had five months to sort this out. Here we have a press release from national cabinet simply saying on 10 July that we had a situation with Victoria:

The Victorian outbreak has meant that there are now around 1,000 active cases in Australia. Daily infection rates have remained low …

in other states but were a problem in Victoria. It talks about:

The news from Victoria remains very concerning. The Commonwealth and all states and territories reiterated their support for Victoria …

It also talks about:

The Commonwealth is providing support and national coordination, with around 265 ADF personnel and additional Commonwealth staff in Victoria assisting the COVID-19 response …

This is the press release back on 10 July. Again, the government said that they did not get ADF support back then, but again, this is in black and white. Also in the press release it states:

States and territories are moving toward a model of charging for hotel quarantine. Further details will be provided by states and territories in the coming days, with National Cabinet agreeing to work toward a uniform model across the country.

That was on 10 July. Now, in July every other state got their model together, got their fee schedule together and away they went. What happened to Victoria? Well, I will tell you what happened to Victoria: they forgot to charge. The member for Broadmeadows would know about this as an astute supporter of business. Imagine opening up a business, member for Broadmeadows, a restaurant, and not having a price list and not having a menu and expecting people to actually understand what you are doing. This government not only does not have a price list or a fee schedule but has welcomed these travellers into Melbourne without any details about what they are going to charge them. And now we are told that this will be retrospective. So it will be that people who arrived yesterday—even though we are debating this today—will have to pay $3000 just like New South Wales, because what I am told is that the government, because they have not had the opportunity to do the work, have just ripped off what New South Wales has done and said, ‘We’ll have some of that. We will do what New South Wales are doing’.

Now, you have heard me in this chamber a number of times say that we should be learning from the best and the other states, and I continue to support that notion. But at the same time we should be learning from what others have not done quite right and how it could be improved. Even New South Wales, who have done so much better than us on just about every single measure, have had room for improvement at different times. Now, this shows you how hopeless this government is, saying that they are going to take a model straight from New South Wales and plug it into Victoria without doing any work at all. What we have here is we now have a fee schedule like New South Wales—fine, I have no problems. We support a user-pays system. We think we should have a user-pays system, so we support the integrity of the bill, but we question the detail of the bill. What this bill is doing is it is saying, ‘Trust us in the regulations. We’ll have a situation where those that cannot afford to pay, we’ll just sort that out later in terms of a relief program for those who cannot support it, and we’ll do it in a similar way to New South Wales because that’s the model that we’re using’.

Well, guess what? Less than 10 per cent of travellers in New South Wales have actually paid for hotel quarantine so far. Fifty per cent are getting straight off an exemption when they walk through the door. So we are up to 10 per cent of people actually paying for hotel quarantine. So I ask you: why would the government on Friday afternoon turn around and say, ‘Well, we’ll just take one of theirs; we’ll take the New South Wales one’ without even googling and finding out how successful the New South Wales fee schedule is when it comes to exemptions? On that note, under standing orders I wish to advise the house of amendments to this bill and request that they be circulated.

**Opposition amendments circulated by Mr SOUTHWICK under standing orders.**
Mr SOUTHWICK: As I stated, we have no issue in charging people for coming here and quarantining. It is a situation that the national cabinet has recommended. Other states have done so, and we think that Victoria should also cooperate with the other states and have a user-pays system—we have no problems at all. But as I have stated, there is very little detail in this bill. In fact the regulations will be worked out later, and we are told that the regulations will not effectively be ready to come into play until the new year. So what will happen is those people that are coming in to quarantine yesterday, today and tomorrow will not get an invoice until January next year. Merry Christmas! They will have their Christmas and they will get their invoice later for something that happened months ago. That is how botched this system is. But these amendments that we are proposing go to the core of the situation of ensuring those that can afford to pay for hotel quarantine should pay while those that have financial difficulty and hardship should get relief—very, very simple. It is a situation in which New South Wales certainly could improve and others could improve, and the government have been so lazy that they have not even looked to see how they could improve this model because they have been caught out. They have been caught out not doing the hard work—a policy by press release, a government that is looking for a news story rather than good policy and good looking-after-the-public, which they should be doing.

So what are we suggesting here in these amendments? With less than 10 per cent of returning travellers in New South Wales having paid their quarantine fees since mid-July, the Victorian Liberals have an amendment to apply explicit minimum eligibility criteria for a quarantine fee waiver which includes the following: applicants must be an Australian citizen or a permanent resident. At the moment we are not welcoming back international visitors, but we will be, and in such time as we will be, we expect them to pay their way and not to effectively get a fee waiver on the same basis as a local resident experiencing hardship. Again there is no detail around this, and we believe that we need to ensure that that is very explicit in terms of those eligible for a fee waiver. The second part is: applicants must not have an income of more than $1903 a week; applicants must not have more than $10000 in cash or a saving deposit; applicants must either have lost employment or suffered a 20 per cent reduction in working hours or salary, or business turnover in the case of sole traders, in relation to COVID-19.

I would expect that the government would support these amendments. I would expect they would do so, and you might say, ‘Well, why? Why would the government support amendments that the opposition has put up?’. Well, we have actually taken this model out of the government’s rent relief system for hardship. So this is a model that the government has already tested. We are not looking at making up our own rules; we are looking at taking the government’s own measures in terms of how they measure for hardship during COVID and what we are saying is let us use this measure for returned travellers who may also be experiencing hardship. Therefore we are quite explicit in terms of who gets fee relief and a waiver, who gets a waiver and who does not—who pays their fair share and who gets the waiver. And I think this is very important. This is crucial to the integrity of the program because this program, in the first go—in the first botched go—cost almost $200 million. It cost taxpayers $200 million. And what did we get? We got 801 lives lost, livelihoods lost, people locked down for 111 days—that is what we got for our $200 million. What an absolute disgrace. I tell you what: anything else and you would be asking for a refund and you would be taking whoever it was who sold you the dud to court.

Complete negligence—we know that. This government has been negligent in hotel quarantine mark 1. The concern is: are we going to see this all over again? Is this going to be groundhog day all over again? Because the government is not into the detail. They are not into the detail, and I am genuinely concerned about this, from all Victorians’ perspective, in ensuring we have confidence in the system going forward. The minister can stand up, as she did today, and say, ‘It’s the best program. We’ve been training for months. We’re all set to go. We are ready with a rolled-gold program’—without an ability to charge people. If you cannot get the basics right, how in hell are you going to be able to get the situation of all the other details right? The Prime Minister and national cabinet said in July, five months ago, ‘This is what you should do’. It was explicit in national cabinet: ‘This is what you should do’.
So these amendments are really important. They are based on the measure of the government’s hardship laws. They are very simple for the government. We need to make sure that those who can pay do pay so taxpayers are not subsidising the hotel quarantine going forward. They will subsidise it—but not to the level that they need to because we know this is costing a lot and we know the government is certainly making a lot of this stuff up as they go along.

We were told there were 300 police that were going to be allocated to hotel quarantine. There are 590 that have been trained, ready to go, for hotel quarantine—less ADF, because the government could not get their act together. We have got these people that have been trained as authorised officers to work hand in hand, which are the corrections staff and airline staff. Well, many of those airline staff are now going back to work as the airlines start again. So another question would be: what is going to happen to those? Are we going to have enough of those going forward?

There are a lot of questions here, and one of the other questions that I would like to put on record, which I think is very important with this going forward, is: when does the measure come into play? The bill provides very, very little detail, as we have said, because it is a last-minute bill. It was cobbled together at the last minute, and there are a lot of questions. The first question we have asked is: when will the regulations actually be finalised and introduced? Now, we were told in the briefing that this will not come into play until the new year, so we are deciding on a bill now without detail. People were arriving yesterday without an invoice. People then have their Christmas and go home, the regulations come into play in January, maybe mid-January or February, and they get a bill.

Now, we have seen what has happened with the COVID fines. How many people are not paying their fines because of the confusion in terms of what the government were doing changing the rules every day under lockdown? Victoria Police themselves did not know what was right and what was wrong when a lot of these fines were issued, and we know at some point we had 20 per cent of COVID fines actually being collected. Well, how many people do you think are going to pay for hotel quarantine between yesterday and when the regulations come into play in mid-January? How many? Well, let me give you some basic numbers here—just some basic numbers. I have had a crack.

So we are told 160 people are coming in each and every day—that is the cap; 160 people—and $3000 a day is what they can be charged. Now, I take the point that not everyone will be charged $3000 because there will be kids and there will be families, but let us just look at what the worst-case scenario would be. So based on that, at 160 people, we have got $480 000 a day in fees—$480 000 in charges that need to be collected. If the government does not get the regulations until mid-January—that is five weeks—this would effectively be $16.8 million. That is $16.8 million, with a question mark as to whether we are going to collect this money or not, at a time when we have lost our AAA rating and when we have a real issue in terms of our economy, jobs, balancing things and getting basic services into our electorates.

None of my schools are being funded. We would love some of that $16.8 million for that, but the government have just said, ‘You know what? Who cares about the detail? Let’s just bring in the hotel quarantine reset mark 2 and not have a fee structure’. I tell you what, the government has told us in a briefing that the actual details changed on the website on Friday. We had our briefing on Friday. The website was updated on Friday to say that you will be charged in line with other jurisdictions. You reckon people that were actually making their way back would check the COVID website and know all of this? And I tell you what, I am very sympathetic to those people that have got on a plane and have arrived here in Melbourne. Being somebody that supports the user-pay system, I am very sympathetic to those people that actually did not know, did not understand or were unclear about the charges because the government had not done their homework. I am very sympathetic to that.

I think you cannot run a business if you do not have the rules of the game set up in black and white. We see Consumer Affairs Victoria act every day in situations where you have Victorians who do not understand the rules, have been ripped off and have taken people to consumer affairs. I tell you what,
with this bill you may as well take the Victorian government to consumer affairs, because really we have got a hotel quarantine program mark 2 after the first one was completely stuffed, completely ruined. People will never get over this. They will never get over this. We can kind of think that we are through COVID and how wonderful it is, and the government keeps reminding us, ‘How good is Victoria compared to the rest the world?’ Gee whiz, how are those 801 families? They will not have their loved one there at Christmas time. They will not be over this, not today, not tomorrow, not ever—not today, not tomorrow, not ever. This is the worst policy failure we have ever seen in this state—the worst. You will read about it for years. Our grandchildren will read about this. They will probably do major projects on the way that the government has handled a botched hotel quarantine program. It will be there on the record forever, and for the government to boast again, to get out there and say, ‘We’ve had a reset. We’re the best in Australia with hotel quarantine’—

Mr Walsh: Gold standard.

Mr SOUTHWICK: ‘We are gold standard’. The new minister said, ‘Well, we didn’t have anyone responsible before, but I’m responsible now, and it’s gold standard’. Well, minister for police, if you are responsible now, why didn’t you get the basic fees right to charge people coming in now? Here is your second chance. You have already failed at the first hurdle. How can Victorians have any confidence in a government that keeps getting it wrong? They keep getting it wrong, and all they do is have another press conference and a press release and think that will fix it. It will not fix it. Victorians deserve better. They deserve better, and this is something I know not from politics but from very early in life—it is something that I was taught: you just cannot throw money at something to fix it. No money will just fix it. You have got to have the basic system right. You have got to have leadership. You have got to have systems. We know, and the government says, ‘We’re not using private security now’. Yes, private security failed. But why did they fail? They failed because there was not the leadership, there was not the authority, the direction, someone in charge. You could have 500 police there tomorrow; if no-one is calling the shots, I do not care who you are putting on the ground. If no-one is calling the shots, you will not get it right. You will not get it right.

That is where this government has failed. They have failed at leadership. The buck stops with the Premier, as we have said time and time again. The Premier stood up and gave his hundred-and-whatever press conferences and did not answer anything, did not tell us who actually botched up the program in the first place. I tell you what, the Premier botched it up, because the buck stops with the top, at the Premier. If no-one else is there to actually accept responsibility, then surely the buck stops with the Premier. Surely that has to happen. You cannot just smooth it over, rub out history and say, ‘Set and forget. Don’t worry about the past; we’ve got it right now’, particularly when the basics like this are not right.

And I know people might think, ‘$16 million—that’s not much’ or ‘$3000 a day by 160 travellers—that’s not much’ and all of this. You know—‘It’s all charging fees; who cares about that. It’s not whether they are going to quarantine and all that other stuff’. I am sorry—forget about the fact that money is money and we need to ensure that people do pay their way and it is something that we all signed up to as part of national cabinet back in July. Five months later we have still failed. Forget all of that. What it is is a test which the government has failed. I cannot believe that it has taken the opposition to ask the government questions in a briefing to then find out—‘Oh, you know what? We need legislation today’.

Well, for anyone watching this at home, anyone reading this in Hansard, I want to reaffirm the point that yesterday we had some 220 or thereabouts travellers that had returned home again without this legislation. We are going to have for the next however many weeks 160 people a day arriving without the regulation. We do not have the legislation, we do not have the regulation, but we have a government that is still intent on charging people—and charging them retrospectively—because at the end of the day they have made a mess of it. They have made a complete mess of it and they do not
want to admit responsibility, so they are hoping it all goes away. This is a bad mistake—it is a bad, bad mistake.

If we did not have hotel quarantine mark 1 and the botched system that killed people, you would turn around and you would say, ‘You know what? Okay. You know, sometimes we forget things’. But I just would have thought that when the stakes are so high—of a third wave—and when the government has been put through the wringer of the mistakes, you would not fail at the first hurdle. You would not have the situation of thinking that you had made the call to the ADF and got them here and you have to do a last-minute job on that now knowing we have got less ADF coming with different responsibilities than the minister herself had planned for. That is a double-fault. That is two things that the government have missed out on in a second go at hotel quarantine.

Government, you have got a lot to answer for. This is appalling. I would ask that you support our amendments going forward to ensure people that come here pay their way and ensure that people that cannot afford to get the relief that they need. Our amendments are sensible. We have at least thought about this, unlike the government, and we are—hopefully—willing to get to a point where we get this right, because up until this point it has just been shambolic, one mess after another and a failure by the Andrews Labor government to get hotel quarantine right.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (14:38): I am most pleased to lead off the government’s contribution in relation to the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020. There are several points to make in relation to this bill and then picking up on some of the commentary from the member for Caulfield as well. Firstly, I think it is important to note that we are now at day 39 of zero cases of COVID-19 here in Victoria. That is something that should never go unnoticed, should never go unremarked, and we should always be very thankful for the very significant work not only of our health practitioners and health workers but also of every Victorian and the discipline and commitment each one of us and everybody in our communities has shown to one another to bring about a result that has allowed so many more of us to be together and to stay safe in what has been a very challenging year with a worldwide pandemic that has taken the lives of so many right around the world.

Can I say also that the bill, in allowing the making of changes to regulations to enable the charging of fees for mandatory quarantine for international arrivals entering Victoria on or after yesterday, 7 December—Pearl Harbor Day, for those of you who are history buffs—when international flights did resume, of course reduces the financial burden on the state and the public administration of mandatory quarantine. There are a few elements that are particularly important in relation to that, and I wanted to pick up on several of those.

Firstly, there was a discussion about fees to be charged. It is quite reasonable that Victoria has drawn on the experiences of other jurisdictions, and jurisdictions like Victoria across our country include New South Wales. It is fair and reasonable that Victoria would in part draw on their experiences, as a like jurisdiction, in setting a framework around how this legislation would be brought to the Parliament and some of the elements that will then flow through in terms of the regulations.

What also needs to be noted is—just picking up on the period between July and November 2020, when less than 200 people were accommodated in our mandatory quarantine—the costs there were upwards of nearly $80 million, and that is just an element, I suppose, to explain to people a bit about the ongoing costs in relation to mandatory quarantine.

There is a new clause in the bill that will enable the amendments and any regulations made under these amendments to have a retrospective effect, and whenever legislation comes to this place that has a retrospective element, it needs to be given very serious and due consideration as to how that affects people. But it has been well known to those who have travelled overseas, Australian citizens seeking to return to this country, that right across the world borders closed mostly back in March to so many who found themselves away from their home country.
It is important to note that there will be an element in the bill that refers to and deals with the waiving of fees and having concessional fee arrangements, and that they will be made as well as payment plans to account for individual personal financial circumstances. So there will be an element of fairness that is applied to families in the way in which these fees are applied. I certainly know from constituents in my electorate, mostly parents or grandparents, who have sought to lobby and advocate and raise their concerns about people who are returning home—some were on the news just the other night—that obviously there are concerns there for people who will find themselves in hotel quarantine and unable to leave that quarantine, with young children, and making sure that their health needs and mental health needs are catered for and that they are given every due support.

But what we also need to bear in mind very clearly is that the greatest threat to the public health and wellbeing of every Victorian is overseas travellers, at this time, in relation to this worldwide pandemic. That is just a fact that is undisputed, and there is not one Victorian who does not understand that and who does not expect the highest standards in the way in which the government will not only ensure that those who seek to return to Victoria and return to this country understand what people have endured here in Australia and in Victoria but that they understand the obligations on them in choosing to return to Australia at this time—outside of the time that was originally given, when people were given very fair and known advice about the closure of the borders and the effects that this worldwide pandemic had had right across the globe.

What I think are also important to note and to mention—and I wanted to pick up on—are some of the time lines that were outlined in the previous speaker’s contribution. I know in correspondence that I have had from the Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Michael McCormack, MP, in relation to seeking to advocate on behalf of residents and families in my own electorate to provide opportunities to give them some clear advice on how they can find their way home, in relation to the caps that have been in place—and let us remember these are national cabinet decisions; let us remember that they are decisions that apply right across the country—in response to my letter of 15 September, firstly to the Honourable Peter Dutton, the Minister for Home Affairs, then of course to the Deputy Prime Minister, his response to me on 10 November was:

Quarantine arrangements for international passenger arrivals remain one of the most effective measures to protect against the spread of COVID-19 in the Australian community.

The Australian Government, following urgent requests from the States to assist with the management of international passenger arrivals given major pressures on their quarantine capacity, put in place a series of international passenger arrival caps at our major international airports, which commenced in July 2020. These caps were agreed by National Cabinet and currently limit the national total number of international passenger arrivals to Australia.

The letter goes on to state that:

… National Cabinet has agreed to a number of increases to the caps, and … on 23 October 2020 … additional capacity being provided on scheduled international commercial services for vulnerable Australians where possible.

In the letter from the Deputy Prime Minister to me, he goes on to say further that the government put in place an arrangement where the:

… arrival caps will continue until 21 November 2020, with ongoing review by National Cabinet …

So it is not fair and reasonable to say that it was some decree in July that was not then subsequently advanced and amended and changed by the national cabinet—as recently as in the past weeks. That is why in the legislation that is before the house today we are making sure that it not only reflects the arrangements and experiences previously in Victoria but reflects the latest advice from the national cabinet. Not only that, but in making sure that we touch directly on the fact that there are some retrospective elements to this legislation I think it is really important to pick up on the points in the second-reading speech from the minister where it is outlined again that:

Should a fee scheme continue to be required for mandatory quarantine beyond 31 December 2021, the Government will bring a future Bill to the Parliament to enable more permanent laws and regulations to be
made. This is consistent with the approach the Government has taken with other COVID-19 specific laws that the Parliament has considered, and the important responsibility the Parliament has in overseeing the State’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

So again, it is outlining to the community, outlining to Victorians, that this legislation is a product of its time, that it is all about meeting the absolute desire and the demands of the Victorian community to ensure that those high-risk overseas returned travellers to Australia, to Victoria, who provide the greatest threat and risk, sadly and unfortunately, with regard to the pandemic meet some significant obligations. Also, if we do not have fee structures and arrangements that are consistent across other states, we will have everyone wanting to try and push their way through the caps into Victoria—rather than those most in need that need to come back here—due to a view that they might be trying to inconsistently avoid costs and obligations that apply to them. The fact that the second-reading speech outlines the opportunity to come back for further consideration if there needs to be an extension to this legislation and to this amendment again goes to the significant point that it is a product of its time and it is also about providing a further opportunity to assess and amend and bring forward a further bill if required post December 2021.

I want to pick up on the fact that I understand and will continue to advocate and lobby for families who have raised concerns about the access to the national cabinet caps and the difficulties they are having getting people home. I absolutely understand the need for support, for making sure we have appropriate health needs met for those who have to endure a level of quarantine. But what all Victorians know is that that level of quarantine is for those returning to this country who are not very clear and do not necessarily have an empathy with or an understanding of what Victorians have endured through the winter months. They need to understand that we are actually reflecting the very key confidences and demands of the Victorian community to keep everybody safe so that we can all remain open and stay safe.

Finally, can I also say that the Public Health and Wellbeing (Quarantine Fees) Amendment Bill comes from that act that was delivered by the Bracks and Brumby governments in 2008 under the then health minister, the Premier, the member for Mulgrave. It is far-sighted and it makes a lot of sense that we are again leveraging off that legislation to deliver safe outcomes for Victorians.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (14:48): I rise to make a contribution on the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020. I suppose I would remind the member for Ivanhoe, the previous speaker, that there is a retrospective element to this bill effectively because such a shambolic mess has been made by this government not only of hotel quarantine prior to this but also of actually this bill. The fact is that the last time any overseas returnees came into Victoria I think was 2 July, from memory. There was a decision of the national cabinet in early July that future returnees would have to face a cost recovery process. So the Andrews government has known since early July that there needed to be a process in place to actually charge overseas returnees for their hotel quarantine. So it just defies logic that the shadow minister would find out last Friday that there was going to be a bill introduced this week, that the actual bill drafting would be dated last Friday, when the government has known since early July that this was necessary.

It is just symptomatic of how bad the Andrews government is at administering this state. Yes, they can put out press releases. Yes, the Premier can do a record number of press conferences, whatever they may have been. But when it actually comes to when the rubber hits the road and you are going to administer the state the Andrews government is absolutely shambolic. So, yes, there is a retrospective element to this, but that is because the government has been so poor in implementing so many different programs across Victoria. To go from early July and having a decision made by the national cabinet, which the Premier sits on, that there will be a charging for quarantine for overseas returned travellers to now on 4 December going, ‘Oh, my goodness, we actually need legislation to charge these people’ just defies logic as to how government can be so, so incompetent.

But I suppose if you look at history, if you look at the failures in hotel quarantine and the failures in contact tracing after those failures in hotel quarantine that led to the tragic loss of over 800 people in
this state, you would probably say, ‘Well, that’s about the standard rate for this government. They just
don’t know how to administer the state. They are totally out of touch with good public administration’.

As the member for Caulfield mentioned, when people look back at history, when people are studying
politics at uni and people are studying public administration at uni and they go to look for examples
of how you could do something so badly and effectively kill so many people, there will be essays
written and there will probably be books written about how bad the hotel quarantine program was in
this state, how bad the contact tracing was to actually trace those people that were infected and how
they spread it back into the community.

The Coate inquiry was set up to supposedly give us answers as to who made that decision to use private
contract security in hotel quarantine. I think we probably all spent too much of our life actually
watching the Coate inquiry, but to sit in my office in Echuca and watch the Premier of this state—the
Premier who said, ‘The buck stops with me. I take responsibility for everything that happens on my
watch’—and have Victorians sit there and watch the Premier of Victoria when he was asked the
questions say 27 times ‘I don’t recall’ is appalling leadership of this state and appalling for someone
who says he takes responsibility. He is someone who everyone knows is effectively the CEO of the
state and makes all the key decisions for this state, and to have him say ‘I don’t recall’ 27 times is just
an absolute slight on both the person and the administration of the Andrews government. The Sergeant
Schultz defence that everyone across the failure of hotel quarantine and contact tracing used—‘I know
nothing. It’s all someone else’s fault’—but not actually knowing who the someone else was I think
again was appalling. That is not how the Westminster system of government should work. That is not
how honesty and integrity should actually be implemented in this state.

The fact that everyone sort of points at someone else, even to having counsel assisting the Coate
inquiry coming up with a theory that the decision to use private security guards in hotel quarantine
was somehow a creeping assumption, that the decision was sort of made by osmosis, that it moved
along and moved along and that no-one really made a decision but somehow the Andrews government
landed at this decision to use private security in hotel quarantine, again defies logic.

Anyone that has anything to do with the administration of government, the administration of cabinet
processes, would know that someone actually has to sign for the money. As the member for Caulfield
said, $195 million has gone west in this huge failure in this state. Someone had to sign the requisition
for that amount of money. Someone had to make that decision. Or is the government trying to tell us
that the systems, the cabinet systems of Victoria, the accountability of Victoria, broke down that badly
that there was no cabinet submission, there was no oversight by Treasury and there was no oversight
by Premier and Cabinet as to this decision-making? If that is the case, that is even more appalling—that
the whole systems of government collapsed and we spent $195 million on a hotel quarantine scheme
that failed, we spent the money on contact tracing that failed and over 800 people lost their lives.

As I have said in this place previously, if there was train crash in Victoria and tragically 800 people
were killed, if one of the high-rise buildings in Melbourne collapsed and tragically 800 people were
killed, there would be hell to pay. There would be heads to roll. There would be screaming from the
streets that someone had to be accountable for that tragedy and those deaths. But because the majority
of those fatalities were in the aged-care system—a little bit out of sight, out of mind—and happened
over a period of time, everyone seems to have just moved on from the fact that, as the member for
Caulfield said, there are 800 families this Christmas who will have Christmas lunch or Christmas
dinner and there will be a vacant chair at that table because of the Andrews government and their
failure around hotel quarantine and contact tracing.

The reasoned amendment that the member for Caulfield has moved is a sensible reasoned amendment,
as it actually puts some detail around the regulations. This is effectively enabling legislation that says,
‘Trust us. Trust us to actually get the regulations right’. No-one trusts the Andrews government
anymore. We actually want to see legislation that has details in it, and I would urge the government to
seriously consider supporting the member for Caulfield’s amendment, because it actually gives some
clear detail as to how people are going to be charged. If you look at the history from New South Wales, only about 10 per cent of the people who have been charged are actually paying the money. So for the government to say, ‘We’re going to introduce this, we’re going to then do the regulations and then we’re going to implement it and then somehow charge people who have already left those hotels’, I think just again defies logic. If you go to a hotel in Melbourne to stay for two weeks as a private citizen, they will take a credit card imprint. They will actually make sure that if you do a runner or if you leave without paying they have a credit card imprint to get that money out of you. I am not sure that the people who are coming back through hotel quarantine will face that sort of rigour that private enterprise actually have to make sure they get paid.

Yes, I understand that there are people stuck overseas. They are partly stuck overseas because of the failures of the Andrews government that shut down Melbourne from early July as far as overseas returnees go. There is an issue of fault with the government as to why these people are overseas, and I understand that they have probably run out of money and there are some issues in getting them home. But to think that the regulations and the systems are not in place and that people who do come home do not know actually what they are going to face is appalling. It just goes to show how shambolic the Andrews government is at administering this state on a whole range of levels, and we see it every week. Almost every day when we come into this Parliament there is something done on the fly at the last minute because the government has actually failed in those basic core principles of administering this state, and we have seen that time and time again. I would urge the government to consider supporting the amendment by the member for Caulfield.

Mr CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (14:58): It is with pleasure that I rise this afternoon to speak on this particular matter. I must say in reflecting on this bill and the year that Victoria has had and where Victoria’s year stands in comparison to the last time we faced the circumstances that we as Victorians have faced this year I reflected of course on the Spanish flu. That was the last time that Victoria and indeed really the global community experienced a pandemic that has had such profound consequences for the health of Victorians but also such profound consequences for the health of many communities throughout the globe. And as we all know, as we have all participated in many debates here and within our own community, we have been able to reflect on the circumstances of the pandemic and reflect clearly on the considerable attention that the Andrews Labor government has put into responding to those very circumstances. I reflected clearly over reading the elements of this bill on how wicked this virus is and how quickly a chain of spread can leap from an individual through their family and into the broader community.

And of course I, like most in this chamber, reflected on the hotel quarantine program that we put in place and reflected carefully on the evidence that we heard submitted to the Coate inquiry and the considerable commentary made through that inquiry and the lessons learned through that. As we are all very clearly aware, the Victorian government has been working in partnership through the leadership of the Premier, through the national cabinet, to make sure that we are operating in lock step with other jurisdictions throughout the commonwealth and to make sure that our programs are consistent, that they are thought through, that they are well managed and that they are well funded. Indeed that has been a hallmark of this government—to make sure that we do that deep public policy work in a circumstance where of course this virus moves so quickly—and we very much have responded I think appropriately and thoughtfully.

The hotel quarantine program that we are debating today, the actions put in place by this government, the rigorous approach that we are taking, I am sure very much builds on that program. It makes sure that we have a system of hotel quarantine for those overseas Australians who wish to return to our shores so that they do not bring the virus back into the country and then see that virus spread throughout our community.

There is one particular element that I thought a lot about over the last few months, particularly in terms of where this virus ultimately ended up, the communities that it affected the most and the nature of the economy that they had the opportunity to participate in. It very much struck me—I am sure in many
members of the Andrews Labor government it struck a real chord—that at the end of the day the reality is that our connection to the economy made a profound difference with respect to how that virus spread. The more insecure work that those communities had, the more likely it was that they would contract the virus and the more likely it would be that they would then transmit that virus into their families and into the communities that they participate in. The Andrews Labor government’s response to that through the redesign of the hotel quarantine initiative is to make sure that at the heart of that program secure work is there for those that participate so that the likelihood that those workers would ultimately transmit that virus—if they were unlucky enough to pick it up even though we have got very, very strong occupational health and safety measures to hopefully ensure that they do not contract it—that it is then not transmitted into their families and into the communities in which they live.

And I said, through the national cabinet we of course will participate in having a hotel quarantine process. We will make sure that we do our fair share of supporting international tourists or international Australians returning to our shores. It is the right thing to do. We have put considerable thought into design of this program to make sure that it can be done as safely as possible, that it can be done as fairly as possible.

Now I do want to very much reflect, just in the brief moments that I have left, that COVID-19 and the pandemic that has flowed as a consequence of that is a one-in-100-year event, and despite how much our scientific knowledge of the way viruses spread has grown over that last century, the reality is that it is the basic lessons learned back then in clever jurisdictions that are just as important today as they were back then—and that is effectively social distancing, mask wearing and protecting the most vulnerable in our community. That is going to continue to be, I think, critical going forward until such time as we have that vaccination—until such time as we are able to vaccinate our communities to make sure that, just like we respond to the flu each year and we get that shot, we continue to maintain the lessons of that pandemic back in the 1920s to make sure that we curtail the spread of this virus.

Having a hotel quarantine program with an appropriate fee-based structure is reasonable. It is what other jurisdictions have done. We need to make sure that those fees are broadly consistent with what is happening in other jurisdictions, otherwise we will end up being the cheapest jurisdiction to go for and we will end up carrying more of the burden than is fair, reasonable or appropriate.

I very much want to thank all Victorians who have done it particularly tough over the last six or eight months. I would like to thank them for their patience and thank them for following the very clear directions of the chief health officer. It has been a tough year for Victorians. We have responded appropriately by focusing on the health elements to the pandemic as our first response, and of course with the budget handed down by the Treasurer last sitting week we are now putting in place a budget that is going to help grow this economy, restore the jobs that have been lost as a consequence of COVID-19 and lead the infrastructure our state needs.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (15:08): Does the left hand know what the right hand is doing? I think that is the question we have got before us at the moment, because there is no greater evidence that the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing than the bill we have before us at the moment, the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020. The whole process has been a farce, and it is very clear that this is the third sitting week in a row where there have been last-minute changes popped in. It is very evident that the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing.

Today during question time the Minister for Police and Emergency Services did a ministers statement and she was saying, ‘We have been training for this for months. We thought about everything that needed to be done’. Well, if that was happening in her area, it was not happening in every area of government. Clearly there have been many people asleep at the wheel for several months, and that is just not good enough, because now we are having to deal with this bill, the quarantine fees bill, urgently. It has got to go through the Parliament very quickly. If it was not going through the Parliament this week—if the member for Caulfield had not had the nous and the briefing that he had last week and this got found out later this week—well, then the government was going to be up the creek. I wonder...
whether they would have had to recall Parliament closer to Christmas because they would have had to have found some way to deal with that, and that just would not have been good enough.

Now, last week the member for Caulfield had a briefing—a hotel quarantine reset briefing. This was in the middle of the day—lunchtime—last week on Friday. And here we are now; the first item of business up on Tuesday is something that stemmed from that meeting that the member for Caulfield had. He asked questions, as you would do, and one of the questions he asked was about the cost of hotel quarantine. That question triggered alarm bells, because it then sent a frenzy through the government offices and the public sector, who had to urgently draft legislation. It is not easy to draft legislation and it does require some thought, but when you have to urgently do it there is the risk that something will go wrong. We know that the draft legislation had Friday’s date stamp on it. It was actually drafted Friday afternoon after that meeting that the member for Caulfield had. So yesterday, I think it was, we had the bill briefing on this—not very much time to do the homework, but again the member for Caulfield excelled in this area. I attended that bill briefing, and I certainly thank those from the department and the minister’s office who turned up and answered questions—as best they could, because there were still many unanswered questions, but I will come to that.

Hotel quarantine has dominated discussion in the last few months. Hotel quarantine is the Premier’s legacy of failures to manage. It is one of the largest public policy failures and it has had devastating consequences for Victoria. So that hotel quarantine second wave has seen over 800 deaths, and that is just tragic. That did not need to happen, because in other states where they managed things much better they did not have that sort of impact. The job losses—one in five is either underemployed or unemployed. We have had so many business closures, and typically they are small businesses, family-owned businesses, the people that put their hard-earned time and money on the line. There are untold mental and social costs. And we know that the hotel quarantine has had a cost of at least $195 million.

We have the Coate inquiry underway. I certainly read the interim report, and I would like to think that the government has introduced all of the recommendations that she put forward—noting, of course that the final report is due to land moments before Christmas. But what we had with hotel quarantine was no clear plan. We had no clear training for the security guards. We had a dodgy process of actually employing the security guards. We had links with the Labor Party and some jobs for the boys; we had the union tick-offs and everything. We had the failure to use the ADF and very lax guidelines. If you read the Coate interim report, you will see all of the failures, because she outlines them one after the other. There was no infection-control mechanism for the security guards.

Now, the government had to get their act together here, and so where did they look? Well, they looked to the north, to our major economic competitor, the New South Wales government, led by the unwavering Gladys Berejiklian, who has done an amazing job. Now, strangely enough the Premier announced that New South Wales had learned from us. Well, we all thought, ‘Goodness me’—on our side of the chamber—‘What on earth did they learn from us?’, because it was an absolute abomination. Now, for some time while we have been locked up, several months, the other states have been doing the heavy lifting. They have been managing all of the incoming flights, all the returning Australians. Victoria certainly was not trusted to be able to do so because of its appalling record, and in fact it suspended operations.

Now, national cabinet early in July had hotel quarantine on the agenda, and it was agreed at that point to implement a user-pays system, agreed that incoming arrivals would make a contribution to the costs. Now, that contribution is not going to cover all of the costs but it will cover some of the costs. The Premier brags about his relationships at that senior level across the state and at national cabinet; I would have thought that they might have talked to him and he might have asked some questions about how they were going and what they needed to do. He had a lot to learn and a lot to get right, and a lot is at stake.
Now, we have had people arriving in Victoria since the weekend. And here it is—people have arrived, they have landed, they are in hotel quarantine and we have a bill before us today that creates the framework for these fees to be charged.

The bill is going to also create regulations through public health. It is benchmarked against the New South Wales scheme in the legislation because the Premier there has been such a great role model. Now, it is all well and good, but where are the details? Most of the detail is going to be in the regulations. So when are we going to get those regulations? January, maybe February—hopefully January. That will include charging an individual $3000 to cover reasonable costs—you know, food, accommodation, concierge, supervision, and that is not fully going to cover it—and you get discounts for couples and families.

We asked questions about waivers, and the government certainly said that there will be some waivers if people are on concession cards or have hardship measures, but the member for Caulfield has put through a reasoned amendment that if those who can afford to pay can pay, those that cannot afford it need to have a look at a waiver. He certainly put that forward based on the evidence that we have seen out of New South Wales about how it is actually difficult to charge people. Not everybody can afford it, and if you think about people who are returning travellers, a lot of them would have stayed for a lot longer overseas and may have already incurred a lot of other costs over there because their holiday may have been extended by five months all of a sudden. And being in countries that have quite big issues with COVID-19, it cannot have been a bowl of roses for them as well.

Now, we wanted to know: when are they going to be invoiced? How are they going to be invoiced? It was said to us that maybe they will be verbally advised about being invoiced when they arrive at the hotel, but their invoices are going to come sometime in January, so it is important to note that this bill is retrospective. People have landed. This will come into effect when it gets royal assent, so I imagine that is going to be expedited as best as possible. But still it is going to be retrospective because people now are in hotel quarantine.

We asked questions about seasonal workers—no answers there. We also asked questions about tourists. Now, obviously tourists are not going to be here anytime soon, but it needs to be considered. If tourists are coming in, are they going to be subjected to hotel quarantine and are they going to be expected to pay $3000? Overseas students who might want to come out to Australia—I wanted to know whether this would be dealt with in this piece of legislation, or are we going to have to come back in February and deal with the next bit? Because we might think that we have done a good job here and we have returned all of our travellers to Australia and now we might want to start implementing other mechanisms for arrivals and that this would be dealt with in this legislation. This has been a basket case for the government—hotel quarantine. They must fix it.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (15:18): It is with great pleasure that I join the debate on this Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020. I wanted to begin at the outset by commending two very quick thinking individuals for their work this week in supporting the efforts to keep Victorians COVID safe, and they are Wilson Security employees: the switched-on security guard, as he has been identified, Claudio Cominotto, and his duty manager, Peter Mikha. I know, Acting Speaker Taylor, you are a former serving member of Victoria Police, and I wanted to actually commend the New South Wales police officer that put his hand up and said that he had made an error and he had directed the German dual nationals in error from going to hotel quarantine in Sydney and mistakenly directed them onto a Virgin flight to Melbourne.

I think what that shows is that all of these systems are fallible. Humans—you know, we can fail, and there is no one category who is right or wrong. I actually feel for the category of workers of security guards, hotel employees and everyone that has worked in this system and is now working to put together a new system, and I would extend that to those who have worked interstate. This is really difficult work, and it is highly responsible. What we have seen is that disaster has been averted but by quick-thinking individuals that are actually security employees, and it came about as a mistake by a
law enforcement officer. So every system is fallible because human beings are fallible, and I think that we should give credit where credit is due and thank those officers.

I do want to thank Victorians for their diligence and the fact that we are—is it 38 days now? I have lost count.

A member: 39.

Ms GREEN: Thirty-nine days of double doughnuts—no deaths, no new infections—in Victoria, and we are reaping the benefits now. And now we have an absolutely new system which individuals have worked really hard to put together. I want to commend them, and Victorians are reaping the benefits.

I have listened with interest to all the opposition speakers so far: to 30 minutes from the member for Caulfield, the Shadow Minister for Police; to the Leader of the National Party; and to the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party and member for Eildon. But let me tell you, some of the last individuals that this Andrews government is going to take lectures from on any part of government administration are the member for Caulfield, the Leader of the National Party and the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party—let me tell you. They did mention that future university students may well be studying actions of our government. Well, I would far rather be part of a government whose actions are going to be studied in the future than the government those opposite were part of, of which probably the only mention will be an asterisk or maybe some double doughnuts or a humorous anecdote about how the National Party’s key achievement was allocating public funds to find a mythical black cat—and failing at that.

Mr Southwick: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I would ask you to remind the member to talk on the bill. This is a very specific bill that talks about hotel quarantine and fees being charged; it is not an opportunity to attack the opposition. I would ask you to remind the member to do so and get back to debating the bill at hand.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Taylor): It has been a wideranging debate. The member was starting to stray from the content of the bill. I would ask the member to come back.

Ms GREEN: Thank you, Acting Speaker, for your ruling, but they are so brittle on the other side, aren’t they? They can dish it out, but they cannot take it.

I return to commending the work that has been done in preparing for this. The member for Eildon, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, was lauding the work of the New South Wales Premier and New South Wales in their quarantine program. No state has been without breaches, and the hallmark of all the work that governments have done across this country, whether it is the commonwealth or states and territories, is that there has been great sharing of information and learning from mistakes. The reference point here about the charging of fees for mandatory quarantine is actually that we want to charge the same level of fees so that we do not have jurisdiction-shopping, so that we do not have people from other states or overseas wanting to come to Victoria because we would be offering a cheaper level of fees than New South Wales. So our fees have been set in the same way, at the same level as or a similar level to New South Wales. When I heard the 30-minute contribution from the member for Caulfield, on the figure that is being charged—for individuals it is $3000 for the total period of hotel quarantine—I am positive that I heard him say that it was $3000 a day. Well, that is another reason why we are not going to take lessons from him and pay any attention to the amendments and the changes that he has proposed.

Mr Southwick: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, again I remind the member on her feet to not verbal the opposition in her contribution. Again, the member is stating something that is absolutely false in terms of the facts of the contribution we made in terms of the amount. I also do remind the member to be factual in her contribution. A number of the jurisdictions all charge different amounts. In fact Queensland charge $2800 a day; WA charge $180 a day. So the fact that the member says
Victoria will be consistent with the other states is actually factually wrong. Different states charge different amounts.

Ms GREEN: On the point of order, I rest my case. In the point of order he actually referred to fees per day, so I would say there is no point of order.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Taylor): There is no point of order.

Ms GREEN: Look, they are so brittle on the other side. They are having a blue with each other. Whenever a point of debate is made in here, they can dish it out but they cannot take it. The last people that we are going to take lectures from about adherence and about knowledge of systems and about getting a good job done are those opposite. I mean, this is someone who was on an education parliamentary committee and who at the same time had falsified his academic record. So I am not going to take lessons from him about matters like that or matters about the arithmetic and how you calculate fees for mandatory quarantine. I will not, and no-one in this place will.

Mr Southwick: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is clearly straying from the bill to attack other members on this side, including me, which has nothing to do with the bill that we are specifically talking about, which is regarding quarantine fees. I would ask the member to return back to the bill at hand—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Taylor): Yes—

Mr Southwick: Can I just finish my point of order, please. This is a very important bill considering the botched hotel quarantine program that the government had on their side. I ask the member respectfully to return back to the bill. They failed in hotel quarantine in the first place, and I would hope that they do not fail again.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Taylor): Order! I am ready to rule on the point of order. I uphold the point of order.

Ms GREEN: In conclusion, I commend the work of everyone that has taken the lessons of the Coate inquiry, that has worked diligently, and particularly the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, who has absolutely worked her heart out on this and is taking the lead on this, and the former corrections commissioner, Emma Cassar, and all those that worked on this. I really hope that the families who stay in hotel quarantine have a fabulous Christmas, and I commend the bill to the house.

Dr READ (Brunswick) (15:28): I am pleased to speak on this bill, and I am even more pleased to see that more stranded Victorians will be returning home this summer. Despite the now well understood risks associated with hotel quarantine, we agree with the need to resume hotel quarantine in Victoria and we agree that the fees should be similar to New South Wales to prevent jurisdiction hopping. We do, however, have some concerns, which we hope that the government will be addressing.

We know—indeed all parties represented here I think know—that many of those returning will already be in significant financial hardship. Many of them have been stranded abroad for months. They have been having to pay for accommodation, some of them exorbitant airfares, some have gone without income, they may have lost a job, they may not have a place to stay and they will be returning to an economy in recession. So these people will be under great stress, urgently looking for employment and housing when they come home. So it is in no-one’s interest that they spend significant time and energy trying to, first of all, survive hotel quarantine and then to fight off the debt collectors. With these self-evident cases of hardship, and particularly individuals with healthcare cards, there should be an automatic exemption from quarantine fees. There will be other less obvious cases where we want to see fee waivers or reductions expedited. I am sure I am not alone here in having helped constituents deal with financial hardship and get their fees waived from, for example, New South Wales Health.
Another key point about hotel quarantine and the arrangements proposed for Melbourne is that those people will be confined in inner city hotels with no access to fresh air or sunlight. For most people that may be tolerable, but imagine having a couple of small kids in tow. In many of these hotels you cannot open a window, let alone walk onto a balcony, and so we do urge the government to consider the psychological wellbeing of those in hotel quarantine and to look at other venues or safe ways of allowing access to sunshine and fresh air, which is so important to psychological health and returning to a different time zone.

The final point of concern I want to touch on is recent reports that doctors contracted to treat sick people in these hotels will also in the same week be treating their own patients. Considering that these staff will be potentially at the highest risk of all of acquiring COVID-19 in the next few months, I find this alarming. Given the difficulty that Victoria has had, and I do not need to go into any details, but also the difficulties that we have had in controlling the spread of this infection amongst trained and well-equipped hospital staff; we know that these doctors will be at high risk of infection and therefore so will their patients. Now, it is only for a few months that we really need to worry about this because these doctors will be among the first to be vaccinated. But if we need to pay a little bit more to address this issue, then it is probably going to be worth it. So with those remarks I will conclude and wish this legislation a speedy passage.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (15:32): I am very pleased to rise today on the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020. By way of introduction, the bill makes amendments to the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 to allow for the making of regulations that prescribe fees for mandatory quarantine for international travellers. The amount of fees to be charged will be prescribed in regulations to be made and will be reasonably referable to the costs associated with quarantine—for example, for accommodation, food and cleaning. The fees to be prescribed will be in line with those of other Australian jurisdictions and indeed I think almost identical to New South Wales and South Australia. The amendments will allow for people experiencing hardship to apply for fee waivers, partial or full, and/or for payment plans. The regulations will prescribe the criteria to be applied in considering applications for waivers and payment plans. COVID-19 Quarantine Victoria will be the responsible agency for delivering the fee scheme, and the reforms will be temporary, with relevant clauses to be repealed from the act on 31 December 2021.

There can be no doubt that Victorians have done an astounding job this year. It has been a very difficult year. There is no doubt about that. But let us just pause to reflect that we are in the midst of a global pandemic, a pandemic that has hit people across the world extremely hard. Indeed today the latest figures, which I had close by but now seem to have lost, put the number of infections at the 67 million mark across the world, and 1.5 million people have tragically lost their lives to COVID. Indeed right now in the world 20 million people are infected with the COVID virus, so let us be clear that this is a pandemic that is far from over. But here in Victoria our community has rallied to the cause. They have done what was needed to be done, and our community has put the collective good and the wellbeing of our community at the forefront. They have made individual sacrifices in order to protect the health and wellbeing of the community at large, so I really want to thank them for that.

The strategy that the Andrews Labor government put in place to deal with the second wave has worked. There were plenty of naysayers out there that said it would not work. There were plenty of naysayers out there, including those on the other side, that were doing all they could to undermine the directions of the chief health officer, but I am very glad to say that when we look across this great state we see that the voluntary compliance with the restrictions that were put in place was extraordinarily high, and I commend our community for that. Because of that, of course, we are now in a position to enter a COVID-safe summer. I know that we are very, very grateful for that. Indeed in my electorate I would particularly like to acknowledge traders in the tourism and hospitality businesses, clubs, restaurants and tourism operators, who have been hit very hard but are very happy right now to be welcoming back more drinkers, diners and guests. I welcome them also to our community.
Of course with the easing of restrictions we have seen restrictions lifted for our faith communities, and again I want to call them out in particular as we approach a very important time, particularly for the people of Christian faith, with Christmas not very long away. Indeed I am very pleased to report that I was able to confidently put in my order for a Christmas ham—6 kilograms—from Istra Smallgoods.

The member for Ripon might well know who I am speaking about; it is not that far from her. So I am very pleased that I will be able to welcome family members from Wodonga, Benalla, Ballarat, Melbourne and, sometime in the new year, my daughter, from Broome, who I have not seen of course for a year.

So I think we all want the hotel quarantine scheme to work, and it is going to work. I have no question about that. I commend the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for all of her work, and indeed the Attorney-General before her. We now have a system in place that I know that Victorians can feel very confident in; we are well prepared to be welcoming back Australians, Victorians, as of today. Just as I am looking forward to celebrating Christmas with my family, many Australians who have been caught overseas are similarly looking forward to that. As we said, we are welcoming those Australians back today, and they will be able to enjoy their Christmas with their family.

Now, as I said, we are in a good place, but we still need to be vigilant. I talked about the numbers before. When we look overseas, a little word to those on the other side, some of whom have been known to wear their ‘Make America Great Again’ caps around the place: the US currently—I mean, it is sad, but it is true—has almost 15 million cases and 283,000 deaths in that country alone. Not a day goes by that I do not count my blessings for living here in this nation and in this state, so we need to all continue to play our part. The government is certainly doing what it needs to do in establishing this hotel quarantine program, which is set up of course as a single entity to run the program, the COVID-19 hotel quarantine. It is a much stronger quarantine program. It has strengthened leadership, oversight and training. It has embedded public health and enforcement expertise and clear obligations for both staff and hotel residents to keep them and the community safe. There are very clear lines of responsibility and accountability, and we have a great workforce—police, ADF, health workers and the other staff that are needed to accommodate returned travellers.

I know that the minister has called out commissioner Emma Cassar for her great leadership qualities that she has demonstrated throughout this year, and I know that both the minister and Premier have every confidence in the capabilities of Ms Cassar to lead this important program. Health enforcement and operational expertise are also embedded within the executive structure of COVID-19 Quarantine Victoria, and Victoria Police will have a highly visible and significant presence across the program. Additional infection controls have been introduced, including daily testing of staff and voluntary, regular testing of their family and household members; a centralised contact-tracing team; proactive contact mapping for all staff; a ban on secondary face-to-face employment for all staff; and strengthened PPE protocols. We have done the work to make sure that we have the best possible quarantine program, and while everyone knows that it is impossible to eliminate risk entirely, I am very confident that what has been established has the very best infection prevention controls in place.

This is an important bill. As I said, it provides for the establishment of a fee structure for returned travellers. Now, I might just help the member for Caulfield along, because he was a little confused, I think, about the costs of the program. So if I can just be very clear about that, the costs of the program in Victoria will be set at $3000 per adult, $1000 for each additional adult in a room, $500 for children aged between three and 18, and there will be no charge for children under three. These costs are indeed the same as those in New South Wales and South Australia, and they are comparable to the remaining jurisdictions’ fees. Children under 18 years travelling alone will be charged a co-payment of $500. A parent or guardian joining their child in quarantine will not be charged a fee. The Victorian government is still funding most of the cost of accommodation, security, transport and logistics as well as essential items and services such as medical care.

So it is important that we are clear about the costs that are associated with the quarantine program. Of course it is only fair that the state seeks to recoup some of those costs and that indeed we are in
alignment with other states, because as I think has been explained earlier, we want to manage the travellers that we are able to manage. We do not want to set up a pricing structure that would incentivise people to land in Victoria even though they may abide in other states. That is exactly what we have done. This is a really good bill. It is important to be delivering it on this last sitting week in the Parliament, and I commend it to the house.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (15:42): I rise to speak on the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020, and in doing so I refer to the remarks made by the member for Caulfield as the lead speaker on this bill and in fact the amendments that he has introduced. I might start with those amendments, because the member for Macedon has mischaracterised the nature of those amendments. What these seek to do is to formulate in the legislation when people will be able to get reductions off their fees—which categories of people will be able to get concessions. Now, the government has said there will be concessions but they will be done by regulation. So we are suggesting that it is much more transparent—much fairer—for those fee schedules to be put into the legislation. So that is what these amendments do, and they in fact, as the member for Caulfield said, follow exactly the concessions that are used by the government in other circumstances. We are not reinventing the wheel here. We are using their standards for fee waivers and fee reductions. Because we do agree that those who can afford to pay should pay for hotel quarantine. We have no problem at all with people being charged for hotel quarantine.

We do have some issues with this bill in the way it has come to the Parliament. As the member for Caulfield has said, because he noted in a briefing on another thing: how are you going to charge for these? And of course the government went out, had a look and went, ‘Oh, dear. Oh, dear. We don’t actually have a legislative basis to charge people. We’re going to have to put in an urgent bill’. Now, that is really indicative of the shambolic nature of the legislative process that this government is undertaking. Last sitting week we had all the chaos around the State Taxation Acts Amendment Bill 2020, driven largely by very late amendments the government was making to that bill. And now, this week, we have a whole new head of power for charging for hotel quarantine, brought in very much at the last moment and after in fact hotel quarantine has restarted in Victoria.

That brings me to the reason we want to charge people—people that are coming back now from overseas and needing to quarantine. And it is great that Victoria’s borders in those ways have been opened up and the airport has been opened up so that people can come back from overseas and spend Christmas with their families. This has been something that many Victorians have wanted to be able to do, and to have hotel quarantine back up and running is of course welcomed by us and I think the broader public. But let us just hope that the government does get it right. The fact that we have got a very big part of it, which is the charging part of it, not right, just brought in at the end, and given what we have seen with the abject failure of hotel quarantine mark 1, we do need to be very cautious about how this government thinks about hotel quarantine, how it manages it and whether in fact it can now at last do its intended purpose of keeping Victorians safe instead of, as Jennifer Coate found:

… breaches of containment in the program in May and June led to the second wave of COVID-19 cases in Victoria, with devastating social and economic consequences for the state.

That was in the interim Coate report into hotel quarantine, and she quite rightly concludes that it was in fact the failures of hotel quarantine the previous time around which led to the second wave which tragically led to the deaths of over 800 Victorians.

Justice Coate said a number of things in her review. We are still waiting on the final report, but in the interim report she talked a lot about the failure of processes within government. She said there needed to be one single minister responsible. This time around we have been told that there will be one minister responsible, and in fact the Minister for Police and Emergency Services made a ministers statement in the house today that in her opinion not only was the reboot of hotel quarantine completely tickety-boo, completely fine—as is the way of this Andrews Labor government and the phenomenal degree of hubris that comes with that—and not only have they reset it so it is actually going to work but it is now the best in Australia.
Now, I just remind members that I seem to remember that when contact tracing got into a complete mess and it was proved to be completely inadequate in this state it was finally suggested that maybe some Victorians should go to New South Wales to learn how to do contact tracing where the gold standard for contact tracing is. And what did the Premier say then? He said, ‘Oh yes, they’ve gone up there, but actually’—and I am paraphrasing—’we taught them a few things. We taught them’. It is at every level. There is no capacity for anybody in this government to show some humility that not everything is right here. And of course in the case of hotel quarantine things are so far from being right. I repeat: the last time the government tried to do this over 800 Victorians died.

They had better get it right this time. They really had better get it right. And yet the process of this bill here—the chaotic nature, the lack of clear decision-making, the fact that they are just not thinking through properly the consequences of what needs to happen at every stage to run a properly functioning hotel quarantine program, including charging returning travellers—suggests that we cannot have faith in their capacity to run the hotel quarantine, and I am very worried about that. I am extremely concerned about that. I want them to succeed at running hotel quarantine. Every Victorian wants them to succeed. But at every point we are not given confidence. Despite the minister’s boasting, we are not given confidence that in fact they have got it right, that the hotel quarantine management is focused around the safety of the staff working there and the people in quarantine, that it is around infection control and that this is fundamentally not a logistics project, as it was envisaged first time around, but a health project. It is a health project, an infection control project. We really do need I think at every point for this to be exposed to great scrutiny and great transparency, because Victorians do not have confidence in this government to be able to run this program properly.

They proved that they could not do it the first time around, with catastrophic consequences. And yet they come here today and they tell us, ‘Let’s push this bill through really quickly’. And again, we understand they have started the program and they need to get a head of power to be able to charge people. We do not have a problem with that, but we do have a problem that the bill is largely a shell bill that does not include the protections that we want to have included through our amendments for when people will have to pay or when they will receive a waiver.

What has happened in New South Wales—and the government makes much of that it has just copied New South Wales—in this particular case is it has been reported that less than 10 per cent of travellers in New South Wales have paid. Now, there are a variety of reasons for that, and some people should not have to pay, which is why we have moved those amendments. But just saying, ‘We’ll copy New South Wales’, actually that is only one level of it. There are a whole lot of embedded levels that again this government has not thought through. There is something very wrong in the way this government’s processes are working, and it does seem that when serious decisions need to be taken on things like this the brains trust has just gone missing. They have done it over and over, and it is of deep concern.

So as other speakers on this side of the house have said, we will not be opposing this bill but we would have liked to have gone into committee to have the ability to test our amendments. We do think they are worthwhile. We think they are exactly what the government uses in other contexts and they should be supported, and with that I commend the bill to the house.

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) (15:52): Australia’s national cabinet supports the key elements for hotel quarantine in this bill. It has bipartisan support at the highest level nationally. It delivers a uniform strategy so that Australians returning from overseas can be safely quarantined, with obviously the aim to make sure the rest of the community is safe as well. This is what Australia needs and this is what can be delivered today by this house. It is part of the initiatives that the government has rolled out to address the changing circumstances of a new, virulent and fatal virus. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services in her second-reading speech defined how this is an adaptation to changing circumstances. The world has been on a trial-and-error experiment to try and address this, so we keep trying to improve.
I will take up the point from the Shadow Treasurer that the government has made its position clear about how it will keep driving for constant improvement. We are not going to shy away from that. This bill is part of this strategy to keep moving in this way, and that is something that this government will continue to do. The Premier has articulated this many times—constant improvement, keep driving for better tracking and tracing, keep driving for better ways to address this pandemic. Also I want to acknowledge the Parliamentary Secretary for Health, the member for Ivanhoe, and his contribution. He outlined all of the correspondence that has gone on between the Victorian government and the Australian government to get the collaboration and to address the changing circumstances, and that is on the record for everyone to see. I think that was important to do, and it reflects the latest advice from the national cabinet.

If you look at what is happening here, there were questions raised about capacity to pay, and that has been addressed. Fees that will be prescribed will be in line with those of other Australian jurisdictions, and they will likely be most closely based on the fee schemes in New South Wales and South Australia, as we were briefed. Then there is the issue of equity. This bill also addresses this matter. This goes to the issue of those who may have financial difficulties and allows for people experiencing hardship to apply for fee waivers—they can be in part or in full—and/or payment plans over time.

Regulations will prescribe the criteria to be applied in considering applications for waivers and payment plans. COVID-19 Quarantine Victoria will be the responsible agency for delivering the fee scheme. Remember these reforms will be temporary, with relevant clauses to be repealed from the act on 31 December 2021. So this is part of an evolution of how you address an international pandemic. It really has been a harrowing year for everyone in Victoria, and the government has acknowledged that. It also keeps driving for the reforms that are required. If you have a look at what is happening in America and in parts of Europe, it is tragic. They are facing a tsunami of cases unless we can get to a vaccine. If you have a look at what else the Victorian government is doing, not only have we looked at a better way of addressing returning Australians on international flights, and there is going to be a cap of 160 arrivals per day, we are looking at what is the next big-picture proposition we can deliver.

One of the outstanding investments in the budget was $155 million for an Australian infectious diseases institute right here in the beating heart of Australia’s medical research. It will be placed within the Doherty Institute—it will be founded on that—and of course that is based on Professor Peter Doherty, a Nobel prize winner. The capacity around that is of international significance, and the Victorian government is asking for the Australian government to partner with that. I renewed my campaign and calls for Greg Hunt to have a look at this. Through the Medical Research Future Fund there is an opportunity, because that is rising to $20 billion, to make this a legacy in the national interest and our international interests as well. We can provide security and safety for the future, and that is what all Australians crave. This is really what the Andrews Labor government is trying to do: build these unity tickets, get collaboration and address this pandemic as best we can.

The other key point is we are driving for vaccines, and this is the next critical issue that we are looking to address. I do want to remind the house that CSL, one of Australia’s leading companies, has now begun its manufacturing of the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, and that is being done at its advanced manufacturing facility in Broadmeadows. That is again an indicator of the elegance of our science, the collaboration that we have and the way that we have built this ecosystem through Victoria with bipartisanship over a long period of time. I do want to highlight that the absolute champions of this go back to former premiers John Cain, Steve Bracks and John Brumby and to the current Premier and all the other health ministers and everybody else who has made a contribution, including the current Minister for Employment in what she has been doing and been able to deliver in the latest budget. I want to also obviously commend the Treasurer for being able to elegantly bring all of this together.

This is what the Victorian government is doing, and this now means that we are in a position of being officially defined as eliminating the coronavirus in Victoria. We know that we still have to be vigilant because of how virulent this virus has proved. That is what we are trying to address now to be able to
take more Australians returning in a way that is safe and secure and to keep that vigilance for as long as we need to until we have the vaccines not just manufactured but also distributed and taken up by the community.

So that then comes to the next issue that we will have to address, which is how we actually prove to people again that facts should be stubborn and cherished, not alternative. We need to actually address proven science, not get into the politics of division, and be able to actually return to these arguments between the counter-Enlightenment and the Enlightenment. We know what the counter-Enlightenment looks like; we used to call it the Dark Ages.

So it will be really important that the vaccines are rigorously tested, they are proven and then the distribution starts from there, because that will give us the best chance to be able to have not just a COVID-free Christmas but a new year where we will be able to prosper. Again, it just shows the need for collaboration. Having cheap shots will not solve these matters. We need to actually address what needs to be done, we need responsible views on how to put these collaborations together and we need to be able to look at how we have independent supply chains and national sovereignty. I am delighted that there is an investment of $1 billion from the Australian government into CSL to help on that, and the Victorian government will look to build on that through city deals and other collaborations into the next year so we have a more prosperous new year. With that I commend the bill to the house.

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (16:02): I rise to speak on the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020. I will begin by saying I support the amendments as put forward by the Shadow Minister for Police, the member for Caulfield. So I endorse the responsible shadow minister’s amendments to the bill, and I hope that consideration will be given to these amendments, because clearly it makes sense and it actually reflects the government’s thinking on another bill that they have put through this place very urgently in the last 12 months, given the pandemic, that takes into consideration people who are in hardship. Basically the amendments say those that can afford to pay pay, and those that cannot are considered in legislation and actually identified so that we have the right waivers in place for those who cannot afford to pay.

I just want to bring to the attention of the community just how worrying this situation is. Today, being Tuesday, we are rushing through a very urgent bill that the government thought about on Friday. So today is Tuesday, and on Friday this bill came to the attention of the government. It was written and dated last Friday and will be put through the Parliament in one day through the lower house and through the rest of the week in the upper house. This is a bill that gives us the ability as a state to run hotel quarantine from the point of view of cost recovery.

Now, hotel quarantine has been such an important part of managing the virus. We are an island country, so one of things we have always had in our favour is the fact that we are an island. As a farmer, I always was involved in pandemic planning. We talked about foot-and-mouth disease being not if but when, and I was involved in pandemic planning—project Minotaur it was—back in I think about 2008. I remember being in a room out near the airport with police, ambulance, teachers and people right across the sectors that you would imagine you would need in a room to plan for a pandemic. We had a scenario where the virus entered the country in Queensland, we all got news, and that afternoon we would not be able to cross to our cows across the road to milk them, we would have to get our kids home from school et cetera, et cetera.

I also saw this play out obviously—in 2011 I think it was—in England where friends of mine were stuck on their farms and their children were not able to go to school. People had to drop off groceries. So we have actually had lots and lots of examples around the world, and obviously as a nurse I watched with interest the Ebola outbreaks and SARS. These are things that were not overly surprising. We then got hit with a pandemic, and as an island country we put in place hotel quarantine.

Now, national cabinet was something that we all went ‘Thank goodness’ over. When needed, our leaders come together, work cleverly, put politics aside and in times of crisis put what needs to happen
first. Unfortunately though for us here in Victoria our Premier decided that he would do it just slightly
differently and did not accept the offer of the national government of the Australian Defence Force.
He then proceeded to say that was not true, but we have all seen now in black and white the evidence
in press releases and the like that that is actually not true. The defence force was offered and was
rejected. Consequently hotel quarantine was managed by private security people who had no training
in infection control. It was absolutely horrifying to me—absolutely shockingly horrifying. I just could
not get my head around it; I still cannot get my head around it. Do you know what? Most people cannot
get their head around it, probably even the ministers who were in front of the Coate inquiry, when
asked who was responsible, could not admit that it was such a debacle. No-one, it appears, was
responsible or they chose not to state that they were responsible for fear of the consequences given
that industrial manslaughter is now a law in this state and you would have to worry if you were a
minister of the Crown on the opposite side about your implication as somebody who might be
convicted of industrial manslaughter if you were responsible for hotel quarantine. Because the reality
is this Christmas when I sit around the table at my place I am fortunate to be able to have my mum at
88 still able to sit around the table, but what about the 801 families that will not be going to visit their
grandmother at the nursing home or at her home or the grandfather or the uncle? Those families will
not forget and I do not think Victoria will forget that this was a debacle.

So starting hotel quarantine just this week and having agreed to take 160 people per day, the government
now say, ‘Oops, we’re really not ready. We’re actually not ready, because the opposition asked a
question on Friday we hadn’t considered. Should we have some legislation in place to be able to charge
these people, because that is what we agreed to in July?’—after all the planning that has been going on
for years, all the opportunity in the last nine months to get contact tracing right, to get hotel quarantine
right and to learn from other states. New South Wales, Tasmania and Queensland are the ones we
should look to and compare ourselves with. We are not in Europe. We are not in California, who have
gone into lockdown today for three weeks. We have put in restrictions, but rightfully so. It was not a
matter of no restrictions or some restrictions, but the restrictions we had here in Victoria were very
onerous as a result of the fact that the Premier stuffed up hotel quarantine. And when he has the
opportunity to get it right, he is still scrambling, after it has begun, to get things in place. If this does not
tell you that we have got a government that is really not organised, I do not know what does. If this does
not tell you that this government is completely disorganised, I do not know what does.

It is extremely symbolic of the fact that the processes have not been put in place. This government is
not cognisant of process. They are more interested in spin and performance—you know, the hero of
the day: ‘I’m going to save the day. As long as I get up, I can indoctrinate the people by saying, “Look
at me, I’m doing fine”’. Well, no—please take a minute to look a little bit. Scratch the surface and see
that this government has got nothing in place—well, not nothing. Okay, that is an over-exaggeration.
But this is really important, because a department is so big that nobody knew what was happening—
a department that is so big that they can actually have ministers say, ‘Not me, not me. I’m not
responsible’, and so big that still with hotel quarantine, which started a couple of days ago, they have
not got things in place.

Well, you know, we do not want a third wave. Every Victorian is absolutely begging this government
to do it right, and I think they should be really nervous given what I have seen—that on Friday they
had not even considered what they have had since July to put in place. Just take a bit of heed; we all
do want to work together. We have been trying to do that.

Members interjecting.

Ms BRITNELL: Oh no, don’t you even think to start that with me. Do not even think. There is no
way, since this pandemic began, that I have done anything but endorse the restrictions that needed to
happen—but not the onerous ones. There is no way I have done anything but try to work with the
government, who have absolutely stonewalled my requests.

Members interjecting.
Ms BRITNELL: So on this occasion I will ignore those comments from across because I know you feel very, very worried yourselves, because you know this is really poor form. You know this is nothing but poor form to be here today rushing through a bill on hotel quarantine because you have not got it right yet. No wonder you are getting vocal over there—you should be embarrassed. But take—

Mr Dimopoulos: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member should address her comments through the Chair. She keeps referring to ‘you’. I am not sure if she is talking about you, the member for Thomastown, or us, as in the government.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Halfpenny): Order! I ask that you continue your address through the Chair, thanks.

Ms BRITNELL: Certainly. So I just want to ask, with due consideration, that the government take into consideration the amendments put forward, because this is really important.

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (16:12): I rise also with delight to speak about the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020, and it is great to hear, fantastic to hear, from the member opposite that we are all working together, because I was not sure. But it is good. I am not arguing with you. That is good to know, because I agree with the Shadow Treasurer, who said we all want this to work—and we do.

Now, can I firstly thank the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for her work on this bill today but also on the significant preparation for what is the reset of our hotel quarantine. It is not only her and her work and her department and everyone connected with that but also corrections, police, the ADF, security guards, health workers at the Alfred, health workers around the state, aged-care workers, health workers who did shifts for aged-care workers, transport workers and staff at supermarkets. We have all worked to get this state currently 40 days clear of this virus. It has been a long road and it has been a hard road, and yes, as the member for Yan Yean aptly stated earlier, people are fallible, nothing is perfect and things that we have learned over those hard times will be put into practice now.

I agree with the members opposite and members on this side that we are all doing our very best, every one of the 6 million Victorians, to make sure as best we can that we do not get a couple of German tourists—sorry, returned travellers—slipping through at Sydney Airport. I am not blaming the people at Sydney Airport for that happening.

Mr Dimopoulos: No, it’s the Liberal Party’s fault.

Mr FREGON: No, I am not doing that. I am not blaming anyone. These things unfortunately have a chance of happening, and our job is to do the very best we can to minimise that chance. But I think, as we say, this year has been very hard—and it has, on all of us, as Victorians and Australians, and on the world.

I have mentioned before in this house that I remember first hearing about this virus back on I think it was 30 January or thereabouts. So we are talking about 10 months ago. A gentleman from Wuhan had visited a restaurant four doors down from my office with the coronavirus. Now, I was having a look at the Channel 7 report of that just earlier today. I will not quote it verbatim, but it stated the facts: that this gentleman had gone to this particular restaurant, that he had been found later to have the virus—he did not know he had it at the time, so again, it was not his fault. He had been told later, ‘Yep, you’ve got it; there’s a problem’, so had to quarantine himself. At that stage we did not know enough about it. There was no quarantine at any federal level or state level or anything apart from, ‘Please stay home’. And he and his family quarantined, did the right thing. Now, at that stage this was new. We did not understand. The Channel 7 report at the time said, ‘Well, pretty much coughing and sneezing probably does it, and maybe from surfaces’, but they were not sure. That was coming I think from New South Wales health at the time, that statement.
I think we now know that it is not just coughing and sneezing but breathing, singing and possibly droplets. I am no epidemiologist, but I am happy to wear a mask if there is an off chance that it means I do not spread it to anyone just if I get it and do not know. I am happy to do it, and we all are. The member for South-West Coast said that she is happy to do those things too; we all are. We are all on board to protect our community. One of the best things I have seen about the state of Victoria in the last number of months is that the community are on board to protect each other. We have banded together to protect a vulnerable section of our community and we have gone through a lot of hardship to do it. Yes, people are unhappy about certain aspects, but we did it, and when I talk to people now there is pride in that. And when we look overseas and, without judging any other country, we see the things that were too hard and we see the steps that were too far and the political will that could not be summoned—in this state we did it, and now we will do our very best to keep it.

You know what? Maybe we do have a bill for which we are going to work out the accounting and we are going to do that today, and then maybe someone will get an invoice in January instead of in two weeks. Well, that is not a particular surprise for me. You get services all the time where you get invoices later. Would it be easier or not easier if they got it straightaway? Maybe. Does it matter? I would not have thought so. I think the most important thing is we have a quarantine system that is ready and we are bringing people back as of yesterday, because we have thousands of people waiting, and the very idea, which I heard on the weekend, that because of a billing issue we should keep people overseas longer—well, I cannot go along with that.

There are others who want to speak on this bill, and I do want to quickly say that one thing that has come up during this whole pandemic that not only this government has probably always been alert to but also now we see a real reason why we have to do something substantial about it is the issue of insecure work. The member for Caulfield in the debate earlier mentioned that airline workers are going back to work, and that is a good thing. Currently we have a national airline that at the same time as they have taken a whole heap of money from the federal government—and we have JobKeeper and JobSeeker, which are very good things—they are laying off people to other companies and then are going to have those people basically apply for their jobs back. Now, yes, we have got airlines going back to work and, yes, we have had an economic dent—and our budget, which I will speak on later, is doing significant work to rebuild from that—but I just say to the Qantas board: now is not the time. You are the Australian airline, and we want to back you, we will use you, we will fly on you. We will all do that, but this government is backing Victorians. We are investing in Victorians, and I ask the Qantas board directly to back our workers, protect our workers and invest in our workers, and it will come back to you tenfold. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (16:20): I rise to make a contribution on the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020. I am pleased that the opposition is broadly supportive of this bill, because it is a classic example of a sensible government making sensible changes to programs in response to a very, very dynamic environment. I think the thing that has been lost on oppositions generally around the nation—of both colours in some cases—has been the fact that right throughout this pandemic governments generally, and this government, find themselves putting the jumper on before the knitting is finished. We are still knitting it, as we are wearing it, and that is a necessary consequence of responding quite properly to circumstances that are moving very, very quickly, very quickly indeed.

I would point those opposite to the conduct of the South Australian Labor opposition, who in recent times offered full-throated support to the Premier in South Australia—sensible, considered, appropriate support to the Premier—in relation to their response to a pretty challenging set of circumstances in that state. And it is an example I think of perhaps how oppositions ought respond to these circumstances. Rather than seeking to take the perceived politically expedient route—and I will let the polls speak for themselves about whether that has worked or not strategically—it is better surely to show some leadership, better surely to demonstrate that you have the interests of the state, rather
than your party, at heart and offer support to the government in dealing with these matters in very
time-compressed circumstances.

I have to say that having come from outside of government before being in this place, I had a degree
of short patience with the length with which it took some government programs to get up and running.
I have a new-found appreciation for the difficulties in getting programs up and the need sometimes,
perhaps all the time, to take your time to get the thing right. That is a function of good and proper
process. That is not a luxury that we or any government right around the globe has had over the course
of this most extraordinary of years. We just have not had that luxury, and in those circumstances, as
we say, we have put the jumper on while it is still being knitted. In those circumstances you have to
expect that there is going to be some need to express things through Parliament, to express things
through cabinet, to express things through various levels of administration. And yes, surprise, surprise,
in those circumstances there will be omissions, there will be mistakes made.

I have spent a lot of time in this chamber hearing about mistakes that were made, from the other side.
We have spent more time I think in this chamber looking, tilting very much forward to the future,
 focusing on the things that really matter to Victorians, which is rebuilding our terrific economy and
getting the entire state back on track. That is our focus, and that in fact ought to be our focus, but in
the meantime you have got to expect that in circumstances where these are not pre-planned,
preordained, prearranged arrangements, where we are reacting to a dynamic, moving and difficult set
of macro circumstances, circumstances far beyond the control not just of this government but of all
governments, that you are going to have to move quickly in some circumstances and make sure
that the show keeps rolling on. It is to that end that we introduced this bill to allow the making of regulations
to enable the charging of fees for mandatory quarantine.

Now, we have telegraphed this. It has been telegraphed publicly, and I do not think anyone returning
to Australia in this month would anticipate for a second that they would get a free ride through hotel
quarantine. We do of course have the appropriate fee waiver and equity arrangements in place, and I
will go to those in a moment, but I do not think that anyone in good conscience could really at this
point assume that they were just going to be able to be put up at government expense for two weeks
in service of a very, very important public health initiative. I think it is important to remember that this
is not in service of some sort of ego trip. It is not in service of just arbitrarily putting inconvenience in
the way of Victorians or standing between them and their families at a time of year when family
gatherings feature so heavily. It is being done for one reason alone and that is to protect the health of
all Victorians, and on that matter we probably can all agree.

This does allow for that retrospectivity, and that is, you know, a rarity in government legislation. I do
not think it is something we should simply skim over. It is very important when applying bills with
any retrospective effect that those changes which are retrospective are fair, are proportional and are
reasonable. In this circumstance, particularly given the telegraphing of these charges and particularly
given that all the other states are similarly charging for like arrangements, I do believe that these
charges—the retrospective effect of them—are entirely fair, entirely reasonable and entirely
proportional, not least because they are consistent with other states.

Again, this is not about seeking to profit from these circumstances. No-one ought to be profiting from
these circumstances. Nor is it about trying to defray all the costs or not accepting that there is some
good public in setting up these quarantine processes. Yes, of course there is a public good and the
public ought to make its own contribution through the government. But it is about reasonably
recouping expenses from those travellers, particularly from those travellers who assumed some risk in
choosing to travel when they did or, in the alternative, assumed some risk by not returning home when
they did not, in effect. So there is some contribution required in circumstances where you have made
a conscious decision—a free decision—either to delay a return or in fact, in the case of some of these
travellers, to leave Australia perhaps in March or April or May knowing full well that there was
definitely going to be a risk that this pandemic was going to continue over the course of this year and
sadly, it would seem, through the course of the winter in the Northern Hemisphere.
We do provide some sensible and equitable measures regarding the payment of these fees, including allowing for the payment by instalments or under payment plans. I think that is a sensible measure. We do not expect that everyone is going to be returning to the country with $3000 in pocket—not least because of the egregious price gouging that has gone on by some of the airlines in this process whereby they have seen fit not just to recoup costs in what are essentially humanitarian services but in fact to ensure that they extract maximum commercial value from offering these services. That is an unfortunate stance. I think the airlines operate with a public licence and that airlines have as part of their charter both a right and an obligation: the right to operate their businesses in a commercially sensible way but with an obligation to respect the fact that they only exist as a creature of law, of Australian law. For those reasons they ought to be a bit more respectful of the trust and the honour that they are conferred, frankly, in being allowed to fly commercial air services to and from our nation.

I will note as perhaps a small caution that if two or more adults are detained together at a specified place of detention, then the adults are jointly or severally liable to pay the state the prescribed fee. So if you think you are not going to get through the two weeks, if you think it is going to blow the show up, I would probably get the debate about who is picking up the bill done pretty smartly.

It is important that in contemplating these rules and these payments we acknowledge that there are mechanisms in place to allow people to make the appropriate representations to government about their own financial circumstances, to apply for the concessional waiver or whatever as required. I think it is very important that those measures are in place. It is an appropriate thing, and fairness is indeed at the heart of everything that Labor does. I am pleased to commend this bill to the house. It is an important bill, it is a fair bill and it is a bill that further underlines the outstanding work that the Victorian government is doing to keep Victorians safe.

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (16:30): I rise to make a contribution on the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020. As I predict this will be my final contribution in the house prior to the end of the year, I certainly wish everyone well for Christmas and the new year and also reflect on the year that has been—a year none of us could have ever predicted. This time last year not many of us had heard of the coronavirus. It has been a public health emergency the likes of which we had not seen for arguably 100 years. That tells me that of course mistakes are going to be made along the way, and I would hazard a guess that some mistakes have been made in terms of dealing with this pandemic in every jurisdiction, not just in Australia but around the world. Yes, there were breaches in quarantine here in Victoria, and they had some pretty bad consequences. But there were breaches of hotel quarantine in other states where there were ADF personnel present. There were breaches of hotel quarantine in South Australia and in New South Wales. New South Wales had a taxi driver who was infected with coronavirus driving all around Sydney picking up passengers. There was no second wave. What that tells me and should tell everyone is that this virus is fickle, it is unpredictable and therefore it is not easy to deal with.

But I am proud of the way we have dealt with it, as a country but as a state as well, because we have had a very regrettable second wave in Victoria, one that at one point reached 725 cases in a day. Many doubted that we would get to zero, and we are now at 39 days of zero—but we got there. We got there because everyone in Victoria—or I should say 95 per cent of Victorians—did their bit. They were compliant with some pretty tough, pretty strict restrictions—most compliant with them. Even Victorians who were at the end of their tether with these restrictions nonetheless were compliant.

We also have a Premier who provided leadership when the state needed it most. He held his nerve under enormous pressure. He held the line and he said, ‘These are tough restrictions. This is a very hard lockdown, but we’ve got to see it through. We’ve got to see it through because we want to have a relatively normal Christmas’. Now here we are: zero active cases in Victoria. Christmas is in just over a fortnight, and we will all be able to spend our Christmases with those we love. Many doubted that we would get to that point, but we did. That is not to say that mistakes were not made along the way, but the reality is that mistakes have been made in jurisdictions all over the world on how to deal
with this virus. Most jurisdictions have not responded to those issues as well and as strongly as our government has, and for that I am very proud.

The member for South-West Coast said that the opposition wanted to work with the government. That might be true for the member for South-West Coast personally, but when we look at some of the things that her colleagues were saying throughout this year, frankly there was no indication of any bipartisanship when it came to dealing with this pandemic. It was not just the rubbish we heard from the member for Kew, like calling the Premier the dictator and the chairman and undermining the public health message, or the mixed messaging that we heard from the Shadow Minister for Health and from the Leader of the Opposition. Frankly, they hitched their wagons to some fairly odious figures from the fringes around the country who were saying all sorts of crazy things about the pandemic, including that the pandemic was a hoax and all sorts of other ridiculous things. That is what undermines confidence, that is what undermines the public health message, and messaging is so important, as we know. But we have got there.

This bill is about the reset hotel quarantine program. Frankly, it was the right thing for the Premier to call the inquiry, and the inquiry made a number of recommendations in its interim report—69 recommendations in fact. They have been considered thoroughly and the government has accepted, or will accept, in principle 52 of those recommendations, with 17 recommendations under review. Thirteen of the recommendations under review relate to the establishment of the model for home-based quarantine, which would require an agreement at the national level that does not currently exist.

Now, of course this bill and the reset hotel quarantine program are in line with the national cabinet decision. What this bill does is set out a fee structure around hotel quarantine. It is important. It is a fee structure that is consistent with other jurisdictions around the country, including New South Wales and South Australia. What I should also mention is that this new hotel quarantine system has a number of very important safeguards. Firstly, there are very clear lines of responsibility and accountability. We have hundreds of police, Australian Defence Force personnel, health workers and other staff ready to accommodate returned travellers. It will be led by the corrections commissioner, Emma Cassar, who has been appointed as commissioner of the new COVID-19 Quarantine Victoria and will report directly to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Health, enforcement and operational expertise are embedded in the executive structure of CQV, and Victoria Police will have a highly visible and significant presence across the program, carrying out supervision, enforcement and compliance duties at all locations. They will be supported by the Australian Defence Force personnel and highly trained resident support officers.

Additional infection controls have been introduced, including the daily testing of staff and voluntary regular testing of their family and household members, a centralised contact-tracing team, proactive contact mapping for all staff, a ban on secondary face-to-face employment for all staff, and strengthened PPE protocols. Frontline staff will work in bubbles to ensure they only have contact with a limited number of other staff during their shift, allowing for the bubble to be taken offline with minimal impact if one staff member becomes unwell. All of those things are important.

Earlier in my contribution I referred to a number of mistakes that have been made, not just in Victoria but elsewhere—around Australia, around the world—and I think what this demonstrates is that in a pandemic you learn from these mistakes. While the second wave was absolutely horrible, especially for the families directly impacted, you do also have to consider Victoria’s situation in a global context. I certainly grieve for everyone around the world who has lost a loved one or who will not be able to spend Christmas with their families, because while we have moved to relative normal here in Victoria and across Australia, the rest of the world is on fire when it comes to this pandemic.

As I said in my budget contribution in the last sitting, those opposite wanted us to prioritise the economy over public health. Where we have seen that happen overseas—where governments overseas have prioritised the economy over public health—in the end they have achieved neither. The UK is a current example of that—61 500 people dead. The government over there did not take the pandemic
seriously. Not only is it out of control in the UK, not only are 61,500 people dead, but their economy is 10 per cent smaller than when the pandemic began. If you choose the economy over public health, in the end you get neither. Well, this government understood that. Our Premier understood that. He held his nerve. He provided leadership. And right now, with 39 days of zero cases, zero active cases in Victoria and a reset hotel quarantine program, Victorians can have every reason to be optimistic about not only the economy but also public health in Victoria in 2021. I commend the bill to the house and I wish it a speedy passage.

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (16:40): I too join my colleagues today to rise to speak in favour of the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fee) Bill 2020. This bill does provide for the establishment of a fee structure for returned travellers, and it is consistent with the national cabinet decision earlier this year and with schemes already operating around the country. But before I talk about the strengthened hotel quarantine program that we have set up I do want to take this opportunity to again give a heartfelt shout-out and say a tremendous thank you to all Victorians right across this state for their hard work and their sacrifice to beat this virus. We have risen to the challenge of battling this global pandemic across the suburbs that make up this great state of ours. We have fought hard to get the virus under control, and slowly but surely we have driven it out of our neighbourhoods street by street, house by house. The strategy is working, and it is going to continue to work if we all pull together and continue to do the right thing. We deserve our COVID-normal Christmas, and I for one cannot wait to see my family, my mum and dad, my in-laws, my brothers and sisters and even my newest little nephew, Huxley, in coming weeks—who I have to say, by the looks of that kid, is one very cute child indeed.

Victorians have done an outstanding job combating this global pandemic, and I do not know if it is just me, but I cannot say that I remember one single contribution from those opposite to come in here and thank Victorians for their sacrifice, their hard work and their sheer determination to beat this virus. As a government it is certainly our responsibility to ensure that essential government services continue in a way that is COVID safe. We all know that this global pandemic is not yet over and it most certainly will not be without a vaccine, and Victoria along with the rest of the world must continue to rise to the challenge of fighting and beating this virus. Indeed these past couple of months I have watched many friends who are currently living overseas in cities like Paris and London, and they are now facing a very dark Christmas like no other as the virus continues to ravage the global community.

My electorate of Tarneit is an incredibly vibrant and multicultural community, and over the last eight to nine months and, shockingly, still as recently as this week I have received emails and phone calls from countless Victorians in my community that are absolutely desperate to get home and to get on with their lives. They continue to be stuck overseas in countries like India and Pakistan, just to name a few. In one case I received an email from a man whose wife had been stranded in India for over eight months, and I for one cannot begin to understand the financial, mental and emotional stress that he and his wife must be feeling, not knowing when she can get home. She is just one of the 39,000 Australians who are still stranded overseas, and these people deserve to get home. They deserve to get home to suburbs like Tarneit, Truganina, Hoppers Crossing and Williams Landing, and as a government we want to help them do just that. But it needs to be in a COVID-safe way that not only protects them but is also going to protect the rest of our community.

I am very pleased to say that the hotel quarantine program and the single entity set up to run it are ready and waiting. What people in our communities need to know is that we have established a much stronger quarantine program with strengthened leadership, oversight and training; embedded health and enforcement expertise; and importantly, clear obligations for both staff and residents, and this is designed to keep returned travellers and the community safe. There are clear lines of responsibility and accountability, and we have hundreds of police, ADF personnel, health workers and other staff ready to accommodate our returned travellers. It will be led by corrections commissioner Emma Cassar, who has been appointed as commissioner of COVID-19 Quarantine Victoria and will report directly to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. What I would like my community of
Wyndham to know is this: health and enforcement operational expertise are embedded in the executive structure of CQV.

Victoria Police will have a highly visible and significant presence across the program, carrying out supervision, enforcement and compliance duties at all locations. They will be supported by ADF personnel and highly trained resident support officers. Additional infection controls have been introduced, including the daily testing of staff and voluntary regular testing of their families and household members. There will be a centralised contact-tracing team, proactive contact mapping for all staff, a ban on secondary face-to-face employment for all staff and strengthened PPE protocols. Importantly, the frontline staff are going to work in bubbles, and not only will this ensure that they have contact with a limited number of other staff during their shift but it will also allow for that bubble to be taken offline with minimal impact if one staff member becomes unwell.

So much work has been undertaken to make sure that we have the best possible quarantine program. We know we cannot eliminate the risk entirely, but we have established infection prevention controls that have been tested, and they are ready to go. In fact the first travellers began arriving yesterday. They are already in quarantine and more are arriving today, which is why this bill is so important, as it is going to set out the fee structure for these returned travellers.

Now, for adults the cost is going to be $3000 plus $1000 for every additional adult and $500 for each child over three years of age. These costs are consistent with the fee structures employed by other state governments and their hotel quarantine programs and schemes. For families experiencing financial hardship—and this is really important—there will be an option to apply for a fee reduction or waiver, and payment plans will also be available for all residents who return home. Of course our government will continue to fund the majority of the program—accommodation costs, security, transport and logistics as well as essential items and services such as meals and medical care. And returning travellers are not going to be invoiced for the cost of quarantine until after their stay has finished. We want this to be a system that is fair. It needs to be as equitable as it can be, and that is exactly what this bill tries to achieve.

More importantly this hotel quarantine structure will be much stronger than it was before. We know—we openly talk about it here—how easily mistakes have been made in each and every jurisdiction, and we know it better than most do. And if we have learned anything, it is how insidious a role insecure work played in the spread of this virus throughout our community—and yes, including hotel quarantine. This structure ensures that those mistakes will not happen again. This hotel quarantine structure will have an exclusive workforce that is employed or contracted directly by COVID-19 Quarantine Victoria. With the exception of cleaning staff, who are going to be employed by Alfred Health, the entirety of that workforce will be employed directly with CQV. We can be confident that these cleaners will apply the same standards that they use in keeping hospitals safe and sanitary.

Now, we also know that all of these cleaning staff will have a fixed, secure contract that deploys them exclusively at that one site. As a result of this structure, all staff involved in hotel quarantine will have the same terms in their contracts and will not be allowed to work at more than one job without the permission of CQV. This will not be granted if it involves face-to-face contact of course and involves high-risk settings. Only a limited number of people will be required to visit multiple sites, including general managers who oversee a small number of hotels and their individual site managers. We know that a poor workplace structure led to failures last time. We know this from the public inquiry, and our government has received and is ready to implement 52 of the inquiry’s recommendations, with another 13 relating to in-home quarantine dependent on the approval of national cabinet. Make no mistake, our government will create a stronger, safer hotel quarantine system that keeps our community safe as we continue to thrive in a COVID-normal setting. This bill sets out the fee structure for the program, allowing it to function as we begin to bring people back home to Melbourne. I commend it to the house.
amazing work that all of our communities right across Victoria have done to keep the rest of us safe during this global pandemic. It is a phrase that gets turned out a lot, but these really are unprecedented times. The last time Victoria was in a pandemic, life was very different. The economic challenges that we as a state have experienced along with the rest of Australia and the world are new, and there has been no rule book or instruction manual to follow. Right from the get-go the Andrews Labor government has worked hard to make sure that Victorians are safe but also that our economy is in a position to grow and recover.

That does not mean it has not been hard. It has been very hard for many of our constituents as well as ourselves. The normality that many of us now know has shown how flexible and resilient Victorians really are and can be. Most of us now wear face masks without a second thought. People are able to do their jobs from the comfort of their homes, and the resilience to be able to work from home and manage family expectations from their homes really is an amazing effort and an achievement that Victorians really should be proud of. And through all of this hard work Victoria has now come through, and we are seeing some amazing results—39 days with triple doughnuts.

Now, many on the opposite side said that our plan was unachievable, airy-fairy stuff—that we would not be able to get to this by Christmas, we would not be able to get to five cases in the community by Christmas. Well, we have now just seen the ability to have up to 30 people in our homes and the lifting of many restrictions. Victoria really is tracking along in relative freedom as we see second waves hit Europe, America and Asia.

With these second waves it really is important that we have a successful hotel quarantine system in place, in particular when we see what is happening again in America, Europe and Asia. Back when the state had to deal with the coronavirus early, there was no instruction manual, as I said earlier, and it was the Andrews Labor government and other state government leaders who were really pushing for a comprehensive national approach to hotel quarantine. We are well aware of the cases that managed to leave hotel quarantine, and if it was not for this brilliant response from the Andrews Labor government to get back in control of coronavirus, numbers would have been facing a very unhappy Christmas. Unfortunately we are also well aware of some of the disgusting comments made by federal government members, shockingly many of them from Victoria—when Victorians were working so hard to keep the current virus in control—sipping beers in Sydney whilst their constituents were working hard to keep their fellow Victorians safe. I think their response was really disappointing, and it is very noticeable that now New South Wales and South Australia have had other cases that have been related to hotel quarantine, they have now naturally been silent.

This government has not worried about cheap political pointscoring. It has been focused on getting on and responding to this crisis. This pandemic is not over yet, and we must continue to rise to the challenge of fighting this virus. We know there are many Victorians still overseas, and they want to come home. We totally understand that, and it is the Andrews Labor government who wants to do just that—and that is bring them home. But of course it needs to be in a COVID-safe way that protects them and the rest of our community.

The hotel quarantine program and the single entity set up to run it are ready. It is a stronger quarantine program with strengthened leadership, oversight and training, embedded public health and enforcement expertise and clear obligations for both staff and residents to keep them and the community safe. There are clear lines of responsibility and accountability, and we have hundreds of police, ADF, health workers and other staff ready to accommodate returned travellers. It will be led by corrections commissioner Emma Cassar, who has been appointed as commissioner of COVID-19 Quarantine Victoria and will report directly to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Health enforcement and operational expertise are embedded in the executive structure of CQV, and Victoria Police will have a highly visible and significant presence across the program, carrying out supervision, enforcement and compliance duties at all locations. They will be supported by Australian Defence Force personnel and highly trained resident support officers.
Additional infection controls have been introduced, including the daily testing of staff and voluntary regular testing of their family and household members, a centralised contact-tracing team, proactive contact mapping for all staff, a ban on secondary face-to-face employment for all staff, and strengthened PPE protocols. Frontline staff will work in bubbles to ensure they only have contact with a limited number of other staff during their shift, allowing for the bubble to be taken offline with minimal impact if one staff member becomes unwell. We have done the work to make sure we have the best possible quarantine program. We know we cannot eliminate risk entirely, but we have established infection prevention controls that have been tested and are ready. The first travellers began arriving yesterday and are already in quarantine. More are arriving today.

This bill provides for the establishment of a fee structure for returned travellers. It is consistent with the national cabinet decision earlier this year and with schemes already operating around the country. In March 2020 national cabinet agreed that states and territories would need to determine cost contributions required from travellers entering mandatory quarantine. Contribution fees are already charged in New South Wales, Queensland, the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. As announced by the Premier last week and in line with the national cabinet commitment, overseas travellers arriving in Melbourne will be asked to contribute to the cost of their mandatory quarantine through a contribution fee. Victoria’s fees will be set at A$3000 per adult, A$1000 for each additional adult in a room and A$500 for children aged between three and 18 years of age. There will be no charge for children under three. These costs are the same as those in New South Wales and South Australia and are comparable to the remaining jurisdictions’ fees.

Children under 18 years travelling alone will be charged a co-payment of $500, and a parent or guardian joining their child in quarantine will not be charged a fee. These costs are the same as in New South Wales and South Australia, and comparable again to the other jurisdictions’ fees. For example, a group or a family of three adults will be charged a fee of $5000. A group or family of two adults and three children between three and 18 years would be charged a fee of $5500. A group or family of one adult and one child under three years would be charged a fee of $3000. The government is still funding most of the cost of accommodation, security, transport and logistics, as well as essential items and services, such as meals and medical care.

Individuals and families experiencing financial or other hardship can apply for a fee reduction or waiver. Payment plans will also be available to all residents. In other jurisdictions fee waivers are variously available based on significant financial hardship, exceptional circumstances or vulnerability. Waivers in Victoria’s fee scheme will be broadly in line with those grounds to ensure consistency between the schemes.

I would like to take a moment to thank and congratulate the many healthcare workers who have given so selflessly and continue to do so to this day. They are the paramedics, the nurses, the doctors, the cleaners, the orderlies, the catering staff and the administration staff. All healthcare workers deserve our praise, as do all frontline workers and every other worker that has kept the system of work, the productivity, going around this state where they possibly could under trying circumstances.

I want to thank my constituents in Melton for beating this virus. We got to a stage in Melton where we had in excess of 500 infection cases. They worked damn hard to get it down to double doughnuts in Melton, as did the rest of the state, and I just want to congratulate them for sticking at that hard task of getting it down to double zero.

I do not know of anyone that wants to have a third wave. I think that is something that we can all agree on in this house—that no-one wants a third wave. This has been a terrible experience. Thank God it has been 100 years since the last pandemic. I commend this bill to the house, and I wish it a speedy passage.
MOTIONS
Tuesday, 8 December 2020
Legislative Assembly
3883

time properly. The house is considering the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Quarantine Fees) Bill 2020. The question is:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Halfpenny): The bill will now be sent to the Legislative Council and their agreement requested.

Sitting suspended 5.01 pm to 5.32 pm.

Motions

BUDGET PAPERS 2020–21

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Creative Industries) (17:32): I move:

That this house takes note of the 2020–21 budget papers.

I am delighted to make a contribution on the budget papers and on the Appropriation (2020–2021) Bill 2020. This is a budget of our times, and this is the budget that we need to recover and to stimulate the economy. What we have seen this year has been the most dire economic circumstances the world has seen since the Great Depression, and I am reminded of the Great Depression in the way in which governments around the world sought to respond to that great challenge. I remember speaking with the member for Mornington during a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing, and I seem to recall that the 1931 Premiers Conference may have been held in the Legislative Council committee room. The member for Mornington and I were having that conversation, and we tried to confirm if that was the case or not. We were not able to confirm it, but it was a profound Premiers Conference at that time in our nation’s history, and the missteps and the failings of public policy at that time were replicated globally. It was a time when the view was put that government needed to engage in a series of austerity measures—that government needed to have balanced budgets, needed to have surpluses and needed to reduce expenditure. So despite the fact that Australia had been in a recession since 1927 and despite the fact that there was a stock market correction in October 1929, the view was that you needed to cut back and you needed to make sure the government did not spend because it did not have the capacity to pay, and particularly at that point in time there was a great deal of debate around paying the bondholders in London at the expense of stimulating the economy.

Now, ‘Red Ted’ Theodore, who was the Treasurer in the Scullin government, had been quite attracted to Keynes—John Maynard Keynes—and his seminal work at that time about expansionist fiscal policy to try and stimulate the economy to try and address those challenges. That was repudiated by his colleagues, and it was not a particularly popular position to have. As a consequence, throughout the Western world—throughout Western liberal democracies—you saw governments cut back and you saw governments retreat, and because the private sector did not have the strength and did not have the capacity to respond to those challenges, they similarly withdrew. So the circulation of money and the supply of liquidity in markets evaporated, and effectively you saw the economies right around the world contract significantly.

I am pleased to say we have learned our lessons from the past. We recognise the fact that there is a role to play for government in these sets of circumstances. And what we are doing here with this budget is what the Reserve Bank governor has advised us to do, which is that governments absolutely
need to spend money now. It is not the time to be courting budget surpluses or credit ratings. Now is the time to be investing in the economy, to stimulate the economy, to provide that confidence.

I do not believe that when markets are running hot, when the private sector is expanding significantly, the government should be in there bidding up the prices and overstimulating the economy, but they are clearly not the times in which we find ourselves today. We are finding ourselves in times when there is a need for government to invest and there is a need for government to provide the economy and business with a degree of certainty. Throughout the course of this year I, and I am sure many members, have heard business say, ‘We need help, we need support, we need assistance. We need to make sure that we can keep the doors open. We need business support grants’. And that is something this government has done. The government has provided billions of dollars in assistance to support business to get to the other side of this crisis. It is something that we have done time and again because we recognise that we need to try and provide business with that level of confidence and support to try and navigate their way through to the other side of this crisis.

Now that we have weathered the worst of that crisis, we have to try and stimulate the economy further to ensure there is that capacity for a strong rebound. The budget papers show that we had a slight contraction in the 2019–20 financial year, and we are looking at a 4 per cent contraction this financial year. So it is a significant contraction, but I would say it is much less than the rest of the world. I think those on this side of the house recognise that it is not a binary proposition. It was not about letting the virus rip and having economic growth. It was about recognising the fact that we had to get on top of this crisis with the virus in order to then stimulate the economy and have economic recovery.

If you look globally at what is happening at the moment, the collapse in terms of America, in the UK and in Israel has been quite profound. I know you would be surprised to hear this, but if people do not feel safe, they will not go out. If you do not feel safe or you care for somebody who has got a chronic illness or chronic disease, you are not going out. I mean, can you imagine it?

Ms Ward interjected.

Mr PEARSON: Indeed, member for Eltham. And, as you would appreciate, there are instances where many of us have got parents who are older. Some of us have got grandparents who are older, some of us have got children who have got respiratory illnesses, or our partners have got certain comorbidities. The notion that you can turn around and say, ‘Well, look, I’ll just go about my business, and I’ll just live life like there’s nothing else. The coronavirus, like Donald Trump said, is just really like a flu, and I’ll just live my life and I won’t think about the consequences’, is just not borne out by reality. So that is why we had to get on top of the virus, and that is why we are now in a strong position to be able to ensure that the economy can rebound strongly.

The reality is that the savings rate now in Australia is the highest it has been since 1974. There is an enormous amount of pent-up demand. Partly that is due to the fact that people have not been able to spend. Partly that is due to the fact that people have been able to access JobKeeper and receive that level of support, and they have been able to have some of that fiscal support to try and rebound strongly. And that is why the budget papers show that we are expecting a 7.75 per cent bounce back in 2021–22 off the back of that, because of that pent-up demand. So the budget is incredibly important in trying to provide that necessary stimulus to the economy to make sure that we have got the ability to respond, and respond effectively. As I said, this is a crisis, but this is a budget to meet that crisis head-on.

Unfortunately with unemployment, unemployment rises quickly but it takes a long time to fall back. With the recession of 1981–82 it took about seven years before the unemployment rate dropped back to its previous rate. For the recession of 1991–92 it was 15 years. So think about that for a moment: the waste in terms of human capital, the fact that people are not afforded the opportunity, the dignity of going back to work. We recognise that that is not acceptable, and that is why we have put Working for Victoria at the forefront of this budget. We want people back to work. I want to see members of my community, the Horn of Africa community who live in the towers of Flemington and in the
broadacre Ascot Vale estate, afforded the opportunity of getting not just the skills that they need to get a job tomorrow but the skills that they require to stay in employment for the rest of their working lives. That is why the Working for Victoria program is so important—it is so vital to make sure that people are not left behind, that they are not forgotten, that they are not neglected. This government stands with them. We do not want to leave any Victorian behind. We do not want to leave any community behind. We are making these investments because that is exactly what we need to do to ensure that the economic dislocation and the trauma and the challenges that come from that are minimised.

So a budget like this plays a really important role in terms of trying to take up some of that excess capacity in the economy and providing those necessary investments. We have made it really clear that we want to have a significant investment in terms of social housing, and I am pleased to say that the Flemington public housing estate and indeed the Ascot Vale housing estate will be some of those very early estates which will be redeveloped because we want modern, affordable, 21st-century, energy-efficient accommodation that ensures that public housing tenants live with decency and with dignity. Now, in the last Parliament the Greens political party at every opportunity opposed these developments. At every single opportunity they opposed. The question for the Greens will be whether they will seek to support what the government is trying to do—ensure that working people have got the decency of affordable accommodation—or whether they will oppose us again every step of the way. The classic case of, ‘Oh, that’s nice, but not here’ or ‘That’s kind of nice in theory, but it won’t work here for these reasons—

Ms Ward interjected.

Mr PEARSON: Exactly right, member for Eltham, because invariably the Greens political party talk a big game when it comes to social housing but at the end of the day what it really comes down to is they do not want public housing tenants living in their communities. They would love us to build tower blocks far out in the suburbs, far away from them. At every step of the way they have opposed these projects. Now, the test will be—

Ms Ward: ‘Not in my backyard’.

Mr PEARSON: Exactly, ‘Not in my backyard’. The test will be what will happen now. Will they come out and will they turn around and say, ‘You know what? This is fantastic—$6 billion in social housing, 12,000 new developments. That’s great. We support it absolutely, and we’ll be there on site to greet every worker as they come on site for that first time for the first concrete pour as we start building these new estates’, or will they oppose us? I suspect they will oppose us, because that is what they do. They are opposed to public housing tenants. They do not want these developments in their backyards. They have no interest in it.

One of the tasks I set myself when I was first elected was I wanted to make sure that Mount Alexander College became one of the best secondary schools in the inner north-west. The Deputy Premier and I went there in 2015. This school services the Flemington public housing estate and it services the Ascot Vale public housing estate. When we went there five and a half years ago there were 27 year 7 students. This is a school that services these communities. If you are actually serious about making sure that culturally and linguistically diverse communities have the opportunity to engage proactively in economic institutions, you have got to make sure they get a decent education. I looked at this school back in 2015 and I just knew—from the way in which that school was constructed—then and there that if those kids from the public housing estates went to that school they just were not going to get a fair deal. It just was not right. And I am really pleased and I am thrilled that through patience and perseverance and strong leadership from the school, particularly Danni Angelico, who is the principal, and prior to Danni, Wayne Haworth, we have secured $24.77 million for the redevelopment of that school, because I passionately believe in it.

I want to make sure that in my lifetime when you walk the floors of a public service building or if you go into the floors of 101 Collins Street you will see African-Australians there in senior leadership
roles, because that has been a great success story of this nation. Every new generation that has sought to come here to build a new life has that opportunity. If they work hard and if they apply themselves and they are disciplined, then they have got the capacity to reach their full potential. And I want more African-Australians in senior leadership roles; I want to see that while I am alive. I want to see that occur because that for me will be testament to the strength and the resilience of our community and our economy. But it starts with a good education. It starts with a good education and it starts with decent public housing, because that is what the community deserves. That is what these people deserve; they just want a fair go. We just want a level playing field to give them the opportunity to achieve their potential.

For me that is something that I feel so incredibly proud of and something I passionately believe in, because it is just fair. It is just the right thing to do. Many of us who have this great privilege of being legislators in this place recognise that there is an obligation that comes with this role and a requirement to honour a promise. It was not that long ago that people like me would never have found their way here. Where I come from, with my background, I would never have had a chance to be here. I am so fortunate to be here, and I am so grateful to have had this opportunity.

Ms Ward: We are grateful to have you.

Mr PEARSON: You are very kind, member for Eltham.

A member: Speak for yourself.

Mr PEARSON: I’ve got the numbers.

A member: Don’t be so sure.

Mr PEARSON: I’ve got the numbers, bud. But I feel very honoured and I feel very fortunate, and I just want to make sure that African-Australians have that same privilege and have that same opportunity. A budget like this is really important. It stimulates the economy. It is about fairness. It is about doing the right thing. I am proud and honoured to be able to be in this place at this time and to be involved with such a momentous project, and I commend it to the house.

Mr M O’BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (17:47): Thirty-one years ago, in 1989, I made the decision to join the Liberal Party, and I did it as a schoolboy; I was in year 12. I looked around and I was very, very worried about my state and the state that it was in. It was a state that was high in unemployment but low in jobs. It was a state that was high in debt but low in growth. It was a state that was high in deficit but low in confidence, and it was a state that was high in taxes but low in its credit rating.

Thirty-one years ago I was motivated to join the Liberal Party and get involved in political life because I cared what was happening to my state and I was worried and desperately concerned for the future of Victoria. And 31 years later I have gone from being a schoolboy to standing here as the Leader of the Opposition, Leader of the Liberal Party, and I see history repeating itself. I see a Victoria with high unemployment—a jobs crisis. One in five Victorians of working age is either unemployed or does not have the hours that they want; they are underemployed. One in five—that is a disgrace. I see a debt that is eye-wateringly high: $155 billion. We have not seen anything like this in our lives—never seen $155 billion of debt in our lives—and you know it has to be paid back. There is no such thing as a free lunch and there is no such thing as a free road. And every single dollar of that $155 billion will have to be paid back, and you pay it back through higher taxes or lower services. This is putting a burden on future generations as well as this one. We are seeing deficit like we have never seen before. The deficits over the next four years in Victoria are going to be greater than the cumulative deficits of every single state in the country.

And we see taxes like we have never seen before. In the middle of a pandemic with a pancake-flat economy, with high unemployment, you would think this government might just give business and consumers a go, give them a little bit of a reprieve from slugging them with more taxes and charges.
But no, this budget tells us there are new taxes on electric vehicles. I thought the government was trying to encourage the take-up of electric vehicles. Maybe they do not understand that if you tax something you make it more expensive and that actually discourages the take-up of it. And then of course there is the threat, the great threat, to our small businesses of another levy, another tax on jobs, because apparently if small business dare to employ casuals and they pay them a 25 per cent loading, this government thinks they should pay even more on top of that 25 per cent loading. So, high in unemployment, high in debt, high in deficit and high in taxes—that was Labor 31 years ago and that is Labor today.

On jobs, as I said, we are in a jobs crisis. What is remarkably concerning about this budget is that despite the massive debt, despite the massive deficit, despite the claims made by the government, it is fundamentally unambitious. I mean, it is appropriate that this be printed in red, because this whole document bleeds red ink—bleeds red ink. When you look at the forecasts for unemployment, what does this government think is going to happen with joblessness in this state? Well, in this current financial year it is 7.75 per cent and the following year, 7 per cent. Then you go through every single year of the four years in this budget, and you know what? In every single one of those years this government says Victoria’s unemployment will be worse than the national average. After four years, after $155 billion of debt, after over $40 billion of cumulative deficits, this government cannot even get us to average. That is not just not ambitious, that is running up the white flag. That is surrender, absolute surrender.

Now, the government have got all the excuses in the world. They talk about a one-in-100-year pandemic. Well, it is a phrase used to cover up a multitude of economic sins. But let me tell you, this budget was in more trouble than the early settlers before the pandemic and before the bushfires. We know that unemployment was up, we know that taxes were certainly up, we know that growth was down and we know that this government had lost control of spending on major projects—all of that before the bushfires this year and all of that before the pandemic. We have seen under this government six years of waste, six years of budget blowouts, six years of the government putting themselves and their mates first and Victorians last.

Let us look at just some of the list of major project blowouts under this government. I have only got 10 minutes to go, so this will have to be very much the abridged version. This will be the Little Golden Book version of all the cost blowouts. The North East Link was promised at $5 billion; it is now looking at $15.8 billion, and they have not even signed contracts yet. The West Gate Tunnel, promised at the 2014 election for $500 million, is now $6.7 billion and counting. Level crossing removals, promised at $5 billion, are now $8.3 billion and counting. The Metro Tunnel, promised at $9 billion, is now $11 billion and counting. On the east–west link, well, the promise was nothing to cancel it—remember the contract was not worth the paper it was written on—$1.3 billion to not build a road, to not do something that Victorians need.

You might have thought they would have learned a lesson from that, but no, no. There was the Minister for Public Transport today standing up saying, ‘Oh, yes, we spent $3 million to cancel a contract, to not build trams’. You have a government that will spend $1.3 billion to not build a road and $3 million to not build trams. I mean, the only growth industry in this state is getting money out of a Labor government for not doing stuff. It is unbelievable, absolutely unbelievable.

That does not even get us to the Murray-Darling Basin upgrade project, which of course they took over from the former Liberal-Nationals government, which we had funded. The government took it over and said, ‘We’ve rescoped the business case. We’ve rescoped the project. It’s all ready to go’. Not even halfway through it and they have run out of money, and they have just given up. On every other project in Melbourne when they blow the budget they just shovel more taxpayer money into it—they shovel more debt into it. But, no, when it is something affecting country Victorians, when it is important for our farmers, when it is important for our rural industries, this government says, ‘Sorry, we blew the budget. We’ve run out of money. It stays where it is. Leave it stopped in its tracks’. It is unacceptable.
Then of course we have got the Suburban Rail Loop, which could be a good idea or could be a horrible idea. Who would know? Who would know without a business case? The mob opposite used to be very big on business cases. I remember them calling, ‘Where’s the business case for east–west link?’. And when we produced it, they said, ‘We want a better business case for east–west link’. There was no business case too good for the Labor Party when they were in opposition, but now they want to spend $100 billion, $150 billion, $200 billion—who would know?—on a Suburban Rail Loop without a business case. They are planning to mortgage our state’s future on a project they do not even know stacks up, and that is unacceptable.

Now, when it comes to the second wave of coronavirus we understand that it has had a major economic impact on this state, but let us look at the causes of it. It has not been visited upon us from outer space; it was the product of governmental failures: a failure of hotel quarantine and a failure of contact tracing. Government failures caused the second wave, government failures prolonged the second wave and government failures are responsible for the damage done by the second wave: 801 Victorian lives lost because of the second wave of coronavirus that this government allowed to occur; 20 000 Victorians infected with that virus through the second wave; 200 000 jobs lost because of the damage done by the second wave; and millions of Victorians locked up in their homes, kept away from their family and kept away from their friends. The mental health repercussions of this will be with us for such a long time. Sadly, I think some of the family violence repercussions of this will be with us for some time as well.

The consequences of the second wave and the lockdown will be looked on in history as being one of the greatest horrific episodes to ever strike this state, and it is all the responsibility of poor decisions in government. This government did not create the coronavirus; I do not suggest that. But this government did not do their job to stop it getting into our community, and when it got into our community they did not do their job to stop it from spreading, because that is what good contact tracing does. Instead we just got the spin and the arguments that, ‘We’re fine. We’re great. New South Wales is looking to us’, and we know that that was a lie. So when we look at the economic consequences of that second wave which are in this budget paper, let us never forget the cause of it.

Standard & Poor’s, one of the global ratings agencies, as we know, sadly—and I say ‘sadly’ as a Victorian—killed off Victoria’s AAA credit rating, downgraded it not once but twice. Standard & Poor’s noted:

We believe potential pressure was building before the COVID-19 pandemic.

You cannot pull the wool over Standard & Poor’s eyes. They knew the budget was on the rocks even before the pandemic hit. Standard & Poor’s said:

… Victoria’s control of operating expenses has moderately lagged other governments in the recent past …

So they know that this government is just not up to it when it comes to delivering what it says it is going to do. Standard & Poor’s said:

… we believe there is some risk of cost overruns …

Goodness me, some risk of cost overruns!

A member: That’s an understatement.

Mr M O’BRIEN: I was going to say that is exceedingly generous from S&P’s point of view. It said:

… Victoria may struggle to deliver on its budgeted capital spending. Therefore, our forecasts assume only 85% will be delivered each year.

We would love as Victorians to get 85 per cent of what this government promises, because the only thing we know this government is good at is blowing the budget and delaying delivery. That is what they do. That is what they are best at. So this is a set of books which makes the Cain-Kirner governments look like Peter Costello and John Howard. It really does. This is a set of books which is
a tinderbox for Victoria. We are in an economic crisis, we have a jobs crisis and we have a mental health crisis, and this government’s answer is simply to borrow more and spend more. There is no reform in this document. Where are the long-term productivity reforms to set this state up to help us recover? They are not there. Other states have done the right thing. Other states have engaged in tax reform. Other states have done more to actually help people bounce back from this. Other states—you would not believe this—have actually supported small business. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine a government saying, ‘Our lockdown restrictions have killed small business, and we will now help to get them coming back’? But no, this government regards small business as like someone from Mars. They look at it quizzically but they do not understand it. Unless it has got a hard hat with a CFMEU sticker, this government could not care less. This is a government that just leaves everyone behind who is not a Labor mate. If you are a woman, you are facing higher unemployment because of this government’s second-wave lockdowns, and there is nothing in this budget to get you back to work. If you are a young person, you are facing 18 per cent youth unemployment. What is in this budget to get you back to work? Nothing. If you are a small business operator, you are on your own under this government. That is the tragedy of this budget.

This is a budget that should have been the apology, the apology from this Labor government to the people of Victoria for the huge amount of damage that their incompetence has done to this state. This should have been the ‘Sorry, Victoria. We caused the second wave, we caused the damage and we will help you recover’, but instead every Victorian child born today will come out of the womb with a $23 000 share of Victoria’s debt tied around their neck on day one, and this government does not even have a plan to repay one single dollar of it—not one.

The previous speaker, the Assistant Treasurer, talked about Keynes. I think he was talking about John Maynard Keynes, the economist. He really should have been talking about John Cain, because this is a Cainsian budget in terms of Cain-Kirner. The only thing is, it makes Cain-Kirner look good. This is a budget which has done horrific things to this state in terms of its future. This government has failed the people of Victoria through its mismanagement of the coronavirus—the hotel quarantine debacle, the contact-tracing debacle. It has caused the damage, and this budget does nothing to undo it. This budget adds to it, and for that reason this budget is a failure for the people of Victoria and it reflects a government whose time is up.

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong—Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) (18:02): That was one hell of a speech for the party room, wasn’t it—a speech with a very targeted audience, a speech that was all rhetoric and no substance. You cannot claim something and through that claim alone have it be true. To say that this budget does not deliver for women I think is a shocking mistruth, particularly when compared to the federal budget and the black hole that was in relation to supporting women, but I will have plenty to say about that shortly. I am also a bit confused by the opposition leader’s remarks that we should have done more to help people yet we have allegedly invested too much in this budget. This is the argument that we have seen the whole way through this pandemic: ‘The restrictions went too far’; ‘No, they didn’t go far enough’. Which is it? It is this kind of inconsistency that needs to be called out.

I also though was pleased to hear the opposition leader express some concern about family violence rates. I share that concern, although I would note that he has had since 2016 to share that concern. He has had since 2016 to commit his team and the leader before him to implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence and yet still has not, so I am hoping this newfound concern is the platform that the opposition leader needs to stand up very soon and commit his team to also implementing those recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. In saying that, we have done the heavy lifting on that; we are 167 recommendations through that 227. But we know it is long-term reform and we know it will take many, many years to come, and so I am pleased to hear, or to hear a suggestion of, the fact that this may well be a bipartisan issue, and I really hope that is the case.
But I will now turn to wanting to make a few remarks, both portfolio related and also electorate related, about the budget. I think it is fair to say that this budget really is one that puts people first, as it claims. The year 2020 has been one of the most difficult years in living memory, and I do object to the opposition leader’s dismissiveness around that, his flippancy in saying, ‘Oh, yeah, they’re saying it is a one-in-100-year event. So what?’ Well, I do not think we should turn our noses up at the significance of this global event, especially when we look at what is currently taking place overseas, and I know many people in this place have had time to reflect on that or an opportunity to reflect on that today in contributions on other matters. Our state has faced unprecedented challenges. Our country has faced unprecedented challenges—in fact the world has. Here in Australia and in many states, Victoria included, this came also on the back of devastating bushfires. This has been a year unlike any other I can remember, and I wager a year unlike anybody in this place could remember. In fact it is a year unlike the generation before us could ever remember. It is utterly, utterly unique in the worst of ways. But sadly, the impacts of all this tragedy have not been felt equally. The impacts of this year’s successive crises have been significantly and disproportionately felt by women. I am very pleased to have heard the opposition leader make reference to that, and again I look forward to hearing what his vision for gender equality is into the future.

Ms Ward: But sadly, not on his front bench.

Ms WILLIAMS: That is right. As 80 per cent of our healthcare and social assistance workforce, women have disproportionately provided clinical care during the health crisis. As a majority of workers in our education, childcare, retail, hospitality and accommodation sectors, women are also the majority of workers hardest hit by the flow-on economic effects of this pandemic. And as 71 per cent of primary carers, women have undertaken the bulk of carrying the domestic responsibilities at home, responsibilities that women already carry the burden of—it was just amplified in the last six or so months.

The year 2020 has laid bare gender inequalities that have existed in our community for far too long and that have persisted for far too long—inequalities that reinforce a pay gap which sees women work 59 days for free each year and also sees women over-represented in insecure work, inequalities that see women do about twice the unpaid care at home but retire with around half the superannuation, inequalities that see older women as the fastest growing cohort of homeless people in our community and inequalities that mean the risk of gendered violence remains pervasive in our community. What we have seen in family violence rates during the pandemic is shocking. What is more shocking though is that all it has done is shine a light on something that was there already—and that is for me the greatest tragedy in all of this. It has amplified, it has magnified, it has made us notice what was already there, whether that be gender inequality or whether that be violence against women. Many of us had seen it long before now, but for those of us who did not see it long before now—and some of them do sit on the opposition benches—I hope you do not ignore it any longer. Now you have seen it, commit to doing something about it.

Despite recent progress, decades of disadvantage and discrimination mean this pandemic was never going to be felt equally. That is why this budget invests in women. When we came to government we committed to a whole-of-government gender equality agenda, a commitment to improve outcomes for women in every setting and at every stage of life. This year has only strengthened this resolve. So I am very proud that this budget directly invests. This is just direct investment—$435 million to progress gender equality and end gendered violence. I am pretty sure that is more than the opposition ever committed to this, despite the opposition leader’s claim that it was insufficient. Of course that needs to be seen in the context of over $3 billion so far invested into family violence reform—more than every other jurisdiction in Australia, including the commonwealth, combined. So again, I am pleased that the opposition leader seems to be indicating his new-found commitment to that, and I look forward to him stating that expressly soon.

But of that $435 million in direct investment in gender equality and ending gendered violence, there is $13 million to support the implementation of the Gender Equality Act 2020 to address a range of issues, including the gender pay gap, under-representation of women in leadership roles, lack of workplace
flexibility and of course sexual harassment too; $17 million to advance the implementation of Victoria’s first gender equality strategy; and $150 million in wage subsidies to get women back to work, including $50 million specifically for women over the age of 45, recognising the additional discrimination they experience in the job market and the additional challenges put in place by many of the settings, including at a federal level, and what that flow-on effect means for those women here in Victoria. And there is $238 million for wideranging family violence prevention and response measures.

We knew in the early days of the pandemic that COVID restrictions were likely to increase incidence of family violence because of an increase in exacerbating factors, whether that be social isolation, financial stress, substance abuse et cetera. We also knew that victim-survivors would be less able to find a safe space to reach out for help, particularly given our service system is very phone based, and if you are effectively holed up with your abuser it is obviously much more difficult to find that time and space and that secrecy, I guess, to make that call. Of course we knew it was going to be much more difficult for services to be able to provide face-to-face support. So we invested $20.2 million to help Victorian family violence and sexual assault services adapt their service delivery and meet increases in demand during COVID-19 and also to improve our web-based rather than phone-based services.

When we talk about investment in family violence, it is important to highlight that this is about more than just numbers. It is about lives, it is about families, it is about breaking the cycle. This is really what we should think about when we think about family violence reform and when we think about what this dollar amount translates to.

I want to talk about a woman who I am going to call Kerry, and I am going to talk about her in the context of explaining why our investment in flexible support packages in this budget is particularly important. Kerry and her children have experienced physical, emotional and financial abuse at the hands of Kerry’s partner, but with the support of her local family violence service provider Kerry fled to a refuge with her children. She had no money. Her family were all in rural New South Wales and she had no means of getting to them, and even if she did, she was terrified that her partner would find her.

The local service developed a case plan for her. They helped her apply for an intervention order, and with the support of a flexible support package they were able to arrange for removalists to have what she was able to salvage moved to New South Wales with her family. They organised for Kerry to have a car to transport her and her children to her family and to provide her with the means once she was there to take the children to school and to find work. They were also able to pay for counselling for her, and they were able to support her in getting set up in a new home with a personal safety device that could be activated should her ex-partner find her. This is what flexible support packages can do, and that is why our investment of a bit over $85 million into them is so very important.

Of course we are also investing in trying to change the violent behaviours that lead to this kind of trauma through investment in perpetrator case management brokerage and in extending the Caring Dads program. I would love to speak more about that, but I want to say a few things about some other areas of reform as well. I could speak at length about what we have done in family violence, and I want to put that in the context of broader reforms, in particular our record commitment to social housing. Of course there are all of those other incredible indirect investments in women we have made, whether that be our free kinder or free TAFE or the secure work pilots, for example—all of those other initiatives that we have done that we know have also had an enormous impact on outcomes for women.

I want to say a few things, though, about Aboriginal affairs quickly. We can only build a fairer future for our state when Aboriginal Victorians get the support and the say, most importantly, that they need and deserve. When we came to government we committed to resetting the relationship between the government and the Aboriginal community. Victoria was the first jurisdiction to commit to and take a meaningful step towards treaty with our First Peoples, and I am very proud of the progress that we have made to date.
We have also recognised that we cannot genuinely move forward as a state if we continue to allow Aboriginal people to bear the disadvantages that remain embedded in many aspects of our day-to-day lives, and this is why we are delivering Victoria’s biggest investment in Aboriginal communities ever in this budget. This budget has a record $356.5 million investment to progress treaty and advance Aboriginal self-determination right across government—and I want to emphasise, right across government—because this is not just my responsibility; we have treated this rightly as a whole-of-government responsibility. Part of that of course is in backing the First Peoples’ Assembly of Victoria, the state’s first and only democratically elected body for Aboriginal people, with $19.2 million to continue their treaty work and ensure even more community voices are heard. This is an incredibly important investment that gives us enormous opportunities not only to right the wrongs of the past through setting us on a better path for the future but also to deliver meaningful and tangible improvements in outcomes for Aboriginal people here in Victoria.

I wish I could say more about that because our Aboriginal community-controlled sector over the last six or nine months has done an incredible job in keeping infection rates of the coronavirus low in our Aboriginal community. I would love to be able to talk more about that, but let me just say thank you. Thank you to the individuals and the organisations who have banded together and partnered with us to keep communities safe and supported and connected during this time. It has been truly, truly amazing, and that is work from which we want to build and a partnership that we want to continue.

Finally, in the very short amount of time I have left I want to talk about the great electorate of Dandenong and what we have been able to deliver there. My priority since coming into this Parliament in 2014 has been education. Lyndale Secondary College in my electorate had had no substantial investment since 1961, and I came to this place in 2014 committed to changing that. We are currently up to stage 4 that we have delivered in this budget. This latest commitment is for $10.8 million to go towards stage 4 of a complete rebuild of Lyndale Secondary College, a school that is so deserving. We have also invested $14 million in Emerson School, an investment that will deliver the school’s master plan, including a new admin area, senior school, home economics wing and library. I want to thank the principal of Emerson School, John Mooney, who has been a passionate advocate for that school community—a passionate advocate for inclusive education and for unlocking the potential as he sees it in all students, no matter their capacities and abilities. He truly is an inspiration and somebody who has been a mentor to many of the other educators not only in the Dandenong electorate but across the state.

Of course there are a number of other commitments I can talk to as well—the fact that the budget commits $12.6 million to widen parts of the South Gippsland Highway between Lynbrook Boulevard and the Dandenong Bypass, some really important road network connections that will help our community move through the electorate more safely. I am very proud of this budget, and I commend it.

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (18:17): I rise to join the debate on the budget in reply. I first off congratulate the Shadow Treasurer for her budget reply speech. I thought the member for Ripon did an outstanding job articulating our position and pointing out, quite rightly, the faults in this budget. I would have to say that this budget that was brought down on 24 November would have to be the worst and most reckless budget that I can remember in living memory. The reason I say that is that it is one thing to spend money on infrastructure to gain better efficiencies and better productivity within the economy, but that is what this budget is not about. It is not about that; it is about covering for waste, it is about covering for mismanagement and it is about covering for cost blowouts on existing projects. When COVID-19 hit, and as devastating as it has been, the Treasurer must have been thinking that all his Christmases had come at once because he had an excuse to be able to rack up the debt, rack up the borrowings and use that money to pay for the cost blowouts on project after project after project. As we have said, we believe that to spend taxpayer money on projects, infrastructure and effective programs is a great way to be able to grow your economy—but this budget is not about that. It is about covering up mismanagement by throwing as many dollars as you possibly can at it.
I was interested in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing. The deputy chair of the public accounts committee, the member for Polwarth, asked a very basic question of the Premier—a very basic question:

When do you plan to pay the first dollar of principal back?

You would have thought that with a budget plan or a loan repayment you would have some idea if you were the Premier. And it is interesting when you look at the transcript, because it goes for pages, where the Premier could not answer that question: when will you pay back the first dollar of principal on this massive loan—$155 billion? The Premier just kept on getting himself more and more into knots. The member for Polwarth again said, ‘So a date, please, Premier’. Then the member for Polwarth went on to say, ‘Well, any sort of answer would be good’. And the Premier said, ‘I am simply not prepared to do that’—I am not prepared to give a simple, straight answer. So in the end the Premier said, ‘I am not able to provide you with a long-term repayment plan’.

So why not rack up $155 billion of debt and not be able to have some plan of when we are going to start repaying any of it. We understand that the interest has to be paid year on year on year, but the principal of it—no-one has any idea. You would have thought the head of the Department of Treasury and Finance would have said to the government, ‘This is a massive sort of debt. We need to put some plans in outside of the forward estimates’. But they could not do it, so we have no idea of when any of this debt is going to be repaid.

When you look at the gross state product, the debt to GSP is going to go from around 9.5 per cent in 2019–20 up to 29 per cent—29 per cent of GSP will be debt. It just beggars belief. I mean, people say—and even said in question time today—it is all about the interest rates being so low, so low, so low. We will just keep on ensuring that interest rates remain low so we are able to repay it, but then how does that equate to the fact that Standard & Poor’s has downgraded your credit rating not one notch, like New South Wales, but downgraded it two notches? Then in question time today in an answer to the Shadow Treasurer, the Treasurer turned around with a really stupid answer by comparing us to the federal government. We are one-quarter the size of the federal government economy, and there is that comparison. You can always tell when a Labor minister is in trouble. When a Labor minister is in trouble, they just say whatever and hopefully someone will try and believe it.

And for the first time, I cannot believe it, budget paper 4 was stripped out of the budget. It just does not make sense. Why would you do that? You know why you would do it? It is because you want to hide something from the Victorian public. You want to hide something from the Victorian public. Budget paper 4 stripped out from the budget makes absolutely no sense, and how good was it when the Treasurer said, ‘We’ll have it by budget day next year in May’? What another cover-up.

I have noticed that a number of Labor MPs have been saying this is a one-in-100-year pandemic. I have to say I do not believe that. I do not believe it. It is okay to look backwards, but if you are looking forwards, I do not believe that we will wait another 100 years for another pandemic. I do not believe that is going to be the case. The pandemic will come around a lot sooner, and will this state be financially prepared for the next pandemic? I do not believe so. If you have to say that you are going to wait another 100 years for the pandemic, I do not believe that is going to be the case.

I want to move on to the issue of the parliamentary part of the budget, and part of opposition is to obviously scrutinise the government. We have been frustrated by the shutdown of Parliament, and we have been calling for Parliament during the year to open and get us back so we can scrutinise the executive government. We had every single right to be able to look at what the government was doing in regard to its planning for COVID, and there is no question that the second wave was purely due to the incompetence and mismanagement of the Andrews government. No-one can dispute the issue that the second wave was due to the hotel quarantine, which was a complete and utter shambolic mess.

So they set up the Coate inquiry, and all of a sudden when the ministers get to the inquiry they cannot remember, they cannot recall. Why would you set up the inquiry in the first place if you cannot recall?
And the bit that I still do not get to this day: the Premier, when he was there, said that Jenny Mikakos, the former health minister, was responsible. Why wouldn’t the Premier of the day lean across the cabinet table and say, ‘Health minister, you are responsible for hotel quarantine’? Why did he ambush her right at the very end? It just does not make any sense. It is almost like—you know, they talk about this creeping assumption. How can you run a government or cabinet on a creeping assumption? Now, the Premier is a control freak. He has got to control, so there is no doubt he knew exactly what was happening in regard to hotel quarantine. But he had to find a scapegoat, so he threw Jenny Mikakos under the bus—absolutely threw her under the bus—and you saw what happened with her.

I still cannot to this day believe that they have cut funding to IBAC. The y have cut funding to IBAC, and you have got a situation where there is the cut to IBAC and the Premier said in question time that all of the oversight agencies will have an increase. He said that in Parliament. I do not know whether he cannot read a budget paper, but quite clearly the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission has had a 4.5 per cent cut to its budget.

But also we have had the situation of the Ombudsman’s report today, and isn’t it interesting that she has not been given the money that she wants? She has not been given the money she wants, and you have to ask: why is it the case? Why don’t you fully fund the Ombudsman? Oh, it is because she is investigating Labor itself for branch stacking and the misconduct of public officials and obviously the public housing lockdown. So there are two investigations she has got on, and the one thing that the government would want to do is starve the Ombudsman of funds—and of course IBAC. I mean, they are investigating Labor. They have got the Casey situation, where they are investigating a sitting MP, investigating branch stacking again, so why not just starve them of funds—just squeeze them and squeeze them? And yet this government says it is open and transparent and governing for all Victorians. They are governing for all Victorians so long as you are a Labor member of Parliament.

Can I just come to the great electorate of Rowville: the big issues in our electorate are obviously around infrastructure, and I will come to some of them, but the big-ticket item for us of course is the east–west link. We want that built, the east–west link, so we can get on the Eastern Freeway, go around, go through the tunnel and go through to Tullamarine or go across the Bolte Bridge—and at least Melbourne would have a ring road. Every city in the world seems to have a ring road except for Melbourne, and that is why we need east–west link—to improve efficiencies. It is something we have pushed for, and isn’t it interesting that the federal government has put in $4 billion for the east–west link and this mob say it is a dud deal and that the business case does not stack up? The business case does not stack up? You have got the federal government paying $4 billion. It probably does not need any other public money because you would have, as an accepted principle, that the tolls would come in.

The other issue we have got is the Rowville rail, and that is one of the real red-hot topics. They are very keen, the Labor government, to be able to put in the Suburban Rail Loop. If you are going to put in a link between Clayton and Monash University, why not prepare Monash University to be able to take the rail link from Monash University out to Rowville? That would make perfect sense. Go from Clayton up to Monash University, and that would be a great plus for Monash University even if it went from Huntingdale station, but let us accept that it goes from Clayton and then it put it out to Rowville. You know what the Labor government want to do? Put out a tram system. They cancelled a tram contract and they had to pay $10 million, and then they want to, with whatever trams they do have, stick them out to Rowville. It would not even get up the hill. You would have to get the horse and cart out to pull the tram up Wheelers Hill. We do not want it. We want heavy rail to go from Monash University out to Rowville. It is one of the big-ticket items and something that we are going to be pushing for over and over again.

Then there is the issue of our schools. Again, Labor says, ‘We govern for all Victorians’. Well, isn’t it funny that when it comes to adequate funding for any of our schools, we just do not get it. We just do not get it in Rowville. Scoresby and Rowville secondary colleges are in desperate need of funding. Whilst some schools in my area, about four schools, have received minor capital works grants, the big-ticket items to be able to build and extend our schools just have not happened. We are desperate
for those school upgrades. We need it, as I said, for Scoresby and Rowville secondary colleges. We need it for Park Ridge Primary School, Karoo Primary School, Heany Park, Lysterfield and Carrington. We need funding for those schools—and the Rowville Primary School. We need funding for those schools.

So in all, as I said at the very start, this budget is the worst and most reckless budget that has ever been brought down in living memory. It is a situation where they are going to throw money and continue to throw money without any accountability. If you cannot even answer a simple question—‘When will the first dollar of principal be repaid?’, which I think is a pretty basic sort of question—then what hope do we have? No capital works program. No budget paper for capital works. This budget is one that generations will continue to pay for forever.

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (18:32): I am delighted to rise to take note of a fantastic budget. Obviously my learned colleague from Rowville does not agree with me, and that is fine. But then again, I did notice that my colleague mentioned that if we were going from Clayton to Rowville we would go via Wheelers Hill. I am pretty sure, from my knowledge of the gully, you would be a bit further south than that. But anyway, maybe that is in your plan—and good luck.

I think we should all acknowledge and thank the Treasurer for what is an astounding budget at an extraordinary time. Again, the member for Rowville was predicting the future, and I hope he is wrong about the next pandemic. I do not think I will guess either way, but I hope he is wrong and that it is not soon. But certainly if we look at previous issues of this magnitude and the health scope, we are going back to the Spanish flu. Let us hope that we can keep that to 200 years, if not 100.

This budget does show what a Labor government stands for, and what it stands for is that we believe in Victoria, that we believe in Victorians and that we back them in. At a time when unique choices have had to be made, the budget’s line items show in black and white just what is important. What this budget puts above all else is people. This budget puts people first. We have had 10 months now of a pandemic where we have put the health of Victorians first, and that has been the priority. Again, as many have commented, we are now 40 days without a case. That is fantastic, and we should all be proud. Now rebuilding is what we are doing and what this budget is doing. It is not talking about it, it is doing it, and I will get to concrete examples of how that is happening.

It has been a year like no other obviously. It is fair to say that none of us would want to go over the last nine or 10 months again, but it has for so many of us made us realise just how delicate our security is. It has brought to light the importance of that security, whether it be the security of our healthcare system, our aged-care system, our workforce, our family incomes or even contact with our families. Now, in a challenging climate both here and worldwide, economies have been severely impacted, and we have all experienced that, so although we have shared problems and shared challenges, what we as a state and the Treasurer and the Premier have brought to us with this budget is to choose to back Victorians in. We have made some very tough decisions over the last many months, decisions that were not always popular, and there have been many who have said we could have chosen differently and should have chosen differently. We have heard many times in this house on this matter and others that we should have chosen differently. But we have continued to put the health of Victorians first, people first, and this budget continues that by investing in Victoria.

From a business point of view—and government is not a business; government does not have the same accountabilities necessarily as a shareholder—back in my small business days there was a saying that you would have to spend money to make money. You would have to invest in your business. You would have to have confidence in your business in order to build your business, to make more profit, to continue that cycle. For businesses that are able to do that and can actually do that, life goes relatively well—short of things coming out of the blue that no-one expects, like a pandemic. Business confidence in this state and this country and the whole world has obviously taken a hit, and so I am so proud to see as a state this budget basically follow the advice of the Reserve Bank of Australia, the World Bank, the IMF and countless numbers of economists to back us in, to invest. Yes, that means
borrowing, but after five previous budgets of surpluses we are in a good position to do that, and I think we have shown the people of Victoria that not only are we in a good position to do that but we are in a very good position to get us back to where we were. Yes, it will take some time, but with the consistent effort and consistent work that this government has shown year on year on year I have no doubt that we will get there.

So for our area, I have said many times that my priority as far as taking up this seat is in education. This budget provides a significant package of support for our students, delivering the biggest ever investment to transform Victorian schools. Again, we are backing in Victorians. We are investing in our kids. Those kids in 10 years, in 15 years, will be the ones that are looking after us. So as our state emerges from the pandemic we need to make sure all Victorians have the support they need, none less so or more so than our kids. Whether it is our youngest learners getting the best start in life with three-year-old kinder or adult learners being able to get the skills they need for jobs in demand—our early childhood sector, our primary schools, our secondary schools, our TAFE sector, our adult learning sectors—this is building Victorians. This is investing in Victorians—Victorian people, Victorian families. It always comes down to people. We are not here as a government to invest in numbers on a page or a profit margin, and to be fair we are not investing in a credit rating. It has got to be about the people.

One of the schools in my area is a primary school, Syndal South Primary School. I had a chat with the principal there a number of years ago—actually it was before the 2018 election, and I talk to all of the schools in my area—and I said to Helen Freeman, the principal down there, ‘What do we need to do? What do we need to work on for Syndal South?’ We had a chat about the fact that their main building has not seen a great deal of love since some time in the 1960s. They had some issues with pebble mix that had sort of fallen off the walls. They got some money for windows in one of our extraordinary maintenance budgets, but there was more to do. So I said, ‘All right, let’s put that on the priority list’. About a week and a half ago or two weeks ago, whenever it was, I got to make a call to Helen Freeman. I said, ‘Helen, how are you; good?’ ‘Yes’. ‘The budget’s on today’. ‘Yes’. I said, ‘Now, remember that chat we had a couple of years ago? Well, I’m very, very pleased to tell you and the whole school community that Syndal South Primary, in this budget that we’re talking about today, received $4.43 million to upgrade that very building that we spoke about two years ago’. I, as the member for this area, was pretty happy to be saying that information. I was a little surprised when I had a crying principal on the other end of the phone, but that is what it meant to her and that is what it means to that school, because there are so many schools that, for want of growth in other areas and for want of needs, you have to make decisions and they just do not quite get there. This is one school that I was very, very happy to be able to tick off and say, ‘We got there’.

I had the luxury of going down to announce it to the school and meet the school captains, Jaden Chen and Hashita Jonnalagadda. There you go, that is a good effort, I hope. I apologise if I got that wrong. They are fantastic kids. I was talking to them about their year, and obviously it was a difficult year. But they were full of promise. They were full of hope and positivity. And I asked them, ‘Where are you going next year?’, because they are in grade 6. And they said, ‘Oh, we’re going to Mount Waverley Secondary School’. And I said, ‘You know what? That’s very funny’, because also in this budget—which was announced for some planning earlier in the year—we have allocated $7.16 million to build a brand new STEAM centre at Mount Waverley Secondary College.

Almost 2000 kids from the Mount Waverley area each year will get to go through that school with a brand new science, tech, engineering, arts and maths centre. And I love the fact that arts are included. We talk about STEM and we talk about the future of technology jobs—obviously I have got a technology background and I am all for that—but it is no coincidence that when you look at arts, whether it be fine arts, whether it be music, whether it be dance or whether it be any other of the arts, they round you off as a person. We cannot just focus on a task. And again it comes down to people, so knowing that we are investing in skills that are across the board makes me proud to be a member in this area.
Another thing that makes me incredibly proud to be a member of the Andrews government is that we are investing significantly in our disability education sector. Glenallen School is an amazing school in my area, and it teaches kids with various needs and physical disabilities. They are the most special people—the staff, the educators, everyone—so to let them know that there is $8 million in the budget to upgrade their school and continue with their master plan is something that I will be proud of forever.

Now, we can talk about debt and deficit, and we can have the economic discussions and the fiscal discussions—and they are all important.

Ms Staley: In a budget reply, yes.

Mr FREGON: Yes, they are all important. Thank you for agreeing with me, Shadow Treasurer. But the investment in the future of our kids in the three things that I have just mentioned is equally important. The Victorian budget will also deliver a $773.8 million investment in early childhood education, including $170 million to help cover the cost of kinder and give our children the very best start to life, because kinder next year will be free, and that will assist families getting back on their feet. It will assist for the most part—and it probably should not be this way—working women to get back to work. For the rollout of three-year-old kinder there is $300 million in this budget to continue that, and we are very excited to wait for it in 2022 in Mount Waverley. There is $4.8 million to fast-track early childhood teaching courses for 76 Victorian early childhood teachers. There are the Building Blocks grants for local government and other eligible providers to upgrade our kinders. There is investment in TAFE and training. I note that I have only got to education, and yet I am running out of time.

For energy there is $800 million. Solar Homes is being extended. There is the Big Battery—a shout-out to Wilson Transformers, who will be doing the transformers for that battery. There are programs to give people a $250 discount on their energy bills. That is real help for people who really need it.

In the 23 seconds I have left, there are 10 000 social and affordable housing developments. That is game-breaking. Are we are borrowing money? Yes. Does everyone in the world tell us we should? Yes, so we are doing it. And what are we doing with it? Labor values. I commend this budget.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (18:47): This is the sixth occasion on which I have provided a budget response, and before every budget day I have some level of anticipation of what might be in the budget papers. We know of the community campaigns that have been running so strongly in the region, the local community voices who are saying, ‘You know what? It might be our year this year. This year we hope that we will get funding, because we’ve been talking to the department. We’ve been speaking to the people in Regional Development Victoria. Even the minister may have hosted a meeting with us, but they didn’t turn up; they sent some of their staffers along. But we feel like we’ve really got a good chance of getting funding this time around’. Unfortunately, in this budget, which says on the front page that they are putting people first, where we hear the slogan run out time and time again that ‘We govern for all Victorians’, yet again Lowan has largely missed out. The biggest frustration for local people with this is not that it is unexpected, because when we have a Labor government we do not expect to get a lot of money in country Victoria; the biggest disappointment is that the government framed that this budget was going to be a massive blowout and it was going to cost every single man, woman and child over $23 000 each for them to get into debt. But the reasoning behind that was that it was all about trying to make sure that we are addressing the lockdown harms that were caused by this government.

I would like to bring to the attention of the house a report that came from the ABC about a review of the financial impact of COVID-19 by postcode across the state. If you look at this document, you can see that on the South Australia-Victoria border, right from the river down to the coast, the areas of greatest financial impact from the coronavirus lockdowns, which were caused by failures of this government to appropriately manage hotel quarantine, have been in the far west of Victoria. So if this government, the Treasurer and the Premier were honest about addressing these financial harms, then we should have seen an enormous amount of funding hitting the region and the west of the state.
Instead we look at the map on the regional paper and if you look at the border there is actually nothing along there. In fact the Shire of West Wimmera, which is one of the areas that is most at risk, with a score of 6.5-plus of extreme impact, has nothing in this budget—absolutely nothing in this budget. So $155 billion and the government could not identify a single project to fund in the entirety of West Wimmera Shire Council, who have had one of the greatest impacts through the lockdowns of coronavirus—not just the Victorian lockdowns but the chest-beating and toing and froing between the South Australian Premier and the Victorian Premier and the closure of that border. I mean, we still have a closed border to South Australia and this ridiculous system where you have to get a permit to go to South Australia and then a separate permit to come back to Victoria. And no consideration has been given to support businesses who have really struggled through these lockdowns—the businesses that rely on pass-through traffic, whether it is people visiting family and friends over in the other state, whether it is people who do their business in the other state.

I refer specifically to examples where it is just preposterous that the bureaucracy made such an impost on people’s lives that they could not work around it. For example, in Casterton the funeral director who does most of the work in Mount Gambier was not allowed to cross the border to conduct funerals. It just makes no sense. We had teachers in South Australia who were not able to cross the border to Apsley to teach the Victorian students. We had South Australian students who attend Victorian primary schools—and Apsley Primary School is another example—who could not attend school because they were not able to enter because there were cases in the north of Adelaide. It just makes no sense at all.

It was fantastic to see that some extensive lobbying did result in funds for our region, and I refer specifically to the good work of the Warracknabeal education precinct, who did an outstanding job in making sure they continually put forward their case and made sure that their voice was heard, and I am so proud that I was able to work with them and the Warracknabeal community to finally see in black and white funding for the Warracknabeal education precinct—and likewise for Baimbridge College in Hamilton. Both of these schools have had election commitments, and I have been proud to make an election commitment for both of those sites, so I am really, really grateful that funding has finally come through. It is too late, but at least we are going to see that happen. I cannot wait to walk through those new schools and to give those kids the educational environments that they deserve.

But when it comes to health care in our region it is astonishing to think that a health crisis in Victoria did not follow through with an investment of capital into our hospitals. In the Lowan electorate we have 17 hospital campuses. We have a critical requirement for an injection of funds into Western District Health Service, Hamilton hospital, in their emergency department and ICU, but we did not see one dollar put aside for that really important project. Similarly in Horsham the Wimmera Health Care Group are looking for a big lump of money to start getting their site upgraded or a greenfield site built to give local people the health care that they deserve and to support the local healthcare staff who do a magnificent job—and another shout-out to them because they took amazing care of me and my daughter, Ella, when she made her presentation to the world back in May. But we desperately need to make sure those staff, our local people, have the healthcare facilities that they deserve.

When we look further down the list to see what else the government have funded for Lowan, we do not see a lot. In fact when it comes to roads, which would be the biggest issue in my electorate, there is only one single road listed, which is the Henty Highway, and it is a small section of the highway between Warracknabeal and further north up the highway towards Mildura. We do not see any money in the budget for the Western Highway, the Glenelg Highway, the Wimmera Highway, the southern elements of the Henty Highway or any of our roads that are funded and managed by our local councils, who no longer get the country roads and bridges funding which the Liberal-Nationals had in place when we were in government. Our roads are getting worse. We rely on them for our day-to-day use, we rely on them to move our freight and our grains to port, and this Labor government have failed to deliver on that. They have failed to govern for all Victorians.
When you look at other elements of transport, when you look at the rail project, the Murray Basin rail project has now disappeared. It has been pushed off into the ether, and now we have railway lines where the trains actually run slower than they did before all this money was spent. All the budget has been completely blown, and yet we have got a worse rail system than when we started.

We look for a commitment for the Overland, something that our region has been fighting for. It is our only passenger rail service, running a paltry two days a week, and yet there is not a single mention of the Overland or a commitment to that funding in this budget. I am deeply concerned that the government is actually planning on again putting the viability of that service or the future of that service at risk. We are sick of running on six-month or 12-month time lines and having no certainty around what our rail services will be. We need that future certainty, but it is not in the budget papers.

Another commitment I made at the last election was around bringing back passenger rail to Horsham and Hamilton. It has not even warranted a business case under the Andrews Labor government. There is a lot of talk about rail programs, but they are only in Melbourne, and that is where I think a lot of our funding has gone for the state. This is not a budget about a COVID recovery; this is about how we can cover up the fact that we have got so many projects which have run over under this government. It does not matter whether it is North East Link, which has had a blowout of $10,790 million—that is billions, thousands of millions of dollars; the West Gate Tunnel Project, $6700 million over budget; level crossing removals, $3300 million over budget; or the Metro Tunnel project, $2000 million over budget. These are all projects which have run over budget, and they are all projects which are in Melbourne. But you get one country project—the Murray Basin rail project in country Victoria—run over budget and that is it. It is just scrapped. It seems it is not a priority of this government to ensure that we can get our produce to port and to be able to feed the people in this chamber, across Victoria, across Australia and overseas. Unless we support our industries and our growers to do that, then Victoria is going to get into an even worse state economically than it already is.

We did not see any funding for police stations in the budget. There was no funding for CFA stations in the Lowan electorate in our budget. We need to make sure we do have those key investments to ensure that there are good supports for people who live in country Victoria. Just because you live a long way from Melbourne does not mean you should miss out on quality infrastructure. Whether it is your schools and hospitals, whether it is safety for your community through your police stations or whether it is about connectivity and roads and rail, we deserve our fair share, and we have not seen it under this government, because money has gone to cost blowouts as opposed to supporting people to do their best and to recover from the COVID lockdowns.

Women have been hardest hit by the COVID lockdowns, and with 146,500 women now jobless it is just astonishing to hear some of the members of the Labor government saying they are going to help women get back to work by bringing in free three-year-old kindergarten. Women cannot get back to work if there is not a job for them. To have a paltry program in the government’s budget papers which will help to train women—in fact just 400 women—to enter the construction industry is completely disrespectful to the hundreds of thousands of women who are unemployed who do not want to work in the construction industry. They want to do what they love. They want to work in the industry that they trained to work in and that they have worked in for many, many years, whether it is in a fitness centre or whether it is in the beauty industry—it does not matter what it is. We need to support those industries to make sure women can get back to work in small businesses right across the state of Victoria.

We know that there is a shadow pandemic coming. We hear about it all the time from leading mental health professionals. And particularly in light of the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System it is astonishing to look through the budget papers and see that while there have been big media releases and big promises about investing in Victoria’s mental health system, which is in crisis, not enough money has been spent. In fact for every single mental health capital project which was designed to increase capacity to make sure people could get the mental health care that they deserve and that they could get into a mental health bed, Labor has failed to deliver. There are 11 projects in
total for mental health that were not delivered last year. Every single mental health project Labor failed to deliver—

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

Business interrupted under resolution of house today.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

**GRAMPIANS NATIONAL PARK**

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (19:00): (5084) My adjournment this evening is directed to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the action that I seek is that she rules out any reintroduction of dingoes into unfenced national, state or regional parks. The reason this has become an issue worth an adjournment is that there is a proposal in the Gariwerd draft management plan to do exactly that, and that is to attempt to bring dingoes back into an area that now is home to some of the great sheep farms of the district and is a well-known region for wool and for sheepmeat. The fact is that dingoes and sheep do not mix.

So this should not in any way be brought forward as something that the government should consider doing. I note, for example, that the government is spending money in this budget, $4.4 million over the forwards, on what is called ‘Victorian community pest management’. That specifically is to deal with risks and impacts on primary production, biodiversity and community health of wild dogs and other pests. Now, if we look at dingoes, they fail on every single account. First of all we have already talked about primary production. They clearly fail in that dingoes and sheep do not mix. But they also fail on biodiversity. There was a really interesting paper put forward by the University of New England which looked at the impacts of reintroducing dingoes on feral cats. Unfortunately the dingoes and the cats got along fine, so dingoes will not help with other feral pest management. Similarly with biodiversity, dingoes are not going to help you there.

The final point is that the Gariwerd draft management plan calls for the potential reintroduction of quolls, bandicoots and wallabies. All of those things—lovely furry things that people want to look at, and they do form part of the traditional landscape—are eaten by dingoes. So in no way is this a proposal that can be supported. It is against the interests of the economic base of the region, but it is also against the environmental and biodiversity aspirations that come with the Gariwerd draft management plan and must be rejected. The minister needs to step in now before this plan goes to its final reading and say, ‘Well, that’s just not something we’re going to be part of’. The government needs to step up and say, ‘We will not support putting dingoes into the Grampians National Park or any other national park’.

CELESTE MANN

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (19:03): (5085) I rise to raise a matter on the adjournment debate tonight for the attention of the Minister for Victim Support, and the action I seek is for her to do all in her power to support the dear loved ones left behind after the tragic death and murder of Celeste Manno. Celeste was a constituent of mine. She loved and she was loved, and the ripple in the pond, the hole that has been left in the lives of so many, cannot be underestimated. I have spoken to many members of Celeste’s family. Having an Italian background myself, I understand how big the family, an Italian family, is when one is lost and when one is lost so young.

Those who worked with Celeste in South Morang—that ripple in the pond. I know, with the Minister for Victim Support, that she and I are connected to this. Celeste was one of my constituents, as is her mother and as is her brother, Alessandro, but Celeste’s father, Tony Manno, is a constituent of the Minister for
Crime Prevention and Minister for Victim Support. The minister has told me herself that she had numerous people that were close to her who had contacted her and said that they knew Celeste. Celeste was a criminology student. She sought to make a difference. She lit up the workplace where she was. When her father and her brothers and other relatives carried her coffin at Whitehaven Receptions at the celebration of Celeste’s life, it was to the song *Forever Young*, and she will be forever young.

And we owe it to her to make a difference and ensure that her loss has not been in vain. Her boyfriend, Chris Ridsdale, and everyone else in the workplace where she worked is going to need an enormous amount of support. Her younger brother Alessandro, who is only 19, is going to need a lot of support. Her mother, Aggie Di Mauro, is going to need a lot of support. Her father, Tony Manno, is going to need a lot of support. Her uncles, her aunts, her cousins—they are all going to need a lot of support. That is why we have a victim support program in this state.

The time will come when we will need to look at other legislation and how we can ensure that things like that do not happen again, but in the meantime we need to support Celeste’s family. At the top of Celeste’s whiteboard as she started each day was the simple word ‘smile’, with the young woman believing that something as simple as this small action could brighten someone’s day. We need to look out and brighten the days of her loved ones who remain.

**NATIMUK LAKE WEIR**

*Ms Kealy* (Lowan) (19:06): (5086) My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the action I seek is for the government to immediately provide the required funding to complete the Natimuk weir project as soon as possible. The Natimuk Lake Foreshore Committee have done an outstanding job over generations now to look after that really important asset for the Natimuk community. However, there has been a problem that has come up over the last number of years around management of the lake and in terms of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning’s management requirements and their oversight of it; Parks Victoria’s oversight of it; and a community trust, the Otto Spehr Lake Natimuk Trust.

Now, it is very, very concerning that members of the Natimuk Lake committee have come to me because government departments are saying, ‘We don’t have the funds’. It is about $140 000 that is required, and these government departments are saying, ‘We don’t have the money to finish the upgrade of the Natimuk Lake outlet weir, so can we take control over your community trust fund?’—a trust fund which was set up to look after the entire Natimuk community, which is managed by the local committee and which is managed by local people for priority projects. The government wants to stick their hand into that little trust fund bucket and use that to be able to upgrade the outlet weir.

Now, this is not appropriate. It should be a completely separate entity, and I think it would send a chill down the spine of any community who manages a trust fund that the government should be seeking to try and eke out some of those dollars. This is money that should continue to be managed by the community, and I do encourage the minister for the environment to step in. It is not a big amount of money. As I said, it is about $140 000.

This weir has been somewhat in contention over about the last five years now, where there have been legal interventions and there have been threats put to community members. It has caused an enormous amount of stress and angst for local community members who have put in hundreds of hours of their own time trying to do their best for their own community. They should not be further penalised. The in-kind support and in-kind credits that they have in managing and looking after that natural asset for their community need to be recognised. I urge the government through this budget: if there is any money in there for community assets, let us fast-forward it to Natimuk Lake committee. Let us make sure we get that Natimuk Lake outlet weir finished finally so that all of the community can sit back, enjoy the lake and maybe float for a little while; they might be able to go for a ski or a swim over this summer. But let us get it done as soon as possible. The only way we can achieve that is by the minister providing at least $140 000 to get that weir finished sooner rather than later.
LE PAGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

**Mr TAK** (Clarinda) (19:09): (5087) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to provide an update on the next steps to deliver the minor capital works project at Le Page Primary School. It was a great pleasure to meet with the school principal, George Danson, last week to discuss the plans for the school’s fencing upgrades. George is a fierce advocate for his school community, and I was delighted to announce that the school has been allocated $176 125 as part of the Minor Capital Works Fund to fast-track this priority project.

Across the state, Victorian schools are receiving a funding boost to deliver small but important upgrades, thanks to the Andrews Labor government’s $70 million investment. Two other schools in the electorate of Clarinda were also successful under this fund. Those are Cheltenham East Primary School, which received $104 165 for the construction of the century park, and I was delighted to announce the funding with my good friend the hardworking member for Mordialloc on Monday. Spring Parks Primary School received $19 120 for an outdoor facility upgrade. These important projects are part of Victoria’s school building boom, ensuring our kids have classrooms and the bright future they deserve.

In the past five years the Victorian government has invested more than $9 billion in more than 1600 school upgrades, creating more than 10 000 construction works. So I thank the minister and I look forward to his response.

CO-WORKING INDUSTRY

**Mr SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (19:11): (5088) The matter I wish to raise is for the Premier and it is on behalf of the co-working industry of Victoria. We have a vibrant co-working industry, and today I have sent a letter to the Premier on behalf of 17 co-working spaces that are desperate for support to kickstart their industry going forward. These are business startups. These are people that potentially have the jobs of the future, the ideas of the future and the industries of the future in Victoria. But unfortunately during lockdown in Victoria many of these co-working spaces that operate within the Melbourne CBD have not been able to get many of their smaller businesses and startups back into their co-working spaces.

In particular the co-working industry would like the Premier to review a rent protection measure to coincide with the extension of the commonwealth government’s JobKeeper program. This will enable many of those startups to be supported by these co-working spaces. Unlike commercial landlords, the co-working industry is supported by those that actually run the co-working spaces. They are mentored and they are supported, and the great thing about these industries is that the space is a collaborative environment. You have businesses working together, sharing ideas and in many cases sharing resources and being able to hatch these ideas together in these spaces.

I particularly want to thank Brad Krauskopf from Hub Australia, Michael Benson from Workplace365 and Jeremy Ellis from LaunchPad, who have driven this, along with Cliff Ho from The Commons. There are 17 different co-working spaces that have written to the Premier, and I am passing this on on behalf of them. There are also 175 co-working spaces in Victoria, representing some 50 000 staff.

This is a great opportunity. When we talk about getting Victoria back to work and back in business, I could not think of a better way of doing that than by kickstarting these industries going forward. Startups are our future, young people are our future, and certainly those that have the ideas that can grow businesses and grow industries are something we should all be supporting in this place. I ask the Premier to take action and provide the support and the rent relief going forward so young people can get into these industries, get into the co-working spaces and hatch the jobs of tomorrow.

NORTHCOTE HIGH SCHOOL

**Ms THEOPHANOUS** (Northcote) (19:14): (5089) My adjournment is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is that the minister join me in visiting the incredible students, teachers...
and staff at Northcote High School. Minister, I know that like me you understand the valued place Northcote High occupies in our community. It is one of the largest public schools in Victoria, and it has been shaping young minds for almost 100 years, with some pretty notable alumni, mind you, including the late John Cain, Jnr. I know you understand their pressures because of the work that we have done together to support Northcote High over the past two years. Indeed one of my most cherished moments so far as the member for Northcote was the official opening of Northcote High’s new performing arts hub last year—a truly modern and indeed award-winning facility, a testament to how much new, modern buildings can add to the learning experience of students.

That is what this is all about, Minister—giving our young people every chance, every opportunity to explore their talents and grow into curious and confident young adults. I do not have to tell you that as our community grows, Northcote High is experiencing serious enrolment pressures, and with current facilities it is just hitting capacity. I know Chris Keating and the team at the Victorian School Building Authority are well aware of those pressures and the needs of the school.

Principal Sue Harrap and the school council have been working alongside me to raise some of the more pressing points, like the state of the heritage hall and the limited open space. Last month the school community reached out to share some of the impacts and challenges they are experiencing in the face of these pressures through a petition tabled by my good friend and our Labor colleague in the other place Sheena Watt. Their petition received almost 2000 signatures from a school community who are passionate about seeing Northcote High be everything we know that it can be. With some innovative design, I believe we can create something truly special at Northcote High. Minister, I know the Northcote High School community would love to have you visit and to share with you the incredible opportunities that new facilities would provide. I hope to see you there.

KENSINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (19:16): (5090) My adjournment is also for the Minister for Education, and the action I would like to request is that the minister take a tour of Kensington Primary School to see for himself the excellent work that the staff do but also to see the urgent maintenance works that need to be done at this school and that he then work with me, the principal and the Victorian School Building Authority to determine how we can meet these needs. Over the course of this year school communities across Melbourne have been tested in ways we never imagined. Teachers, parents and kids have all shown, under the toughest of conditions, that they are adaptable, resourceful and incredibly resilient, and while everyone is relieved that kids are now physically back in school, kids at Kensington Primary have returned to facilities that really do need some TLC.

Before I talk about this, I would like to thank this government for the investments in new schools and school repairs in my electorate. After working closely with the community for a number of years I was really excited to see $24 million for significant school improvements at Mount Alexander College, just over the border of my electorate, and a commitment to a new primary school in North Melbourne, which will hopefully ease overcrowding at the existing North Melbourne Primary. These projects are very welcome, and I really look forward to working with the community to make sure their views are taken into consideration in these new projects. I would also like to acknowledge the recent commitments to funding at Carlton Gardens Primary School and a few years ago the significant rebuild at Carlton Primary, which I have had the pleasure to be involved in, and the new school which will open shortly in Docklands. I would like to thank the government and the community for work on these important projects.

It is now time to fix up Kensington Primary, which needs significant repairs. In 2018 a number of parents approached me about desperately needed repairs at the school, and I am proud to have helped them secure more than $260 000 to make the school safer and more accessible. A ramp is now going in to make sure students, parents and staff in wheelchairs can access the school. The staff toilets were fixed after staff spent a long time using a portaloo in the playground, and some of the safety issues have been fixed. However, there are some significant issues that remain. Some of them are pretty
dangerous for staff and students. Parts of the school are 150 years old. Window frames are rotting, the office floor is sinking, and currently staff mark out the uneven floors with masking tape to avoid tripping over. Mould was recently dealt with, but the rusty guttering that lets water into the bricks and plaster was not fixed, which means the problem will keep repeating. Some sewerage pipes have been cracked by tree roots and need replacing. The school is probably in need of restumping. One playground was pulled out because it was unsafe, but there is no funding to replace it, and another playground looks like it is about to fall to the same fate.

Parents have already fundraised enough to fix the school hall, which was started under the Rudd Building the Education Revolution program but never properly finished. Parents have also fundraised to give the school a new playground, doors, carpets, painting, air conditioning and to address a termite problem. I commend their dedication, but it should not be up to generous parents to reach into their pockets to fix these issues when they have done it so tough this year. I look forward to working with the minister and hope he can come and visit the school— (Time expired)

**LE MANA PASIFIKA YOUTH PROJECT**

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (19:19): (5091) The adjournment matter I wish to raise is with the Minister for Youth and concerns the recent funding in the 2020–21 state budget for the Le Mana Pasifika youth project. The action that I seek is that the minister provide further details on exactly how the funding the Le Mana Pasifika youth project will receive will benefit my community in Narre Warren South. It was great to see that $600 000 was announced in the state budget to provide support for Pasifika youth and their families in my electorate. The Pasifika community make a significant contribution to our area, especially in regard to the arts, local cultural events, as well as sports such as rugby. The HP Boyz are a local rap group with a very proud Pasifika background. They have achieved international fame while also becoming community leaders to Pasifika youth, who look for direction and guidance from their peers and elders.

I am very proud to represent the diverse Narre Warren South community, and this government understands that specialised services for people from various backgrounds are often required to have the greatest impact on people’s daily lives. I hope that continued funding and investment in specialised cultural services help to create better pathways for our multicultural youth and facilitate social and educational engagement while also providing mental health support. I would appreciate it if the minister could provide any further information on the services and the support that the Le Mana Pasifika youth project funding will provide to Narre Warren South, and as always I look forward to sharing the minister’s response with my community.

**NEPEAN HIGHWAY-MOUNT ELIZA WAY-WOORALLA DRIVE, MORNINGTON, TRAFFIC CAMERAS**

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (19:21): (5092) I raise a matter this evening for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, who I am delighted to see in the chamber. The action I am seeking is the installation of cameras at the intersection of Nepean Highway, Wooralla Drive and Mount Eliza Way in Mount Eliza. Now, I do not want to be too hard on the minister, but I did write to him on this matter three months ago and I have not yet received a response. I know he has been busy putting extra bus services into the marginal seat of Nepean, trying to shore up the fortunes of the member for Nepean down there, but this is I think an important safety issue. In that letter I included an email from a constituent, and I will just read a few bits from that email:

At about 10.01 am I was, during my daily walk, crossing Nepean Highway … at the corner … with Mt Eliza Way and Wooralla Drive. I was midway across the first 3 lanes. Traffic had stopped at the red lights, when I heard a horn sounding to my right and a black SUV … hooned through, dodging a car already stopped … Had it not then changed lanes yet again … I would be dead.

…

… several drivers were in shock, as I believe was I. I kept walking—adrenaline can be a helpful thing— and I think I would agree on that—
and when I returned home I did report the incident to the Mornington police … Unfortunately they really can’t do anything, as that intersection does not have any surveillance cameras.

My question is—what action needs to be taken to install … cameras at that intersection? There are often accidents there … the policeman I spoke with admitted it is a bad intersection.

I can certainly support that view. This is an intersection that has a large private school on one corner, a very busy state primary school on the other corner, and of course it is the intersection with the Nepean Highway. It is a very busy stretch and there have been issues, including one involving a member of my own staff a number of years ago.

This is just another location in the Mornington electorate that desperately needs an investment in terms of road funding. I have raised in this place frequently the issue of Urrala Road in Mount Martha; the issue of Forest Drive in Mount Martha; the lack of a school safety zone outside Balcombe Grammar School on the Nepean Highway; congestion on Bungower Road, the main access to Peninsula Link; and congestion on Mornington-Tyabb Road. There are a significant number of roadworks and road safety measures needed in the Mornington electorate. They are in some cases, I appreciate, big-ticket items and probably not appropriate to be raising in the context of a request in an adjournment debate, but the issue I raise is a modest amount of money, and I urge the minister to take action on that front.

ELONERA PRESCHOOL

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (19:24): (5093) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Early Childhood Education. The action I seek is for the minister to join me at Elonera kindergarten in Parkdale to hear about their future needs and the need to expand those facilities into the future. Elonera, along with so many of our kinders in the City of Kingston, have been extraordinary during 2020. It is a year none of us expected or ever planned for, but our early childhood educators have been amazing during this time. We have seen them adapt to virtual online settings to support families and their students to get through. As a parent of a four-year-old I could not think of a harder task than to keep them invested in their learning, but seeing some of the ways that they have adapted through virtual learnings, through packs that have been delivered to homes or been picked up, this is the innovation that our early childhood educators bring each and every day to their work and their role.

We are so very proud of their efforts, and we are embarking on such a significant agenda in early childhood education—truly revolutionary—with the universal three-year-old kinder being rolled out. Of course from six local government areas it is now expanding in 2021 into 15 local government areas, getting to 79, including the City of Kingston, in 2022. It is an extraordinary undertaking, but we know how critical those first 1000 days are in the development of our young people. It is an extraordinary time for parents as they see their little ones unearth their imagination and their creativity in that play-based learning setting, and I could not think of a better professional job to get involved in right now than early childhood education. We want to see more teachers. We need 6000 more early childhood educators to steer our young people, the next generation of Victorian young people, into the future as well. It is an exciting time in early childhood education.

But we are not done there. Of course a significant announcement in this budget was that for 2021 kinder would be free. This takes the pressure off our families and sets them up for 2021, making sure that on average there will be a $2000 saving across our kinder providers. So we are really excited for the expansion and growth that is needed to occur to cater for the rollout of universal three-year-old kinder, and that is why an expansion of Elonera Preschool is so very critical. We had some upgrades and refurbs a year or so ago, which were really well received and really set them up. They have got a beautiful program with their bush kinder on the corner of Victoria Street near Mordi-Brae’s facilities, and into the future we want to set them up and investigate how we can expand them out further in partnership with the City of Kingston.

So I am really excited the new minister is on deck. I hope one of the first visits that she makes out in the City of Kingston will be to Elonera Preschool. She will be always welcome, and I will be inviting
her down and asking her to hear from my community at Elonera Preschool what the building priorities are into the future.

RESPONSES

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie—Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (19:27): I do want to acknowledge the member for Mornington for his adjournment matter in my capacity as Minister for Roads and Road Safety, particularly on the road safety, and the action he is seeking in terms of cameras at the intersection of Nepean Highway, Wooralla Drive and Mount Eliza Way. He has written to me, as he outlined in the matter. I have given him a commitment to get back to him as soon as possible on that matter in writing and to follow it up.

I would also like to acknowledge the other members’ contributions tonight. The member for Ripon has asked for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change to take action in terms of the reintroduction of dingoes, particularly in relation to the Gariwerd draft management plan and what is outlined in that, and I will pass that on to the minister for the environment.

The member for Yan Yean, in a very impassioned contribution and adjournment on the tragic death of Celeste Manno that really rocked our city—a beautiful soul—has asked the Minister for Victim Support what services and availability there is to help that loving family in her electorate. The member for Lowan had another matter for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change concerning funding for the Natimuk Lake weir project, and that will be passed on to the minister for the environment. The member for Clarinda has been busy with the Parliamentary Secretary for Education, and he is wanting an update on the capital works for the Le Page Primary School. We will ensure that the Deputy Premier gets onto that. The member for Caulfield had an action for the Premier. He has written to the Premier today considering the co-working industry support, and that will be responded to.

The member for Northcote, a very passionate advocate for the Northcote High School—John Cain Jr’s old high school—was calling for the Deputy Premier to come and visit that school and see its growing pressures. It is almost 100 years old, and it is a very important institution—as is the Kensington Primary School near me, and the member for Melbourne has asked for the education minister to also visit that school and look at some of the maintenance issues and some of the pressures on that school. The member for Narre Warren South has a matter for the Minister for Youth concerning the Le Mana Pasifika youth project and the carve-up of the $600 000 in the state budget for youth services. The member for Mornington—I have addressed his matter and said I will get back to him. The member for Mordialloc—his concern was for the Minister for Early Childhood to come to the City of Kingston in one of her first visits to visit the Elonera Preschool and see firsthand the wonderful work that is occurring there.

I think they are all the matters that will be referred to the appropriate ministers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The house now stands adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned 7.29 pm.