



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Wednesday 17 June 2026

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

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Juliana Addison, Martin Cameron, Jordan Crugnale, Daniela De Martino, Wayne Farnham, Lauren Kathage, Nathan Lambert, Paul Mercurio, Kim O’Keeffe, Meng Heang Tak and Iwan Walters

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Ben Carroll (from 28 July 2026)

Jacinta Allan (from 27 September 2023 to 28 July 2026)

Daniel Andrews (to 27 September 2023)

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Gabrielle Williams (from 28 July 2026)

Ben Carroll (from 28 September 2023 to 28 July 2026)

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Jess Wilson (from 18 November 2025)

Brad Battin (from 27 December 2024 to 18 November 2025)

John Pesutto (to 27 December 2024)

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

David Southwick (from 28 January 2026)

Sam Groth (from 27 December 2024 to 28 January 2026)

David Southwick (to 27 December 2024)

Leader of the Nationals

Danny O’Brien (from 26 November 2024)

Peter Walsh (to 26 November 2024)

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Anthony Carbines (from 15 April 2026)

Mary-Anne Thomas (to 15 April 2026)

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury (from 13 October 2025)

Bridget Vallence (from 7 January 2025 to 13 October 2025)

James Newbury (to 7 January 2025)

Members of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	McCurdy, Tim	Ovens Valley	Nat
Andrews, Daniel ¹	Mulgrave	ALP	McGhie, Steve	Melton	ALP
Battin, Brad	Berwick	Lib	McLeish, Cindy	Eildon	Lib
Benham, Jade	Mildura	Nat	Marchant, Alison	Bellarine	ALP
Britnell, Roma	South-West Coast	Lib	Marsh, Anthony ⁹	Nepean	Lib
Brooks, Colin	Bundoora	ALP	Matthews-Ward, Kathleen	Broadmeadows	ALP
Bull, Josh	Sunbury	ALP	Mercurio, Paul	Hastings	ALP
Bull, Tim	Gippsland East	Nat	Mullahy, John	Glen Waverley	ALP
Cameron, Martin	Morwell	Nat	Newbury, James	Brighton	Lib
Carbines, Anthony	Ivanhoe	ALP	O'Brien, Danny	Gippsland South	Nat
Carroll, Ben	Niddrie	ALP	O'Brien, Michael	Malvern	Lib
Cheeseman, Darren ²	South Barwon	Ind	O'Keeffe, Kim	Shepparton	Nat
Cianflone, Anthony	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Pallas, Tim ¹⁰	Werribee	ALP
Cleeland, Annabelle	Euroa	Nat	Pearson, Danny	Essendon	ALP
Connolly, Sarah	Laverton	ALP	Pesutto, John	Hawthorn	Lib
Couzens, Christine	Geelong	ALP	Read, Tim ¹¹	Brunswick	Greens
Crewther, Chris	Mornington	Lib	Richards, Pauline	Cranbourne	ALP
Crugnale, Jordan	Bass	ALP	Richardson, Tim	Mordialloc	ALP
D'Ambrosio, Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Riordan, Richard	Polwarth	Lib
De Martino, Daniela	Monbulk	ALP	Rowswell, Brad	Sandringham	Lib
de Vietri, Gabrielle	Richmond	Greens	Sandell, Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Dimopoulos, Steve	Oakleigh	ALP	Settle, Michaela	Eureka	ALP
Edbrooke, Paul	Frankston	ALP	Smith, Ryan ¹²	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Farnham, Wayne	Narracan	Lib	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Foster, Eden ³	Mulgrave	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
Fowles, Will ⁴	Ringwood	Ind	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Groth, Sam ⁵	Nepean	Lib	Theophanous, Kat	Northcote	ALP
Guy, Matthew	Bulleen	Lib	Thomas, Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Halfpenny, Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Tilley, Bill	Benambra	Lib
Hall, Katie	Footscray	ALP	Vallence, Bridget	Evelyn	Lib
Hamer, Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Vulin, Emma	Pakenham	ALP
Haylett, Martha	Ripon	ALP	Walsh, Peter	Murray Plains	Nat
Hibbins, Sam ^{6,7}	Prahran	Ind	Walters, Iwan	Greenvale	ALP
Hilakari, Mathew	Point Cook	ALP	Ward, Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Hodgett, David	Croydon	Lib	Wells, Kim	Rowville	Lib
Horne, Melissa	Williamstown	ALP	Werner, Nicole ¹³	Warrandyte	Lib
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Westaway, Rachel ¹⁴	Prahran	Lib
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP	Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib
Lister, John ⁸	Werribee	ALP			

¹ Resigned 27 September 2023

² ALP until 29 April 2024

³ Sworn in 6 February 2024

⁴ ALP until 5 August 2023

⁵ Resigned 13 February 2026

⁶ Greens until 1 November 2024

⁷ Resigned 23 November 2024

⁸ Sworn in 4 March 2025

⁹ Sworn in 2 June 2026

¹⁰ Resigned 6 January 2025

¹¹ Died 19 September 2026

¹² Resigned 7 July 2023

¹³ Sworn in 3 October 2023

¹⁴ Sworn in 4 March 2025

Party abbreviations

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

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Wednesday 17 June 2026

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

Bills

Corrections Amendment Bill 2026

Introduction

Paul HAMER (Box Hill – Minister for Local Government, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Corrections) (09:34): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Corrections Act 1986 to provide that a prisoner's right to be in the open air is subject to operational considerations and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (09:35): I just ask for a brief explanation of the bill.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill – Minister for Local Government, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Corrections) (09:35): The bill responds to the recent Supreme Court decision regarding prisoners' access to open air while in high-security management units. It introduces qualifications on their right to open air as well as limits any liability of the state arising from the court decision.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Local Government Legislation Amendment (Stronger Communities) Bill 2026

Introduction and first reading

Paul HAMER (Box Hill – Minister for Local Government, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Corrections) (09:36): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Local Government Act 2020 to enhance the integrity and governance standards of councils, to enable the prescription of a Fair Jobs Code and to make provision for the appointment of a local government Fair Jobs Code regulator and to amend the City of Melbourne Act 2001 to increase the permitted ratio between the lowest and highest differential rates if the Melbourne City Council uses the net annual value system of valuation and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:36): I seek a brief explanation of the bill.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill – Minister for Local Government, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Corrections) (09:36): This bill will implement recommendations from the Sandon report and the Whittlesea commission of inquiry to enhance council governance and processes. It provides a regulatory framework to implement a local government fair jobs code and amends the City of Melbourne Act 2001 to enable the Melbourne City Council to levy differential rates, bringing it into line with most councils in Victoria.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment (Facilitating Timely Reporting) Bill 2026*Introduction*

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:37): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011 to facilitate timely reporting by the IBAC and for other purposes.

For too long there has been a cover-up occurring in Victoria. There has been a cover-up occurring for corruption that is infesting our state. What the coalition is seeking to do today is move a bill to make sure that when IBAC do work, their reports are tabled fast. We want their work tabled. We look at what has happened recently with Operation Richmond, which commenced seven years ago. Seven years ago that investigation commenced, and today we are still seeing the run-around on that report. Frankly, I think most Victorians would say the court system is being misused. Whether or not that opinion is right, most Victorians would say it. They would say, 'How, after seven years, can a corruption investigation report not be made public?' We have seen the chief integrity agency IBAC publicly call for action on the speedy release of their work – well, so it should be. The test now for this chamber is: will this government continue to allow the cover-up? Will they allow the cover-up, because they are about to vote on it. The government is about to vote as to whether or not our corruption reports can have the light that they deserve to receive and the public scrutiny that they deserve. This is a test for the government. This legislation will enable speedy reporting, fast reporting, and a new legislative requirement that these reports are tabled speedily – and so it should be the case.

That does not take away from the court's capacity in certain limited circumstances in relation to natural justice, and neither should that be the case when it comes to certain very unusual circumstances. When it comes to health and safety, these types of issues will still be as they should be – in the purview of the courts. This bill in no way has constitutional concerns because the courts should still have the capacity to intervene where it is appropriate and, as I said, where it is an unusual circumstance, not for people who, in a lot of Victorians' minds, are simply using the courts to stop publication because they do not want their name bandied around for behaviour they may or may not have committed. It is wrong. It has to stop.

We saw the train wreck interview last night where calls and questions about cover-ups were put to the Premier. This goes to the heart of this bill, the urgency of this bill. The Premier was asked about the cover-ups that are occurring in Victoria, and four times she refused to answer. The test is now with the Premier. It is with the Labor government. Will they support the introduction of this bill? Will they allow the fast, speedy transparency when it comes to corruption work that we all deserve, that Victoria needs to see, to let the sunlight in? Not only will this be a legislative requirement if this bill is put through in place, but it will allow the state government, in circumstances where you see someone misusing the court system, to intervene and participate in any application put by a person to the court where it is believed to be vexatious and to have the power of that law behind them, so the courts can hear from the state that we need to start to balance transparency more than certain individuals covering up their behaviour. That is what I think most Victorians believe. Today is an important day. We are calling on the government to vote for the urgent introduction of this bill.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon) (09:42): I rise to oppose the motion put by the member for Brighton. In doing so, I think what we have seen from the member for Brighton this morning is yet more hysteria. I would encourage the member for Brighton that he needs to really speak up, because I am here in the back stalls and I can barely hear him at times because he is yelling –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, sledging is not relevant.

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

Danny PEARSON: I listened to the audition for the leadership by the member for Brighton. What has become clear and apparent is that there is a –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Members will cease interjecting while members are on their feet. Everyone has a right to be heard.

Danny PEARSON: Thank you, Speaker. In my time here watching and observing the member for Brighton quite closely, it is clear that he is an untrustworthy individual.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, firstly, I take offence. I ask him to withdraw.

The SPEAKER: The member for Essendon will withdraw.

Danny PEARSON: I withdraw.

James Newbury: Secondly, on relevance, the continued sledging is not relevant to the proceeding. This is a procedural motion.

The SPEAKER: The member for Essendon knows this is a procedural motion.

Danny PEARSON: Touchy, touchy. We are just warming up. Again, as soon as you look sideways at this bloke, he goes to water. The reality is that this is nothing more –

James Newbury interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Brighton, that is inappropriate.

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

The SPEAKER: Member for Essendon, come back to the procedural motion.

Danny PEARSON: This is nothing more than a stunt. What is clear here is that this is an opportunity for the opposition to grandstand on issues where there is inherent complexity, because what you have got to do is strike the right balance between unreasonable delays in completing and publishing investigative reports, including due to litigation, and the fundamental principles of procedural fairness affecting individuals. The issue here is that you need to get that balance right. I have not spent a lot of time in relation to working in the justice portfolio, but what I do know is that IBAC forms an integral part of our justice system and that if you have an action that has an impact in relation to the way in which IBAC will do its job, it will have cascading implications across the broader sector. This is indeed reflected in IBAC's own submission to Parliament's Integrity and Oversight Committee inquiry into IBAC's legislative framework, where IBAC says:

IBAC is one part of Victoria's integrity system and changes to one part of the framework can have implications across the entire system. Any amendments to the legislative framework need to be considered in the context of this system ...

What we are seeing from the member for Brighton is that he has got form – I know he might not like it, but let the truth be told – when it comes to being a low-altitude flyer who is all for the likes, all for the grabs, all for the hits. There is no substance. There is no detail.

The SPEAKER: The member for Essendon will come back to the procedural motion.

Danny PEARSON: The issue here, in opposing this motion, is that it demonstrates the fact that those opposite are not looking at this carefully and in a considered way. The reality is that this is a complex piece of legislation. The broader architecture in relation to integrity and oversight is that you have got integrated parts, As IBAC say themselves, you need to be very clear about what you might do in one part, for it affects another, and that is why you need to go and do the work. Things like this are more than just a stunt for the Assembly to kick off on a Wednesday morning. You have got to do the work, and you have got to do it properly. You do need to make sure you have the balance right

between unnecessary and unreasonable delays and a right for an individual to procedural fairness. Those opposite have got form when it comes to trampling over conventions and trampling over what I think is fair and proper process, and this is yet again evidence of doing just that. The government is not supportive of this stunt by the member for Brighton. We will continue to do the serious work that needs to be done to get these things right, because it is complex work, and you need to weigh up carefully the implications of these sorts of actions. The sort of behaviour that we can see from those opposite has got nothing to do with substance; it has got nothing to do with improving integrity. It is all about a cheap hit.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:47): In all honesty, this is getting embarrassing. This attempt by this corrupt Allan Labor government to –

Anthony Carbines: On a point of order, Speaker –

Danny O'Brien interjected.

Anthony Carbines: I will follow the forms of the house, Leader of the Nationals, based on previous behaviour and will again go to relevance on this matter. This is a procedural matter, and if members cannot follow those arrangements, then I will be raising further points of order.

The SPEAKER: I remind all members who are speaking on this procedural debate to stick to the procedural debate. It is not a difficult thing to do.

Jade BENHAM: Now that I am allowed to continue, I was getting to the point that it is getting embarrassing for this corrupt government to keep blocking –

Anthony Carbines: I do raise a point of order, Speaker. This is not relevant to the procedural matter before the house. If the member cannot confine her comments to the procedural motion before the house, she should sit down.

The SPEAKER: There are reasons for a bill to be introduced to the chamber. I would ask members to stay with the reasons why the bill needs to be introduced to the chamber.

Jade BENHAM: I appreciate being mansplained on how procedural motions work in this place.

The SPEAKER: I do not accept that you have referred to me as mansplaining. Irrespective of whom it was directed at, all comments are made through the Chair.

Anthony Carbines: On a point of order, Speaker, I take offence to the comments from the member for Mildura directed at me and ask her to withdraw.

The SPEAKER: The member for Mildura will withdraw.

Jade BENHAM: I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: The member for Mildura to continue on the procedural debate.

Jade BENHAM: If I can finish a sentence this morning: it is getting embarrassing, the lengths that this corrupt Allan Labor government will go to to cover up the biggest corruption scandal this state has ever seen. The introduction of this bill is a key part in actually being able to answer some of the questions that Victorians are asking right now, because so far we have seen, like the car crash interview on the ABC last night with the Premier, that we are still failing to get any level of transparency or any answers whatsoever, and Victorians have had enough. And blocking the introduction of this bill to enable an efficient passage of these reports that will expose the facts behind this, again, corrupt Allan Labor government – a description – is embarrassing, and Victorians are angry.

As soon as Geoffrey Watson had dropped his report in Queensland and mentioned a conservative figure of \$15 billion, that hit Victorians hard. They understand how many hospitals that is, how many new schools that is, how many police that is. They understand that their tax dollars have been funnelled

into the pockets of criminals, bikies and organised crime by this government, under this watch. And the current Premier is the architect of that. She has been the minister since the beginning. We want answers.

Anthony Carbines: On a point of order, Speaker, this is a procedural debate with regard to whether the house will consider the bill that has been sought to be brought forward by the Manager of Opposition Business.

Brad Rowsell interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Sandringham, you are warned.

Anthony Carbines: We have heard no arguments from the member as to how that is relevant, and I would draw your attention to relevance in relation to the procedural matter.

The SPEAKER: Yes. Member for Mildura to come back to the procedural debate, please.

Jade BENHAM: If the Leader of the House was listening to the argument – perhaps part of the problem of why Victorians are so angry right now is that those of us on this side of the house are trying to uncover the truth. We are just trying to uncover the truth; that is why this bill should be introduced.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (09:52): We are seeing a paucity of substance from those opposite and a lot of emotion, and I think what is most disturbing are the attempts to distort and diminish the significance of and the complexity of matters at hand, noting they have been reluctant to support a definition of ‘corrupt conduct’. It is also inappropriate to cherry-pick one element in an entire integrity system and effectively run on that for the purposes of media, when in fact we know we must not underestimate the importance of each and every part of the integrity system. And that is what is at risk when transacting a bill in this manner which, I would dare say, undermines and does not in any way go to all facets of the appropriateness in terms of the requisite overhaul of the integrity system as a whole. I am also going to quote IBAC’s own submission to the Parliament’s Integrity and Oversight Committee inquiry into IBAC’s legislative framework:

IBAC is one part of Victoria’s integrity system and changes to one part of the framework can have implications across the entire system. Any amendments to the legislative framework need to be considered in the context of this system ...

Hence a domino effect with who knows what consequences could effectively undermine the purposes which we are all seeking here, and they are to ensure that integrity is supported and maintained in our great state of Victoria, which at least the members on this side of the house love. We love our state, and we certainly back it in at every moment we can. We respect the individuals that work hard in our integrity system, and because of that, we must show them due respect and allow any amendments to the integrity system to factor in the entire integrity system as a whole and not cherry-pick one element, which could have perilous consequences in the near or distant future.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (09:55): This bill needs to be introduced for one simple reason: justice delayed is justice denied. Whilst those on that side can make jokes around this, the reality is I have sat here and seen what has happened when it comes to some of the IBAC reports in Victoria. It is a shame in this state that the Operation Richmond report has not been released, and not just for people like Tony Bates, who may have been caught up with it and who has since been appointed as Secretary of the Department of Education. I think the community would love to know what he did, how he was involved and what corruption was involved with Tony Bates and the discussions with Daniel Andrews.

Anthony Carbines: On a point of order, Speaker, for members to use cowards castle to slander and attack public servants is out of order, and I say that that should be withdrawn.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order, but I do ask the member for Berwick to speak to the procedural debate.

Brad BATTIN: That is the exact reason why we need to bring in this legislation, because we need to understand who in the government has been involved in the discussions between Peter Marshall, the United Firefighters Union, Daniel Andrews, Tony Bates and Eccles. The problem here is when it does not get released. This is for people like Stephanie Rotarangi, who was a fantastic leader in the CFA, who stood up for integrity, who stood up for the CFA, who did everything right to ensure the protection of her members. It is for Jane Garrett, who stood up for what was right, who did the right thing. Operation Richmond will show that Jane Garrett was right and Daniel Andrews was 100 per cent wrong. There are so many ministers still sitting at the table today who need to be named in this report, who need to go out there and publicly apologise. Operation Richmond will tear down what happened between Daniel Andrews and Peter Marshall, the corrupt behaviour in this state.

We know that this government loves to deny justice here in Victoria, and let us be honest, it is not new. That is why it is retrospective. But we can look back on this Labor government, whether it is red shirts rorts, whether it is a previous Speaker who stole money from the Victorian people, which this government covered up –

Anthony Carbines: On a point of order, Speaker, I am still struggling to find how the member for Berwick is being relevant to the procedural matter before the house in relation to his contribution.

The SPEAKER: Member for Berwick, I ask you to come back to the procedural debate.

Brad BATTIN: It is so important that we introduce this legislation, because we have got a Labor government that continues to hide corruption here in Victoria, and as I said, they have a history of it. That is why we need to introduce it. A Speaker and a Deputy Speaker both stole money from this Parliament. The Labor Party stole \$380,000 from Victorian taxpayers. It is important that it goes to IBAC when we find out the truth, because this government thinks that if they pay it back, it is okay. Going by that scenario, those that are doing aggravated burglaries and stealing cars, if they return the cars, then they should get off and not get charged at all. The reality is they will get bail, so they do not have any stress in this state. They have got no stress with what they steal. No wonder car theft is at the highest level it has ever been. This legislation is vital to ensure –

Anthony Carbines: Speaker, I again renew my point of order with regard to relevance to the procedural debate before the house.

The SPEAKER: Come back to the procedural debate, member for Berwick.

Brad BATTIN: That is why IBAC in Victoria needs to have the powers to investigate, to ensure natural justice. I have spoken specifically about this with the member for Brighton. The one thing we could not take away was natural justice, because we have spoken to people who need the opportunity to look at those reports. But why is it that any IBAC report that does not involve the Victorian Labor Party seems to have been tabled and IBAC reports involving the Labor Party are all being hidden and never get released? That is why this legislation is so vital, because on this side we know that those that are investigating parliamentarians must have free rein to do so to ensure that any corrupt behaviour is called out. And any person who is found guilty of corrupt behaviour should be charged; I do not care where you sit in this place.

That includes previous premiers and current premiers if it is in relation to something like a \$15 billion cost to the Victorian taxpayers for their Big Build projects. We should be able to 100 per cent look at what the Premier is doing at the moment. IBAC should be able to do that, but not just do the report and use it as a doorstep later so no-one sees it. That report should be released to the public. Operation Richmond needs to be out before the election. Only then can we have faith in the system.

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (10:00): I rise to oppose the motion by the member for Brighton, and I might just echo the comments made by the Leader of the House with respect to the member for Berwick's contribution. I do think it is very important that if people are going to come into this place and make very serious allegations of corruption they should take them, as the Leader of the House

said, to the appropriate integrity bodies. Certainly they should not bring them to this place and then fail to do so. I thought the comments made by the member for Berwick with respect to Tony Bates should be addressed in that manner and not in the manner –

Brad Battin interjected.

Nathan LAMBERT: For the benefit of the member for Berwick, I will reiterate my point. These things should not be brought up cheaply in this place but should be brought up through the full process. If the member has serious integrity questions to raise, the member knows where to take them. It is particularly important on integrity matters that we follow the correct process. There is a correct process here. All members are aware that the Integrity and Oversight Committee – the chair is here with us – had an extensive investigation into the adequacy of the legislative framework around IBAC.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Nathan LAMBERT: Speaker, if I can raise a point of order, it is very difficult to make my contribution with constant interjections from the member for Berwick.

The SPEAKER: I have called members to order.

Nathan LAMBERT: Thank you. As I was saying –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for Brighton, you are very close to being removed from the chamber this morning.

Nathan LAMBERT: As I was saying, the Integrity and Oversight Committee completed a report. We have read that report. The government has responded to that report. The report addresses recommendation 27, which is pertinent to what we are discussing. There is an expert reference group being set up and there is an appropriate process being followed, and we will see the output and the further consideration of that process when it is complete. My personal preference is that instead of addressing this matter today we follow that appropriate process, which is particularly important for integrity matters, and that we should move to members statements, which are coming up next. I know the member for Pascoe Vale has some important matters to raise on behalf of his community. I am certainly hoping to raise some matters with respect to the Yarra Avenue drop-off for Reservoir East Primary School, where there are some safety issues. The school crossing there is not quite in the right place. It is a fantastic local school run by James Cumming and Linda Lavelle, and they do a great job, but there are some issues there that I would like to raise in my members statement.

As I have set out for you, I think the matters raised by the opposition here are best dealt with by the well-established process that all of us have already agreed upon, including through the work of the Integrity and Oversight Committee. I reject the motion by the member for Brighton.

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

Leave refused.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (31): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Gabrielle de Vietri, Wayne Farnham, Will Fowles, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Anthony Marsh, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Tim Read, Richard Riordan, Ellen Sandell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway, Jess Wilson

Noes (52): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Motion defeated.

Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026

Introduction and first reading

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (10:09): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Crimes Act 1958 in relation to recruitment of children to engage in criminal activity and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:09): I seek a brief explanation of the bill.

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (10:09): This bill will amend the Crimes Act 1958 to introduce a new offence for recruiting a child to commit offences, with a maximum penalty of at least 15 years. The new offence will have a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment (VEET Strategic Review and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Introduction and first reading

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (10:10): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Act 2007 to support the operation of the Victorian energy upgrades program and to make amendments consequential to the renaming of that act, to amend the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990, the Electricity Industry Act 2000, the Gas Industry Act 2001 and other acts and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:10): I seek a brief explanation of the bill.

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (10:10): This bill implements the recommendations of the Victorian energy upgrades strategic review to support Victoria's transition to cheaper energy-efficient appliances and modernise the program, streamlining processes, reducing red tape and increasing the Essential Services Commission's regulatory powers. It will include amendments to strengthen energy consumer protections and to maintain effective regulation of the rehabilitation of the Hazelwood mine.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Fair Work (Commonwealth Powers) Amendment Bill 2026*Introduction and first reading*

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (10:11): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Fair Work (Commonwealth Powers) Act 2009 and the Victoria Police Act 2013 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:11): I seek a brief explanation of the bill.

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (10:11): The bill amends the Fair Work referral act to expand the category of matters that can be the subject of enterprise bargaining agreements and determinations in relation to law enforcement officers and applies these protections in the same way as for other public sector employees. The bill also extends the jurisdiction of recently enacted Commonwealth Fair Work provisions to the Victorian public sector.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Firearms Amendment Bill 2026*Introduction and first reading*

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (10:12): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Firearms Act 1996 to ensure the continuation of the firearm prohibition order scheme, to make further provision for the categorisation of firearms, to increase penalties for certain offences and to impose a citizenship requirement and a firearms background check requirement on the holding of a licence, to make consequential amendments to the Firearms Amendment Act 2018 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (10:13): I ask for a brief explanation of the bill.

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (10:13): This bill delivers on the government's response to the Ken Lay review by further strengthening Victoria's firearms laws. The bill will strengthen background checks for applicants for a firearms licence and increased penalties for those who breach firearm prohibition orders or who commit firearm trafficking offences.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

*Business of the house***Notices of motion**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (10:13): General business, notices of motion 17, 41 and 72 to 75, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2 pm today.

Petitions

Road maintenance

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) presented a petition bearing 407 signatures:

This Petition of residents from across Victoria draws to the attention of the House their concerns regarding the appalling state of our roads.

The petitioners therefore request that the Labor Government provide more funding and maintenance to fix our roads.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Gippsland police resources

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) presented a petition bearing 96 signatures:

This Petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the House their concerns regarding the rise in crime and lack of police presence and resources across the Gippsland area.

The petitioners therefore request that the Labor Government provide more funding and resources to boost police presence and deter crime in Gippsland.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Documents

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Auditor-General:

Delivering School Upgrade Projects – Ordered to be published

Improving Bus Services – Ordered to be published

Planning and Environment Act 1987 – Notice of approval of an amendment to the Victoria Planning Provisions – VC312

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 60, 62, 63

PROCLAMATIONS – Under SO 177A, the Clerk tabled the following proclamations fixing operative dates:

Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Act 2026 – Whole Act – 1 July 2026 (*Gazette S326, 16 June 2026*)

Restricting Non-disclosure Agreements (Sexual Harassment at Work) Act 2025 – Whole Act – 1 July 2026 (*Gazette S326, 16 June 2026*)

Safe Food Victoria Act 2026 – Whole Act – 1 July 2026 (*Gazette S326, 16 June 2026*)

Social Services Regulation Amendment (Child Safety, Complaints and Worker Regulation) Act 2025 – Chapter 5 – 1 July 2026 (*Gazette S326, 16 June 2026*).

Bills

Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026

Victoria Police Amendment (Police Reservists) Bill 2026

Council's agreement

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (10:15): The Speaker has received messages from the Legislative Council agreeing to the following bills without amendment: the Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026 and the Victoria Police Amendment (Police Reservists) Bill 2026.

Building Legislation and Treasury Legislation (Tax Relief) Amendment Bill 2026*Council's amendments*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (10:15): The Speaker has received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Building Legislation and Treasury Legislation (Tax Relief) Amendment Bill 2026 with amendments.

Ordered that amendments be taken into consideration later this day.

*Committees***Legal and Social Issues Committee***Membership*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (10:16): The Speaker has received the resignation of Jackson Taylor from the Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee, effective from today.

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

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (10:16): I move, by leave:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended on Wednesday 17 June to allow the member for Pakenham to make a valedictory speech for a maximum of 15 minutes at the conclusion of the matter of public importance.

Motion agreed to.

Anthony CARBINES: I move, by leave:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended on 17 June 2026 to allow the member for Nepean to make an inaugural speech for a maximum of 15 minutes immediately after the member for Pakenham's valedictory speech.

Motion agreed to.

*Motions***Motions by leave**

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (10:17): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Niddrie for failing to make a single call to his constituents while acknowledging his tireless distraction, calling caucus members to shore up his leadership ambitions.

Leave refused.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:17): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Bentleigh's failure to make a single call, knock on a single door or hold a single conversation with constituents and notes this is why Victorians are sick of this tired, old and out-of-touch Labor government.

Leave refused.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (10:18): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Kororoit's failure to knock on a single constituent's door while acknowledging the obvious difficulty of face-to-face engagement with locals from South Yarra and Sorrento.

Leave refused.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (10:18): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Wendouree's failure to make a single call, knock on a single door or hold a single conversation with constituents and notes this is why Victorians are sick of this tired, old and out-of-touch Labor government.

Leave refused.

Rachel WESTAWAY (Pahran) (10:19): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Dandenong's failure to knock on a single constituent's door while acknowledging the obvious difficulty of face-to-face engagement with locals from Surrey Hills.

Leave refused.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (10:19): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Thomastown for refusing to call or doorknock or hold a single conversation with constituents and notes this is why Victorians are sick of this tired, out-of-touch Labor government.

Leave refused.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (10:20): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Sunbury's failure to make a single call, doorknock or hold a single conversation with constituents and notes this is why Victorians are sick of this tired, old and out-of-touch Labor government.

Leave refused.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (10:20): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Ashwood's failure to make a single call, knock on a single door or hold a single conversation with constituents and notes this is why Victorians are sick of this tired, old and out-of-touch Labor government.

Leave refused.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (10:21): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Kalkallo's failure to make a single call, knock on a single door or hold a single conversation with constituents and notes this is why Victorians are sick and tired of this old and out-of-touch Labor government.

Leave refused.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (10:21): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Laverton's failure to make a single call, knock on a single door or hold a single conversation with constituents and notes that this is why Victorians are sick of this tired, old and out-of-touch Labor government.

Leave refused.

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (10:21): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Oakleigh's failure to make a single call, knock on a single door or hold a single conversation with constituents and notes that this is why Victorians are sick of this tired, old and out-of-touch government.

Leave refused.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (10:22): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the members for Geelong and South Barwon for their failure to make a single call, knock on a single door, in some cases even open their office or make calls with constituents, and notes that this is why Victorians are sick of this tired, old, out-of-touch, lazy government.

Leave refused.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (10:22): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Tarneit's failure to make a single call, knock on a single door or hold a conversation with constituents and notes this is why Victorians are sick and tired of this old and out-of-touch Labor government. The member for Tarneit did more running on the MCG this morning than he has done over his own electorate.

Leave refused.

Chris CREWTHOR (Mornington) (10:23): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Carrum's failure to make a single call or knock on a single door to hold a conversation with constituents and notes that this is why Victorians are sick of this tired, old and out-of-touch Labor government.

Leave refused.

Members statements

Graham Keith Ernst

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (10:24): I rise to pay tribute to Graham Ernst, a former member for Geelong East and Bellarine, who served in this Parliament from 1979 to 1992 and passed away in April this year. Born in South Australia, Graham was a fitter and turner who worked at Alcoa in Geelong before entering public life. Those who remember him recall a gentle, calm and considered man. Graham was interested in people and serving his community. He understood that good representatives listen first, build relationships and bring people together, and that approach has earned him respect across the community and lasting outcomes. Graham loved his electorate. He would travel around in a small caravan, a mobile electoral office, taking Parliament to the people. His family joked that he may have checked the horseracing form guide before opening the office door, but once he did, his focus was always on the constituents. Graham once heard that a local resident's house was flooding, and without hesitation he diverted everyone into the family car and went to help. That simple act said much about the man. His wife Sue said Graham was there for the community, not politics, and believed it was important not to lose sight of humanity in these jobs, and Graham never did. He was proud to help secure land for SpringDale and support Wathaurong through providing space to strengthen their services to First Nations people. In his inaugural speech he spoke about the issues that remain central to the Bellarine today. To his children Virginia, Jeannette, Paul, Lara, Sonya and Jo-Anne, and to Sue, Zoe and Evan, I extend my sincere condolences. Graham served with decency, humility and humanity. Vale, Graham Ernst.

Tram Road Reserve, Doncaster

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (10:25): The residents of Doncaster South, particularly around Church Road, Meadowbank Avenue, Windella Quadrant, Larkspur Avenue, Grange Park Avenue, Whittens Lane, Hampshire Road and Norfolk Circuit, are becoming increasingly tired, angry and frustrated with the Labor government's lack of information as to why they are stealing more open space for the Eastern Freeway works along the Koonung Creek trail and the Tram Road Reserve. In fact the Tram Road Reserve will be eliminated. There is very little public information as to why the government, at the last minute, has deemed that this land needs to be acquired and taken from the council and from the public and used as paved space. It is open space; it should remain open space. It has been open space for decades. The people of Doncaster South deserve a lot better than the mistruths they are being told by the Labor government, who are not giving proper information as to why this land is being

acquired. In my electorate, particularly in Doncaster South, this is emblematic of a government that is out of touch and in its last days. The residents of Doncaster South are sick to death of this government taking advantage, running roughshod and giving no reasons and no excuses as to why open space is going and being replaced with nothing.

Graham Keith Ernst

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (10:27): I acknowledge the passing of Graham Ernst on 26 April 2026 and send my condolences to Graham's family, who are in the gallery today. Graham was a former member for Geelong East, winning the seat in the 1979 state election and moving to the seat of Bellarine in 1985 after his former seat was abolished. He was a Labor Party member of the Parliament from 1979 to 1992.

Graham was a grassroots MP who advocated for working people. He was a trade unionist and a politician who was committed to advancing the lives of working people. He knew how important good government policy was. Graham attended state schools in Cranbrook and Portland before becoming a fitter and turner at the Portland superphosphate works, where he was elected as shop steward for the Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union. He also worked as the manager of a bakery and operated an engineering workshop in Portland.

He actively raised local issues such as better water supply, concerns about unemployment and the need to create job opportunities, the need for open space in built-up housing developments, supporting youth, the need for improved sports and recreation facilities, concerns about industrial accidents, the lack of support for workers and their families, and a great deal more. I have many fond memories of Graham during his time as a member of Parliament, alongside former Labor MPs such as Neil Trezise, Hayden Shell and David Henshaw. Vale, Graham Ernst.

Euroa electorate bushfire recovery

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (10:28): One of the best parts of this job is getting out and listening to my community. Through my Cleeland Cuppas, I have sat down with locals in Tatong, Devenish, Murchison and Euroa recently. Thank you to Joan for my Texas bolo and to Sandy and Jane for the bouquet of flowers. It is an absolute honour to do this job. More than 30 people came to the Euroa catch-up, and one issue dominated the morning: recovery from January's bushfires. People are struggling – really deeply struggling. The support has been woeful, and for some the response from Emergency Management Victoria has been more traumatic than the disaster itself. There are modular homes sitting in storage while people live in tents right now in Victoria. The Allan Labor government should hang its head in shame with this response.

Euroa electorate police numbers

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (10:29): I invited the Shadow Minister for Police to visit the Kilmore and Seymour police stations recently. Kilmore was built as a 24-hour station and now opens just one day a week, with the 24-hour response stretched between Wallan, Kilmore and Seymour. We sat down with local officers to hear about the pressures facing police on the front line. Police numbers are down, and we are asking fewer officers to cover more ground. We have had aggravated burglaries recently by opportunistic criminals who know our communities are vulnerable, and locals are deeply worried about community safety. People want a visible police presence in their town and confidence that help will be there when they need it. Our police work tirelessly, but they need help to keep us safe. That is why the Liberals and Nationals have committed to 3000 additional police if elected this November.

National Reconciliation Week

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (10:30): National Reconciliation Week was observed from 27 May to 3 June. It is an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come as a state and a nation in our understanding of First Nation peoples, cultures and histories. As someone who is not getting any

younger, I can honestly say that when I was growing up First Nation history and culture were not taught in the schools the way they are today. Many Australians of my generation grew up with little understanding of the world's oldest continuing culture, and unfortunately, racism and misconceptions were often accepted without challenge. That is why I believe it is important to recognise the progress that has been made. Today more Victorians are learning about the rich cultures, histories and contributions of First Peoples. More importantly, we are starting to listen. National Reconciliation Week provides an opportunity to reflect on our shared history, but it is also a reminder that reconciliation requires action. Here in Victoria we have led the nation by establishing a pathway towards treaty, recognising that First Peoples deserve a genuine voice in decisions that affect their communities and the future. I want to acknowledge the significant work undertaken over many years by First Peoples leaders, community advocates and successive ministers who have worked diligently, respectfully and patiently to progress Victoria's treaty. Recognition, truth-telling and treaty must always be approached with honesty and respect. While these discussions can at times be challenging, the willingness of leaders and communities to uphold the integrity of the process has helped Victoria become a national leader in this space. National Reconciliation Week reminds us that while there is still work to do, we should also recognise the progress that has been made and continue walking that path together with respect, understanding and optimism.

Justin 'Polly' Polwarth

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (10:31): Today I rise to honour a member of the Victoria Police force who is retiring: Justin Polwarth, 30318. I worked with Justin out in Dandenong, and Polly was fantastic. We recently had his retirement and reflected on his career, and it was a very interesting one, with 32 years in the job. He was asked why he joined and the answer was, quite simply, 'Because my mate next to me is, so I'll give it a go.' One of his stories was going in to do his exam, and he was very, very honest about it. He just hoped the bloke next to him was smart enough, when he copied the exam, to ensure he could get in. When he did actually get in, he was one of the rare people in Victoria Police that was late to his first day on the job. He knocked on the door of the superintendent, and the superintendent opened up the door – these are words from Justin, so I do not get in trouble here. Polly says, 'I'm here to report for my first day,' and the superintendent goes, 'No worries at all. That is a mediocre start to a mediocre career.' After 32 years, who would have thought that that bloke could predict the future so well. Justin's time in the Victoria Police force – Polly's – was absolutely amazing. The one thing outside of his work as a detective at detective training school, protecting the community, is he was the person that every person in the police force knew that they could look to. They always say, 'Who would you take into the trenches? Polly is one you would take with you.' The people that were at that retirement spoke so highly of him, and one of them that did speak highly of him was Riz. We want to say too, to anyone at the Auburn Bowls Club, where we were at to do the function, if Riz is still doing his speech now, just ring Yarra criminal investigation unit and we will make sure we come and pick him up, because he manages to speak for a hell of a long time.

Narre Warren Football Netball Club

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (10:33): It is AFL season and it is fair to say that we have had a great start to the season in my community. The Narre Magpies are absolutely kicking goals, and as the number one ticket holder – it does take me a lot to get into the black and white, as a Doggies supporter – I am very, very proud. It is the women's team that are actually shining this season. On Friday night I got the chance to go along to see them play against Chelsea Heights, where our girls absolutely dominated. I will admit there was a lot of argy-bargy, but we did come home with a win and we are proudly sitting on top of the ladder in our first season. It was also a really big night of celebration: Courtney kicked four goals, with an absolute cracker from the boundary line, and it was also her dad Greg's birthday – wishing him a very happy birthday. I also want to wish Maree, who has been running the canteen for over 12 years and has been involved in the club for over 30 years, an absolutely happy birthday – a very special 60th. Sorry, Maree, I did say the number. Thank you, Maree, for everything that you do at the Narre Magpies. You are the sort of person that keeps our community

together. I also want to give a huge shout-out to Pete and Sonya for the amazing job that they do on the committee.

Glenda Haswell

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (10:34): I also want to take this opportunity to send my love to the Haswell family, to Chris and to Lauren. I am so sad at the passing of our beloved Glenda. May she rest in peace.

Hawthorn Artist Society

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (10:34): Last week I had the pleasure of visiting the Hawthorn Artist Society. For more than 40 years the society has been a fixture of our local community, providing a welcoming home for artists of all ages and abilities from its studios beneath the Hawthorn Arts Centre. Run by artists for artists, the society offers classes, workshops, exhibitions and open studio sessions that bring people together, foster lifelong learning and create meaningful social connections through a shared love of art. In an age where many people are experiencing isolation and disconnection, organisations such as the Hawthorn Artist Society play an important role beyond being a creative outlet. May I place on record my thanks to David Bailey, Kirsten Tarry-Smith, David MacLeod, Graham Hubbard, Jim Moody and Tony Ericson for their tireless commitment and service to art in Hawthorn.

Camberwell District Basketball Association

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (10:35): I would like to recognise the Camberwell Dragons basketball association for their leadership in promoting mental health and wellbeing within our community. In particular I would like to acknowledge Andrew Johnstone and the team for their great work. During the recent Mental Health Awareness Week held at Camberwell Grammar School, the Camberwell Dragons brought together two key speakers, along with players, coaches, referees, volunteers and families, to encourage conversations about resilience, mental health and seeking support when needed. Importantly, there was a focus on the power of positive self-talk, not just as the basis for better mental health but also as a way to improve performance.

Neil and Marianne Williams

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (10:36): I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge local legends Neil and Marianne Williams, who founded the Sunbury Neighbourhood Kitchen and on a Monday night feed more than 100 locals. They are just absolutely outstanding members of our community. Neil and Marianne are indeed tireless, generous community members, and I take this opportunity to thank them and acknowledge the amazing work that they do for our community. I look forward to seeing them again really soon.

Mel Lofts and Jess Geary

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (10:36): I also want to acknowledge the work of Mel Lofts and Jess Geary from the Sunbury Netball Association, who I caught up with last week. They continue to do terrific things for local community sport in our electorate and are terrific members of the community.

Sunbury electorate community

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (10:37): Whilst I have got the opportunity, I want to thank those within our community that chatted to me on Saturday at my regular street stall. Having the opportunity to engage with the community each and every day and make sure that we have important conversations about the things that affect our community – a place where I have lived for 40 years – is really, really important. I will continue to do that work, and we will continue to make sure that we get on and deliver things for our growing community.

Gippsland East electorate bush nursing centres

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (10:37): I want to raise this morning the lack of support from this government for our bush nursing centres and the impact that it is having on my communities in East Gippsland. Through a lack of government funding the Dargo Bush Nursing Centre has just cut back one day a week and is now only open four days a week. We also have the Swifts Creek Bush Nursing Centre, which has stopped its after-hours work and its weekend work. These are remote communities that need these services operating simply to serve the public that lives there, because it is a long, long way to other health services.

We also have the Buchan Bush Nursing Centre, which has applied for funding twice to have its centre rebuilt. They already have the land purchased, and they have been knocked back on that funding twice and are currently having a third go. All three of these bush nursing centres – and there are many more around the state – are openly stating that it is a lack of state government funding that is putting them in this situation. One can only lament that this is a result of the fact that, by this government's own budget papers, we are heading towards a state debt of \$200 billion and interest repayments of \$28 million a day. The outcome of that is why we are not having these important services funded in our regions, and only a change of government in November will fix that.

Community safety

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (10:39): On 11 June, as the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Safety, I had the privilege to attend the violence reduction unit, VRU, inaugural community safety regional forum, joining the Attorney-General; western parliamentary colleagues from St Albans, Laverton, Sydenham and Melton; Andrea Davidson, the VRU CEO; and 130-plus community leaders, service providers and locals. The forum was held at the Visy Cares Hub in Sunshine and provided for an extensive day of listening and learning about the incredible work underway across the west by so many to help tackle and respond to the drivers and root causes of crime – housing, employment, education, mental health, wellbeing, socioeconomic opportunities and barriers. I thank all for attending and contributing to the forum, which will help inform and guide the VRU's ongoing work to identify and support more early intervention and diversion programs that can help make our community safer.

On 29 May, as Parliamentary Secretary for Community Safety, I had the pleasure to join the member for St Albans for a community safety round table with the St Albans traders to discuss strengthening local safety initiatives, including the good news that PSOs are patrolling St Albans station from daytime to last train, and ongoing opportunities to enhance local ambience and amenity for traders, shoppers and families alike. Again, I thank all for that contribution, which will be conveyed back to the violence reduction unit.

On 23 April I attended the Victoria Police neighbourhood policing forum at the Coburg town hall, attended by Superintendent Wayne Cheesman, Merri-bek area commander Tim Jacobs, local police officers and around 100 local residents. The forum covered a range of topics, including overall crime trends, family violence, road safety, young people and tips on crime prevention and community safety.

I also attended on 14 May the Pascoe Vale Rotary community policing awards to commend all of our hardworking local police officers for their efforts.

Mount Buller Road

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (10:40): The speed limit on the Mount Buller Road between the Sebel at Merrijig and Sawmill Settlement has been reduced from 100 kilometres to 80 kilometres and more recently to 60 kilometres. This change stunned residents and regular road users and was made without prior notice or consultation. The minister needs to outline what evidence or assessment informed the decision to further reduce the speed limit from 80 to 60. Further, the minister must come clean and inform the community if this reduction is intended to be temporary or seasonal, and if so, when the 80-kilometre limit will be reinstated.

Mansfield Secondary College

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (10:41): I implore the Minister for Education to quickly find a solution to keep the Mount Buller annexe of the Mansfield Secondary College open. The Mount Buller community is ropeable by the decision to close it – the traders association, the ratepayers association, Buller Ski Lifts, Mansfield Shire Council, the Mansfield community and skiers. There is an opportunity to reinvigorate and grow the program to pre-COVID levels. I am sure the Minister for Sport and Major Events knows what an important role the annexe plays in the elite pathway for snow sports.

Celeste Dennehy

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (10:41): Thirteen-year-old Celeste Dennehy of Barjarg shone at this year's Australia's Greatest Horsewoman event in Tatura. Riding her horse A Cool Custom, Celeste took on a full four-day junior competition program. Celeste achieved impressive results across the board, culminating in her being awarded the title Cowgirl of the Year 2026. Congratulations on such an impressive debut.

EidFest in the West

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (10:42): Earlier this month I was delighted to join the community in Tarneit at EidFest in the West, put together by the AL-Madina Foundation in celebration of Eid al-Adha this year. Penrose Place was completely transformed, with vibrant stage performances, amusement rides, arts and sports competitions, camel rides, food trucks and so much more. There was something for everyone, and it was wonderful to see so many young families come down and have such a great time. I am proud to represent a community held together by people from all walks of life who can come together to celebrate and lift each other up. A multicultural and multifaith community is generous and strong, with deep cultural and spiritual perspectives that contribute greatly to the fabric of Tarneit. Recently the first round of multicultural festivals and events programs grants were announced – grants of up to \$50,000 to support incredible festivals like EidFest in the West. The second round of grants will be announced in September this year. As the member for Tarneit, I have had the great pleasure to attend many multicultural and multifaith events and festivals. I am proud to be part of a government which supports all Victorians and prioritises social cohesion. Every person deserves the right to feel safe and respected within their communities, and EidFest in the West was a joyful illustration of exactly what that can look like.

Regional Victoria

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (10:43): The people of regional Victoria are simply tired of being treated as an afterthought by this Labor government. While \$15 billion is poured into the pockets of bikies and criminals, regional communities continue to fight for the bare minimum. They are fighting for decent roads, reliable health services and new fire trucks. If our police force were driving vehicles the same age as our CFA fleet, they would be still driving VS Commodores.

Dylan Wight interjected.

Jade BENHAM: It was a good car, but we do not need to be driving them around as emergency vehicles. We are fighting for improved water infrastructure and the investment needed to keep local communities strong. The reality is simple: regional Victorians pay their taxes like everyone else and they deserve their fair share. That is why the Nationals will end the regional discrimination that we have seen from this government and deliver a 25 per cent fair share guarantee. It is a very, very straightforward principle. If 25 per cent of Victorians live in regional Victoria, then at least 25 per cent of infrastructure spending should be invested in regional Victoria, not as a favour, not as a deal, simply as a matter of equity. That is all we have been asking for. Regional Victorians are not asking for more than their share – just their fair share. That is what the Nationals and the Liberals in government will deliver. After more than a decade of Labor neglect, regional communities deserve their fair share.

Thomastown electorate

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (10:45): There is so much going on in the vibrant electorate of Thomastown – so many good people doing so many good things. Over the past week I was able to join residents at the Residents of Epping North and Wollert community association coffee and chat to discuss local environmental issues and local news. I also got to talk about the work of the State Electricity Commission, its role in bringing down wholesale electricity prices and the recent announcement of 2000 new apprentices.

Then there is Link Community Transport and its staff and many dedicated volunteers who assist older Victorians to get about and stay connected. The recent outing I attended had lots of laughs and great company. Days out include cruises, trains, bus trips throughout regional Victoria, as well as short trips to see the sights of Melbourne. Link also provides much-needed transport options for older people to get to the appointments and shopping they need to do. But it is not just services it provides, there is care and support built in and a groundswell of expert volunteers to help. Some volunteers were previous clients of Link through their carer roles and now volunteer to give back to an organisation they love.

I also had the honour of attending the presentation of the Board of Imams Victoria Lifetime Achievement Award to imams who have served the community for more than 30 years, to honour their dedication, selfless and invaluable service to others and to Islam and the Victorian Muslim community. Congratulations to Sheikh Rexhep Idrizi, former imam of the Albanian Australian Islamic Society; Sheikh Isse Abdo Musse, chief imam of the Melbourne Grand Mosque, graduate of Umm Al-Qura University in Makkah, Saudi Arabia; and also Sheikh Eljam Bardi.

Bushfires

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (10:46): Today I rise to again draw the house's attention to the devastating bushfires that tore through regional Victoria last summer and the lessons we must learn from them. Over the summer more than 436,000 hectares burnt across Victoria. The Longwood fire alone burnt more than 136,000 hectares and tragically claimed a life. The bushfires may have faded from the headlines, but for the communities that bore the brunt of them the recovery is far from over. Families are still rebuilding homes, repairing fences, replacing livestock and living with the consequences each and every day. As the member for Euroa has highlighted in this place, many affected communities are still waiting for the practical support Victorians have come to expect after major bushfire disasters, including effective clean-up programs, support for local businesses, rates exemptions, temporary housing and long-term mental health services.

We also have an obligation to learn from these events and better prepare for those that will inevitably come. That is why the Victorian Auditor-General's recent report into reducing bushfire risks matters. While the report acknowledges improvements since 2020, it also finds that key recommendations remain unresolved six years later. It identifies concerns around bushfire risk modelling, fuel reduction activities, private land management and strategic fuel breaks. This is not a criticism of our volunteers, firefighters or emergency services personnel, but rather a reminder to the government that lessons identified in audits, inquiries and reviews must be acted upon, not simply acknowledged. The inspector-general for emergency management's review of the 2025–26 bushfires must commence soon.

Reclink Community Cup

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (10:48): Over the weekend I had the great pleasure of representing the Minister for Community Sport at the 2026 Reclink Community Cup. The winter sun was shining down at Victoria Park in Abbotsford for the annual game of footy that raises money for the great work of Reclink. Reclink's work engages people at risk of homelessness, alcohol and drug addiction, unemployment or mental illness, through sport, improving confidence and wellbeing. Their initiatives include the ActiVIC program, which runs in 19 locations across the state, including in my

local community in the City of Casey. The state Labor government is a very passionate supporter of Reclink. Last year's state budget invested \$5 million over two years to support their initiatives, including the ActiVIC program.

This year's community cup showdown was between the Megahertz, made up of community radio stations Triple R and PBS, and the Espy Rockdogs, featuring local music legends. As always, it was hilarious – really athletic but always a spirited contest. The Rockdogs and Megahertz have been challenging each other for the community cup since 1993. This year, as usual, the scores were low, and the Rockdogs were crowned champions with a 12-point win. The music was absolutely fantastic, including music from Owelu Dreamhouse, Kim Salmon's Smoked Salmon, Public Figures, Stella Donnelly and C.O.F.F.I.N. A very big thank you to Reclink founder Peter Cullen, CEO Dave Wells and the whole Reclink crew.

Gellibrand Crescent Kindergarten

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (10:49): Darebin council recently released a report showing that north-west Reservoir has the highest projected future demand for kindergarten places in our area, and you can see that in the number of private long day care centres that are opening up, including on Hughes Parade, Mcfadzean Avenue and another one on the corner of Henty Street and Gilbert Road. But we would like to see families in that area have access to a community-run kindergarten, if that is what they would like, so we are asking Darebin council again to partner with us in expanding Gellibrand Crescent Kindergarten. It is a great community kindergarten. It has operated there since 1976. It has many longstanding staff, including centre director Maria Sorace, who I think has been there for 27 years; centre coordinator Nina Cifonelli; and operations manager Tracey Attards, who is also a long-term local. Importantly, it not only is a great service but also has a large site, so we can build a second room there without losing too much in the way of outdoor space.

We have previously raised West Preston and JS Grey Kindergarten as priorities. They certainly are, but council's own report shows that north-west Reservoir should be the first cab off the rank with West Preston to follow. We hope that can be reflected in Darebin council's upcoming budget decision-making and that they can partner with us on these important projects for children in the north-west Reservoir area. Very briefly, I would also like to acknowledge that they are very positively considering some upgrades to the Yarra Avenue entry for Reservoir East Primary School.

King's Birthday honours

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon) (10:51): I rise today to congratulate three remarkable local Macedon community members who were recognised in the King's Birthday honours for their extraordinary service in our community and to Victoria. In Lancefield Pam Ahern OAM has been recognised for her contribution to animal welfare through the founding of Edgar's Mission. I have had the opportunity to visit Edgar's Mission on a number of occasions, and Pam does a remarkable job out there. For more than two decades she has devoted herself to creating a sanctuary for rescued animals while inspiring compassion and kindness in countless people across our region and beyond. In Gisborne Tricia Kaye OAM has been recognised for more than 50 years of dedicated community service, including as a founding member of the Gisborne ambulance auxiliary, and it was my great pleasure in August of last year to be able to join Tricia and members of Gisborne ambulance to celebrate her remarkable contribution and dedication to our fabulous ambulance service. I also congratulate Assistant Commissioner Jane Welsh APM, recognised for her exceptional leadership and contribution to Victoria Police. Jane has played a pivotal role in modern policing, including establishing Victoria Police's first cybercrime division and strengthening efforts to combat online child exploitation. I am very proud to represent a community such as Macedon and the outstanding volunteers within it.

Victorian African Communities Committee

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (10:52): I am very pleased to congratulate the newly formed members of the Victorian African Communities Committee. This is an extraordinary committee who are doing really important work on behalf of the Victorian community. I would particularly like to acknowledge and congratulate the co-chairs, very well known, very hardworking members that they are, Mahamed Ahmed and Dr Rumbi Nyanhoto. The other members are Tigist Kebede, who has been working very hard and is somebody very well known to me; Fred Alale; Nyachan Nyak; Abraham Kuol, who is very well known to many people in this place; Gebreselasie Gebru; Jemima Lotika; Noma Johnson; Nimo Hersi; and Achol Arow. This committee is formed by some of the most esteemed and accomplished members of the African communities and represents rural, regional and metropolitan areas of Victoria. We are so fortunate to have their wise insight.

Casey Thunder Women's Football Club

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (10:53): On another matter, the Casey Thunder were able to celebrate a terrific addition to their grounds. I would like to congratulate Pam Rogers and of course Shannon on their new baby, and coach Justin, known better as JR. They are a great team. Go, Thunder!

Statements on parliamentary committee reports**Environment and Planning Committee*****Inquiry into the Supply of Homes in Regional Victoria***

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (10:54): It is with great pleasure that I speak on the Legislative Assembly Environment and Planning Committee's inquiry into the supply of homes in regional Victoria and the government's response. On 19 November 2025 the EPC tabled our report in this place, delivering 12 findings and 34 recommendations aimed at increasing the supply and diversity of housing across regional Victorian communities. This was an important inquiry to me as a regional Victorian. I know firsthand how great it is to live in regional Victoria, as do a number of the committee members who are on there, including the very, very amazing member for Bass, the member for Ripon, the member for Morwell and the member for Narracan. We also have the member for Croydon and the member for Monbulk – people who really have strong connections with regional Victoria. We know that regional Victoria is vibrant, we know that regional Victoria is full of opportunity, but housing supply is simply not keeping pace with the momentum.

Before I turn to the substance of the government's response, I would like to acknowledge and thank those who have contributed, those amazing members from across the aisle, particularly the member for Morwell, the most amazing deputy chair anyone could ask for. Thank you particularly to the members for Bass and Croydon, for whom this was their last time on a committee, as they are both retiring at the end of this parliamentary term. It was so special to get to spend time with them. Committee work is fantastic, and getting to know and work closely with good people like the members for Narracan, Croydon, Monbulk, Bass and Ripon was an absolute gift, as the member for Cranbourne would say. Once again I want to acknowledge the committee secretariat, particularly Marianna Stylianou, who is in the chamber as we speak, for her leadership, and the whole team for their professionalism, diligence and expertise, which were integral to the success of our inquiry. Your work behind the scenes ensured that the committee could deliver a thorough and meaningful report for the Parliament, a report that I am incredibly proud of.

As we travelled across the state, from Bairnsdale to Horsham, visiting Colac and Ballarat and Warrnambool and Morwell and Stawell and Castlemaine, as well as having people Zoom in from the Mallee and the Murray, we heard that the population growth in regional Victoria is outpacing housing supply, placing increased pressure on rental markets as well as home ownership. We heard that the most vulnerable in our communities are disproportionately affected by housing shortages: people on low incomes, older Victorians, young families and those experiencing family violence. We heard that demand is shifting, with more single-person households and ageing populations, yet there is a shortage

in smaller, accessible homes near services and transport. We also heard that Aboriginal Victorians face additional barriers to accessing secure and culturally appropriate housing. Ultimately we heard that without action, people are being forced to leave their communities simply because the right housing options are not available.

We made 34 recommendations that focused on increasing supply and diversity, ensuring sustained investment, strengthening regional planning, delivering the infrastructure needed to grow and support housing and improving collaborations between governments, industries and communities. I want to thank the Victorian government for their response, tabled last sitting week, and I want to talk about their responses. I am going to have to talk again in the future because I am not going to get through all of them. The government response acknowledges the core finding of the committee, that housing supply in regional Victoria is not keeping pace, and recognises the urgency of the challenge. I was pleased the government has broadly supported the intent of the committee's recommendations with a mix of accepted, supported-in-principle and under-consideration actions. The response outlines a coordinated, long-term strategy building on existing planning reforms, infrastructure investment and housing programs. There are several aspects of the government's response that I would like to look at and talk about, including planning and land supply, infrastructure, boosting housing supply and diversity, workforce capacity, social and affordable housing, collaboration and regional growth. Importantly, the Allan Labor government acknowledges the ongoing challenges of limited serviced land, high construction costs, infrastructure gaps, planning delays and viability. We know every Victorian deserves a home, and that is what we want.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Inquiry into Vaping and Tobacco Controls

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (10:59): I rise to speak on the PAEC report into tobacco and vape controls here in Victoria from August 2024. We have all seen that the vaping and tobacco industry here in our state has expanded at such a rapid rate. Many of us would have walked down the street behind someone who is having a vape, and I do not know about you, but I think it is disgusting when I walk behind them. All I can think is that that horrible stuff has been in their lungs and it is going into mine as I am walking behind them. It is an area that we know is impacting health across the state. It is impacting the health of young people and it is impacting the health of older people, and it is the concern about what is in some of these vapes that is a massive issue for many people when we are talking about it.

I am going to hit on two sides of it. The first one I am going to go to is some of the issues that it has raised particularly around crime here in our state and some of the things that tobacco and vapes are linked to in different crimes across Victoria. We have already seen the issue with the extortion. We have seen firearm-related incidents across the whole state; these are not just in one area. We have seen over 100 arson attacks on tobacco places, sometimes legitimate, sometimes not legitimate, but obviously you can see there is a very clear message to try and get more and more people to push across to the illegal tobacco that is available in the state.

One of the biggest concerns is around the vulnerable youth who end up involved in these crimes, and it is something that we desperately need to address. The way to address that would be putting more police on the beat for a preventative model. What we have seen is, because of the lack of action on this for such a long period of time, the actions of these young offenders, the actions of the extortion, are bleeding across to new industries like the alcohol industry, particularly nightclubs across Victoria. It generally makes people feel less safe. We know it is not new what is happening here. We have seen this in the past. Some may remember we used to have arson attacks on panelbeaters when panelbeating could be involved with illegal operations that were happening there. What changed that was stricter regulations, more policing and higher penalties to ensure that we could move that away from there. But it has now become what we are seeing here in Victoria with alcohol, tobacco and with the vapes.

One of the other issues is the number of people who are using vapes. Going by this report, the higher percentage are those in lower socio-economic areas. It is something that is a cheap thing to buy,

particularly the cheap tobacco. As I said, I was a smoker, so it is up to you; I am a big believer in freedom of choice. But the reality we have got now is tobacco and cigarettes have become so expensive. That is what has opened up the market for the black market. When we do that and we go to the black market, the government does not see any return on that. They see no income come back from it. That is a huge problem, because with tobacco and vapes that are not regulated, other than the very small amount of regulation through vapes for people who are giving up cigarettes through pharmacy, and most on the street being sold illegally, the government is not getting any return on that in GST. Yet what we are seeing is an increase in people that are using our health services across the state because of the impacts of these cigarettes and the vapes. That is going to put pressure on any government. I got a bit frustrated when I saw recently a federal MP come out and state that the reason the tobacco excise was not taking as much was less people were smoking. The reality is more people are smoking here in Victoria.

I just want to put onto the record some things for those people that want to get the vape out and have a go, and there are a few people in here I have seen walking around with vapes. I want you to have a think about this. The chemicals that are found in those vapes, the other places they are found in Victoria are in the exhaust fumes of a car and in weedkiller. They are found in gasoline. They are found in bleach. They are found in hospital-grade disinfectant, aviation fuel, paint stripper, preservatives in morgues – which might actually help you on your way through when you are smoking them – and they are found in rat poison.

People are doing this because of the lack of regulation, but what we will see is the increase in people who will be presenting to hospitals is going to put increased pressure on the hospitals. This report highlights it. It highlights it from an economic point of view. If we do not do something about this to get on top of it and to regulate the system and also get on top of what is happening with the illegal sale of tobacco here in Victoria, the people that are going to pay the most for this are all Victorians who want to access our healthcare network, because it will be tied up and they will not be getting the income back from the legal sale of cigarettes across Victoria and Australia.

Economy and Infrastructure Committee

Inquiry into the Impact of Road Safety Behaviours on Vulnerable Road Users

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (11:04): I rise to make a further contribution on the Legislative Assembly's Economy and Infrastructure Committee report on its inquiry into the impacts of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users. I continue to draw the house and the respective minister's attention to the 61 findings and 56 recommendations set out in the report to make our streets, roads and neighbourhoods safer. In that regard, I again draw the house's attention to recommendation 23 that the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) prioritise the delivery of accessible tram stops. I met with the Sydney Road Accessible Tram Stops organisation committee on Monday 15 June. They have since sent a letter to me and the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. They say:

Dear Minister,

Re: Installation of permanent accessible tram stops in Sydney Road for number 19 tram

We are a group of local residents, who have been working since 2023, brought together by our founding member Christian Astourian, who uses a motorised wheelchair and requires public transport to access his workplace. Our aim is to increase accessibility for our local tram network. This committee primarily supports human rights for people with disability but also advocates for parents with prams; older people and people with mobility issues who access the number 19 tram.

We met with ... Member for Pascoe Vale on ...

the 15th as a member of the parliamentary inquiry that we are referring to here. They go on to note:

... the report identified that raised platforms acted as a traffic calming measure and result in an 81% reduction in crashes involving pedestrians. Our committee is also concerned for the safety of –

vulnerable road users –

... who use Sydney Road.

I indicated, and we discussed on the night, my willingness to work together and support the Sydney Road Accessible Tram Stops organising committee at this time with this advocacy. They went on:

We acknowledge and thank the government for the allocation of funding in the 2026/2027 state budget, for preliminary planning and consultation of accessible tram stops in Sydney Road. This initiative will contribute to the Federal government's 2022 review, "Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport ... requiring all public transport to adhere to standards by 2032.

There is an urgency to progress the installation of accessible trams stops in Sydney Road due to the Level Crossing removal project commencing in 2028 on the Upfield ...

rail corridor, which runs parallel to Sydney Road.

We request the government allocates funding in the 2027–2028 state budget, for the building of accessible tram stops in Sydney Road, prior to the commencement of the level crossing removal on the Upfield train line in 2028.

They look forward to the minister's response in that regard.

I also draw the house's attention to recommendation 5 of the report around the Department of Transport and Planning revising its speed-zoning policy and finding 15 around restrictions in Victoria's speed-zoning technical guidelines limiting the designation of 40-kilometre speed limit zones in certain areas, as well as timing the school speed zones, resulting in higher speed limits that place vulnerable road users at risk.

In this regard I draw attention to Gaffney Street in my community through Pascoe Vale and Coburg North. Gaffney Street is a major east–west arterial connector for many in my community which we have continued to invest in to make it safer through the signalised intersection at Gaffney Street and Sussex Street, replacing the previous dangerous roundabout, which my predecessor Lizzie Blandthorn secured and which we have since opened, which has made the area safer; the new raised and signalised pedestrian crossing for Pascoe Vale Primary School between Ann Street and Wilna Street; and safer speeds along Gaffney Street between Heath Street, Somerset Street and Stewart Street. We have extended the centre island with line marking and installing a small traffic island on Gaffney Street near Pascoe Vale station. We have widened the footpath on Gaffney Street and Heath Street to provide more space for pedestrians, and we have painted some bike sharrows and symbols along Gaffney Street near the station.

Notwithstanding that, there is more to do. That is why I am pleased to report that, after having been contacted by many locals following a number of serious accidents and incidents and far too many near misses, including the families from St Oliver Plunkett Primary School, I am pleased to have been informed that DTP will now be assessing a reduction in the speed limit from 60 kilometres down to 50 kilometres along Gaffney Street, through the Irvine Street and Landells Road corridor, right through to Sydney Road, I understand, in Coburg North. DTP says this assessment will consider current conditions, including pedestrian activity, traffic volumes and local access to build on our ongoing work to help make Gaffney Street safer for families, students and vulnerable road users.

DTP's assessment will directly respond to the advocacy efforts I have been proud to help lead and support on behalf of locals regarding this stretch of Gaffney Street, which is increasingly utilised by local families, businesses and many other residents along Gaffney Street. I have received two wonderful letters, from the St Oliver Plunkett Primary School community and the Coburg North Primary School community. In relation to why we need to make this stretch of Gaffney Street safer, the principal of St Oliver's Delfina Pieri states:

As Principal of St Oliver Plunkett Primary School, located on the corner of Landells Road and Gaffney Street ... I am writing to express my –

and our school community's –

strong support for the proposed extension of the 40 km/h school zone along Gaffney Street.

This is a high-priority matter for our school community, as it directly relates to the safety and wellbeing of our students, families and staff.

I will continue that contribution the next opportunity I get in this chamber, because we have an extensive letter from them and the Coburg North Primary School community that I would like to put on the record.

Environment and Planning Committee

Inquiry into Securing the Victorian Food Supply

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (11:09): I rise to make a contribution on the Environment and Planning Committee's inquiry into securing Victoria's food supply. My reference is page 34 and the comment about the need to protect and enhance the future of agriculture by ensuring it is well placed to respond to various matters. One of those matters is pests, and that is what I want to talk on. I have mentioned this in the chamber in the past, and I do want to put it on the record again. I want to talk about wild dogs, and I refer to them as wild dogs rather than dingoes. The reason for that is very simple: they are not purebred dingoes. I will go into that a little bit later. But the reality is farmers do not care what we call them; they are killing their stock, and in some cases they are forcing them off the land.

I did read a few months ago a claim by the Dingo Conservancy that numbers are plummeting, suggesting that inaction around protections will send them the same way as the Tasmanian tiger. This is just complete and utter rot. The stock kills are happening nightly. Farmers are reporting more dogs than they have ever seen before. I raised in Parliament recently one farmer who had genuine concerns, because these dogs are getting bigger and they are getting bolder. The government has cut aerial baiting, which has obviously had an impact – it has allowed numbers to grow. The reality of it is we need to keep strong controls in place.

I have put this on the record in the past, and I just want to put to bed that myth that these are purebred dingoes. And on that, I received information from Dr Kylie Cairns in 2023 telling me her DNA research showed that 87 per cent of the animals she tested were purebred dingoes and the rest had more than 80 per cent dingo DNA. Interestingly, her research was funded by the Australian Dingo Foundation and some other conservation groups, and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action certainly swallowed the bait on this research, it is fair to say – excuse the pun there – but it was wrong. And more recent research led by the University of Munich geneticist Lachie Scarsbrook – and he had a team of about 25 or 26, I think – proved it wrong. His study found, and I quote from that study:

We also showed that many dingoes, particularly those from Southeast Australia, experienced admixture with European dogs.

...

... Our study ... reveals evidence for widespread interbreeding across Australia prior to the 21st-century.

So how can one lot of DNA testing say they are purebred dingoes and then the next lot of extensive DNA testing say there are hardly any? Well, the reason is, when the first study was done, it appears they did not use precolonial dingo DNA. I mean, what a mistake to make when you are studying the history and the heritage. I have put in some emails to Dr Cairns to get her explanation, but surprise, surprise, I have not had a response. But I want to make the point that regardless of what we call them – and there is going to be a push coming out now by some conservation groups to say any of these animals with any level of dingo DNA need to be treated as dingoes, and yes, they do play an important role in our ecology and they do need protection – there needs to be a balance. Removing controls simply will not work, and it will leave our farmers too vulnerable and will have them forced off the land. So that will be the next push – 'Any percentage of dingo DNA, we'll call it a dingo' – and they

think that in calling it a dingo it will be afforded full protection. We need to protect these animals; we do. We need to make sure they exist, because they are part of our ecology. But particularly on the farming interface, they need to be controlled.

Before I finish on pests, I want to give a quick shout-out to the member for Greenvale, who last sitting week, speaking on the Outdoor Recreation Victoria Bill 2026, spoke about the need to control carp so native fish like redfin are able to thrive. Newsflash: redfin are an introduced species, also known as English perch. They eat our native fish, they spread disease in our native fish and they are taking over rivers –

Vicki Ward interjected.

Tim BULL: Minister at the table, are you objecting to this? They are an introduced species.

Vicki Ward interjected.

Tim BULL: Oh, well done. She is supporting me. But redfin are a big problem in the Murray, the Loddon, the Campaspe, the Goulburn, the Wimmera. They are impacting our native fish numbers – they eat them, they spread disease – but we have got the member for Greenvale standing up saying, ‘We need to create an environment to get rid of carp where they thrive.’ I mean, God help us if we have got members of the government thinking redfin are a native fish that need to be protected. I think that says a lot about this government’s knowledge of how things happen in rural and regional Victoria.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Report on the 2024–25 Financial and Performance Outcomes

Danny PEARSON (Essendon) (11:14): I am rising to make a contribution on the 2024–25 financial and performance outcomes PAEC report, which was tabled in the house in March of this year. I refer the house’s attention to 8.6, ‘Investment in artificial intelligence infrastructure’, page 138. The committee questioned the Secretary of the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions in relation to the development of an AI mission statement. At that point in time when the outcomes hearings occurred, that mission statement had not been released, but I had the great privilege of writing that mission statement, and I want to take the time to explain why I think this is important.

I was asked to write the mission statement by the Premier. I had a long road trip in the car, and I spent a couple of hours in the car writing out and trying to frame what I thought would be the right response in relation to AI. The Europeans have gone down a pathway where they are using a very 20th-century approach to artificial intelligence, where they are trying to legislate and regulate in order to control it. The Americans have basically said, ‘Look, let it rip, and if there are consequences, we’ll deal with them later.’ I think what you are starting to see now in a public policy sense in America is that whiplash effect where people are not necessarily liking AI, because there have not been any appropriate controls put in place. Indeed I read a report recently which had some market research which showed that AI in America is less popular than, for example, immigration and customs enforcement.

What I thought would be the right way to approach this is to recognise the fact that AI is all around us. It has reached mass adoption in three years. Compare and contrast that: the running toilet took 75 years to reach mass adoption. This form of technology has reached mass adoption more quickly than any other form of technology. You might make the argument, ‘Well, we don’t really like AI. I’ve got concerns and reservations.’ I absolutely understand the arguments about that, but you cannot put the genie back in the bottle. This thing is all around us. It is everywhere. In some respects I am reminded of the discussions and the debates we had in this place in our first term of office in relation to Uber and taxidriver. I remember one Sunday morning I was walking through the streets of Ascot Vale and a car pulled up, a person got out of their house, walked down their driveway, jumped in the car and left. I remember thinking at the time that that could be a person just picking up a friend, it could be a family relative picking up another family relative or it could be an Uber driver picking up a passenger.

The reality was at that point in time I realised that as a state we had no capacity to know whether that person was being picked up as part of a rideshare agreement or not.

The reality with AI is it is everywhere. The question is: given this is the case, how do you choose to respond? You can turn around and bury your head in the sand and say, 'Well, we don't like it, and we're going to try to turn our back on it,' or you can recognise the fact that there is an opportunity here to embrace this and recognise that there are significant advantages that we can play by moving quickly and having that first-mover advantage. That is one of the reasons why I really pushed for the data centre rollout here in this state. The reality is that a lot of the tech companies in the states are now saying, 'We hear that New South Wales is a problem, but we hear good things coming out of Victoria.' It is why we are leading the nation when it comes to private sector investment in this state, and a lot of that is through data centres. Data centres will be that digital spine from which we will be able to start to look at innovating and having further levels of investment. It is why, for example, it was deliberately a mission statement – not a strategy; it is a mission statement – because I wanted to keep it broad enough to be able to indicate where we should go. It covers things like investment attraction and adoption, data centres and digital infrastructure, local innovation products and services, talent and workforce, the ethical use of AI and public sector adoption.

This is our moment in time where if we get this right as a state we have got the capacity to crowd in this capital, and we can find ways in which we can harness and utilise AI to improve our operational efficiency, both as administrators, from a public sector perspective, but also in relation to the way in which we can harness AI to play to our competitive strengths. We have got a fantastic food and fibre sector here in this state, we do pharmaceuticals and medical research extremely well and we do great work when it comes to transnational education. The ability to harness and utilise AI to play to our competitive strengths will drive some significant advantages. But we must back ourselves. We must be brave and we must be able to invest in our people and in our talent to make sure that we have got a workforce that is highly skilled, agile and mobile. Now is not the time to hesitate. I look forward to the future.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Report on the 2024–25 Financial and Performance Outcomes

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (11:19): I rise to speak on the 2024–25 financial and performance outcomes tabled in this house in late March, and in particular chapter 2.2, which deals with the government's fiscal strategy, so called. I seize on the fiscal strategy because that seems to be the blueprint that this government is relying upon to try to assuage the community's justifiable and well-placed apprehension at the direction of our economy and the state budget, by trying to assure them there is a plan to get out of the spiralling debt and the mounting interest payments.

It is regrettable to reflect that the government is failing on all five elements of its fiscal strategy. The first one deals with economic growth and unemployment. We know that in the 2024–25 year economic growth in Victoria came in at just a little over half of what the government said growth would be for the 2024–25 year. That alone puts a real question mark on the government's ability to say that net debt as a proportion of gross state product (GSP) is actually stabilising or coming down – it clearly cannot. For an economy that was over \$650 billion in 2024–25, if growth has come in at half, you cannot say that all the other assumptions and forecasts are sound. They would have to be reviewed, and yet the government has not done that.

Unemployment – well, that is a very sorry tale, because unemployment in Victoria is higher than any other state, and it has been that way for many, many months. When it comes to the operating cash surplus and the operating surpluses, they are (1) wafer thin but (2) omitting the big piece which is driving so much of our debt problem in Victoria, and that is the infrastructure spend, which the government has not managed prudently on behalf of Victorians at all. Not only have we seen major projects delayed, we have seen them come in well over budget. I will not rehearse all of the well-placed arguments we have been articulating on CFMEU corruption, but it has not just been CFMEU

corruption and misbehaviour, it has been total mismanagement. The procurement delivery models that the government has used have meant that Victorian taxpayers have been on the hook for all of these blowouts on major projects.

When it comes to stabilising net debt levels and net debt as a proportion of GSP, as I alluded to earlier in my remarks, we can see that net debt is actually, despite the government's figures, not coming down as a proportion of GSP. I wanted to mention those figures and those matters because we sit in a context where we face this mounting challenge where our debt is not just a huge and growing number sitting off to the side there but is driving an increasing amount of interest payments that the government has to fork out to service that exploding debt. Think about every \$10 of revenue not just now, but let us take the 2029–30 year. If you take \$10 of operating revenue that comes in, you would set aside about \$3 or \$3.50 for health and you would set aside about \$2 or \$2.50 for education. It would be higher if the government actually met our Gonski obligations. And then after the \$2.50 and \$3.50 – \$6 – basically you would have about \$4 left. What I want to say is our interest bill is so high that, of that remaining \$4, \$1 out of every \$10 in 2028–29 will be devoted to servicing interest costs on behalf of that debt, to service that debt. That leaves only \$3 to fund police, our courts system, our child protection system – we see more kids in child protection today than four years ago and certainly more than there were 12 years ago when this government came to office – our roads and our other infrastructure. It all has to be funded out of that \$3. If we do not get debt under control, we cannot reinvest in those services. That is why we are committed to fixing Labor's mess, making sure we can repair the budget so we can invest in the frontline services Victorians need and deserve.

Bills

Equal Opportunity Amendment (Work from Home) Bill 2026

Statement of charter compatibility

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (11:26): Under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, I table a statement of compatibility:

Opening paragraphs

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, (**Charter**), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Equal Opportunity Amendment (Work from Home) Bill 2026 (**Bill**).

In my opinion, the Bill, 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 legislate a right to work from home for two days per week, where reasonable, in the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (**EO Act**). This right is applied on a pro rata basis for employees who do not work full time. The Bill specifies the factors that must be considered by an employer in determining whether it is reasonable for an employee to work from home, being the inherent requirements of the employee's role and the impacts on the employer.

The Bill will provide categories of employees that cannot access the right to work from home. To ensure a well-trained and skilled workforce, employees undertaking a probationary period at the commencement of their employment and employees participating in formal training programs, such as apprentices, trainees, work experience students and interns will not have access to the right at this stage of their employment. However, these employees would be eligible to benefit from the reforms and exercise the right to work from home for two days a week, where reasonable, once their probation period or training program has concluded. Further categories of employees may be prescribed by regulations, if required.

Those employees who can request flexible work arrangements under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (**Fair Work Act**) on the basis of their particular circumstances (for example if the employee is pregnant or is 55 or older) will continue to be able to access these rights for flexible work under that Act, where their request for flexible work arrangements relates to those particular circumstances. Requests for flexible working arrangements under the Fair Work Act, can among other things, including working from home. Certain categories of employees are also already covered by the Fair Work Act.

The dispute resolution pathways under the EO Act, namely the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, will be extended to disputes which arise where an employee considers that their employer has unreasonably refused their right to work from home or contravened the provisions regarding the new right.

Human Rights Issues

In my opinion, the human rights under the Charter engaged by the Bill are the:

- right to recognition and equality before the law (section 8 of the Charter); and
- right to protection of families and children (section 17 of the Charter).

For the reasons outlined below, I am of the view that the Bill is compatible with the Charter because, to the extent that some provisions may limit human rights, those limitations are reasonable and demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society. I consider that other provisions of the Bill promote human rights.

Right to recognition and equality before the law

The Bill engages the right to equality in section 8 of the Charter because it has the potential to both promote and limit equality before the law.

On one hand, access to regular working-from-home arrangements may enhance workplace participation, especially for women and people facing barriers to entry into the workforce, aiding productivity and worker satisfaction.

It also brings the benefits of working from home, such as reduction in the cost of commuting and improved work/life balance, to a broader sector of the Victorian community. In this way, the reform promotes greater equality before the law.

On the other hand, the proposed reforms in the Bill could be said to limit the right to equality with regards to roles which cannot be performed remotely or for employees who lack a suitable environment within which to conduct their work from home. The employees who cannot benefit from the proposed reforms may be disadvantaged by comparison to those whose roles can be performed away from the office. The Bill addresses this by ensuring that the right applies across all business sizes and industries and only exempting limited cohorts of employees. It also requires employers to cover necessary costs to enable the employee to work from home, including essential equipment and secure access to the employer's information systems.

Employees who are otherwise eligible to request flexible working arrangements under the Fair Work Act based on their particular circumstances (such as where the employee is pregnant or is 55 or older), will continue to be able to do so where they are making a request on the basis of those circumstances. However, like other Victorians, if these employees would like to work from home for two days per week because it is their preference and not based on their circumstances, they may do so under the Bill. This promotes equality before the law and ensures existing protections for employees with particular circumstances (such as where the employee is pregnant or is 55 or older), still have access to other pathways to request flexible working arrangements.

A key aspect of the proposed reforms is that the right to work from home will apply only where it is reasonable. 'Reasonableness' will be assessed on a list of factors prescribed in the Bill that relate to the inherent requirements of the employee's role and the impact that working from home would have on the employer.

The Bill further engages the right to equality before the law by potentially impacting the ability of employers and business owners to conduct their business. Industry and employer stakeholders have raised concerns that the reforms will negatively impact on businesses through the requirement to provide equipment for employees working from home, a potential increase in industrial disputes, and challenges in attracting and retaining staff in frontline roles for which work from home is unlikely to be possible. However, these risks are intended to be addressed through the 'reasonableness' factors that must be considered when determining if an employee can work from home.

The 'reasonableness' factors included in the Bill support employers to vigorously analyse employee requests to work from home with regard to the inherent requirements of their role, including the need for in-person attendance to satisfy that role effectively. A consideration when making this assessment is whether the employee's role includes legal requirements related to safety, welfare, supervision or security. This clarifies that the right is not intended to detract from the critical functions that frontline employees complete to keep Victorians safe. The reasonableness factors also require balancing the inherent requirements of the employee's role with the impacts of that individual working from home are likely to have on the employer. This includes productivity and efficiency, safety, supervision, training and professional development of employees, building relationships with stakeholders, clients or customers, customer service outcomes, confidentiality and cost.

In time, it is expected that hybrid working (working from home for a portion of the week) will become the new norm for businesses and employees alike, which will provide benefits for the entire Victorian community.

The Bill aims to strike a balance between ensuring that the right to work from home applies to as broad a sector of Victorian employees as possible, whilst also taking into account the operational realities of businesses, ultimately bringing great benefits for the Victorian community at large. For this reason, to the extent that the Bill limits the right to equality in section 8 of the Charter, this limitation is reasonable and justified.

Right to protection of families and children

Section 17(1) of the Charter provides that ‘families are the fundamental group unit of society and are entitled to be protected by society and the State’. The Bill engages this right because it directly assists in the capacity of eligible employees to maintain and support family life by reducing commuting time and increasing flexibility in managing work and caring responsibilities. A work-from-home entitlement may promote the ability of parents and carers to participate more fully in family life, alongside their employment, thereby supporting the protection of the family unit. In this way, the proposed reforms in the Bill promote the right to protection of families and children. In addition, the Bill does not impact existing entitlements under other legislative frameworks such as the Fair Work Act.

Conclusion

I consider that the Bill is compatible with the Charter because, to the extent that some of the provisions may limit human rights, those limitations are reasonable and demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society in accordance with section 7(2) of the Charter.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Hon. Jacinta Allan MP
Premier

Statement of treaty compatibility

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (11:26): Under the Statewide Treaty Act 2025, I table a statement of treaty compatibility:

In my opinion, the Equal Opportunity Amendment (Work from Home) Bill 2026 (Bill) is compatible with the matters set out in section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* (Treaty Act). I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of the Bill

The Bill proposes to legislate a right to work from home for two days a week through amendments to the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (EO Act).

The Bill will set out criteria for an employer to assess the reasonableness of an employee working from home, which will be based on the inherent requirements of the employee’s role and the impact that employee working from home would have on the employer. The matters to be considered when determining if it is reasonable for an employee to work from home are:

- the inherent requirements of the employee’s role, including whether those requirements can be satisfied
 - without the employee’s attendance in person at their regular workplace; or
 - without the employee using equipment at their regular workplace; or
 - without in person interactions between the employee and members of the public or clients or customers of the employer; and
 - having regard to any legal requirements relating to safety, welfare, security and supervision
- the impact that the employee working from home would have on the employer, including whether the employee working from home on specific days or at specific times
 - would likely cause a significant decrease in productivity or efficiency for the employer; or
 - would have an adverse impact on any person’s safety; or
 - would have a significant adverse impact on supervision, training or professional development of the employer’s employees; or

- would have a significant adverse impact on the capacity to build relationships between the employee and stakeholders, clients or customers of the employer; or
- would have a significant adverse impact on customer service outcomes; or
- would have a significant adverse impact on confidentiality or data protection; or
- would impose financial costs on the employer that are excessive; or
- would require the employer to make changes to the working arrangements of the employee or any other employee that are impractical; or
- would require the employer to make new hirings that are impractical; or
- any prescribed reasons.

The dispute resolution pathways under the EO Act, primarily through the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, will be extended to disputes which arise in relation to an employer deciding that it is not reasonable for an employee to work from home.

Consultation with the First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl

Due to the recent establishment of the First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl, it was not possible to give the First Peoples' Assembly the opportunity to advise on the Bill or for them to otherwise make representations about the effect of the Bill on First Peoples.

Compatibility of the Bill with each of the objects in section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025*

In my opinion, the Bill is compatible with the following objects set out at section 66(3)(d) of the Treaty Act:

- advancing the inherent rights and self-determination of First Peoples;
- addressing the unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation; and
- ensuring the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by First Peoples.

Advancing the inherent rights and self-determination of First Peoples (section 66(3)(d)(i))

The inherent rights of First Peoples, including the right to self-determination, are recognised by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

The Assembly has identified that the right to self-determination for First Peoples includes economic self-determination. The right to economic self-determination, empowers and supports First Peoples to make decisions about First Peoples' financial resources and encompasses the right to freely pursue economic development.

The Bill may indirectly limit the achievement of economic self-determination for First Peoples by imposing obligations on businesses owned and operated by First Peoples. This includes potential increased equipment and administration costs to set up employees working from home.

However, whether the work-from-home entitlement arises is determined by a test of 'reasonableness'. This test is sufficiently broad to address various scenarios which may be faced by a First Peoples-owned business, due to which it may not be possible for the business to allow employees to work from home for the period of time being requested. The reasonableness factors direct the employer to consider operational and financial obstacles which may prevent the business from being able to reasonably offer work-from-home arrangements for employees but are simultaneously sufficiently limited to avoid denials of work-from-home requests based on irrelevant considerations. The test aims to strike the balance between considering the legitimate needs of all businesses, including those operated by First Peoples, against the new right to work from home which will benefit all eligible Victorian employees, including First Peoples.

The Bill will ensure that the right to work from home applies across all business sizes and industries and only exempts limited cohorts of employees such as those on probation and trainees. Ultimately, it is intended that the benefits to the Victorian community will outweigh any potential negative impacts on businesses.

Despite the potential limitation on the right to economic self-determination, the Bill is nonetheless compatible with the object of advancing the inherent rights and self-determination of First Peoples, as the limitation is reasonably justifiable in the circumstances for the following reasons:

- This Bill represents a positive and modern reform that will benefit a large sector of the Victorian community, including First Peoples. The right to work from home reflects contemporary expectations about flexible and hybrid work and helps create more inclusive, adaptable and resilient workplaces.
- The reforms in the Bill may enhance equal participation in employment for people who experience structural barriers to traditional workplace attendance, including First Peoples (and in doing so

advance economic self-determination for those employees). An employee is only entitled to work from home where it is reasonable, taking into account both the requirements of the employee's role and the impacts on the business. On balance, my view is that the obligations on business owners are proportionate when considered alongside the advancements for employees, and the requirement that work-from-home arrangements meet the "reasonableness" test set out in the Bill.

Addressing unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation

The Yoorrook Justice Commission's 'Truth be Told' report ('Yoorrook Report') describes the effects of colonisation on First Peoples. It describes how the gap between outcomes for First Peoples and other Victorians in areas including education and employment is caused by the impacts of colonisation in the past, which continue today.

The Bill may address the unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation. It does this by improving access to employment, including through reducing commuting costs. These measures can help mitigate barriers arising from housing constraints, particularly in remote and regional areas, and support greater workforce participation for people living in rural and regional communities.

In my opinion, the Bill is compatible with the object in section 66(3)(d)(ii) of the Treaty Act because it addresses the unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation due to the following:

- The amendments apply equally to First Peoples and non-First Peoples.
- The ability to work from home improves equality by enhancing equal participation in employment. The Bill is expected to support the workforce participation of First Peoples living in regions where long commutes are a barrier to exclusively working onsite. The Bill may support distribution of economic activity across the state which would support regional businesses owned by First Peoples and boost regional employment.
- The Bill provides greater flexibility to manage work alongside family and cultural responsibilities for a broader sector of the Victorian community and enables greater connection to country and community.

Ensuring the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by First Peoples

A Bill may affect the equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms by First Peoples where, in its express terms or practical effect, it has a differential effect on First Peoples as compared to the broader community.

It is possible that the Bill may not present the same benefits to First Peoples as the broader Victorian community. However, ahead of the reforms being tested, and subsequent data generated, it is not possible to know whether the advantages of the Bill will be proportionately accessed by the First Peoples community, as to the broader Victorian community.

As the Bill does not in its terms deal with First Peoples and does not directly or indirectly in its practical effect engage the human rights or fundamental freedoms of First Peoples, the Bill is compatible with this object.

Hon. Jacinta Allan MP
Premier

Second reading

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (11:26): 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:

The Bill proposes to legislate a right to work from home for two days a week, where reasonable, through amendments to the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (EO Act). The Attorney-General will be the responsible Minister for the new provisions in the EO Act.

For Victorians, working from home has innumerable benefits. It saves families money at a time where every dollar makes a difference. It cuts congestion and improves work-life balance with less time being spent commuting. It increases workplace participation, especially for women and people facing barriers to entry into the workforce, aiding productivity and worker satisfaction. Yet, this is all at risk, as every day Victorian employees are being denied reasonable work from home requests. In an Australian-first, this Bill will create

a right to work from home for two days a week, where reasonable, thereby enabling more Victorian employees to access the benefits of working from home.

These reforms are intended to benefit as many Victorians as possible and to that end, there are no exemptions based on business size or industry. However, the Bill will provide categories of employees that cannot access the right to work from home. To ensure a well-trained and skilled workforce, employees undertaking a probationary period at the commencement of their employment and employees participating in formal training programs, such as apprentices, trainees, work experience students and interns, will not have access to the right at this stage of their employment. However, these employees would be eligible to benefit from the reforms and exercise the right to work from home for two days a week, where reasonable, once their probation period or training program has concluded. Further categories of employees may be prescribed by regulations, if required.

Those employees who can request flexible work arrangements under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) (Fair Work Act) on the basis of their particular circumstances (for example if the employee is pregnant or is 55 or older) will continue to be able to access these rights for flexible work under that Act, where their request for flexible work arrangements relates to those particular circumstances. Requests for flexible working arrangements under the Fair Work Act, can among other things, including working from home. However, like other Victorians, if these employees would like to work from home for two days per week because it is their preference and not based on their circumstances, they may do so under the Bill. This promotes equality before the law. Certain categories of employees are also already covered by the Fair Work Act.

The proposal to introduce a new right to work from home for two days a week will protect employees from unreasonable refusals of work from home requests. Whether it is reasonable for an employee to work from home will only be assessed in relation to the inherent requirements of the employee's role and the impact that the employee working from home will have on the employer. In determining reasonableness, the list of factors to be considered include:

- whether the inherent requirements of the role can be performed remotely or require in-person workplace attendance
- whether the employee can only undertake the inherent requirements of their role using workplace-based equipment
- whether the inherent requirements of the employee's role require in-person interactions including with clients, customers or members of the public
- whether the impact of allowing the employee to work from home would be likely to result in a significant loss in productivity or efficiency for the employer
- whether the impact of the employee working from home would have an adverse impact on safety, or have a significant adverse impact on supervision, training or the professional development of staff, capacity to build stakeholder, client or customer relationships or customer service outcomes, or a significantly adverse impact on confidentiality and data protection
- whether the financial cost of implementation to the relevant employer would be excessive
- whether it would be impractical to change the working arrangements of other Victorian based employees or recruit new employees in Victoria to accommodate the employee working from home.

These reasonableness factors will ensure that only those employees who reasonably can work from home, will be able to do so. For example, our frontline workforces play a critical role in providing care and education and keeping our communities safe. These employees have obligations in relation to safety, welfare, security and supervision that require in-person interaction. The reasonableness factors are drafted to ensure that these critical tasks continue to be carried out in our community. In addition, the Bill makes it clear that legal requirements relating to safety, security, welfare or supervision must be considered (among other things) as part of the inherent requirements of the employee's role.

An employer may determine the specific days of the week that an employee may work from home. In doing so, they will be required to apply the reasonableness factors. As an example, to mitigate any likely significant loss in business efficiency or productivity, an employer may determine that it is only reasonable for the employee to work from home on Mondays and Fridays on the basis that their business's peak trade period is Tuesday to Thursday, and in consideration of the reasonableness factors outlined in the Bill.

An employee who wishes to exercise their right to work from home will be required under the Bill to make the request in writing to the employer, with the employer having to consider the request and respond to the request in writing within 21 days, outlining whether or not they have determined it is reasonable for the

employee to work from home as requested. Where the employer determines that it is not reasonable for the employee to work from home as requested, they must provide written reasons for their decision.

The Bill extends the existing dispute pathways under the EO Act to the new right. Where an employee considers that their employer has unreasonably refused their request to work from home, an employee may lodge a complaint with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission seeking conciliation or make an application direct to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal under the EO Act to resolve the dispute. Where the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal determines that it is reasonable for the employee to work from home, they can order that the employer allow the employee to do so.

Where a dispute raises federal jurisdiction, for example, if one of the parties resides interstate, or where it is not clear which pathway the application is being made under (for example under the Fair Work Act or the Equal Opportunity Act) the matter may be heard by the Magistrates' Court of Victoria. Applications made under the Fair Work Act will continue to be determined by the Fair Work Commission where there is a dispute.

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission will also support implementation of the proposed reform by producing guidance material.

The Bill specifies that the employer is responsible for the reasonable costs associated with enabling the employee to work from home, including IT hardware and software.

The Fair Work Act states that a modern award or enterprise agreement applies subject to the EO Act. The Bill makes it clear that these reforms are not intended to detract from existing and more beneficial flexible working arrangements provided for eligible employees under the federal scheme. This means that a term of a modern award or enterprise agreement that includes flexible work arrangements will have effect, to the extent that it is more beneficial to the employee than the new reforms proposed in the Bill.

The Bill does not alter existing occupational health and safety or workers compensation schemes. Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*, employers have a duty to provide a working environment for their employees that is safe and without risks to health. They must do this so far as is reasonably practicable. The *Workplace Injury Rehabilitation Compensation Act 2013* establishes a 'no fault' injury compensation scheme for people who are injured arising 'out of or in the course of their employment'. These Acts currently apply to employees working from home and will continue to do so following implementation of the Bill.

Similarly, the Bill does not alter existing land taxation requirements. Land tax is not charged on a person's principal place of residence where an employee is working from home, on the basis that they are not conducting their own business from home (they are simply working for their employer at a different location).

Working from home offers significant benefits for employees, families and the broader economy. This Bill represents a positive and modern reform that will benefit the broader Victorian community. The right to work from home reflects contemporary expectations about flexible working and helps create more inclusive, adaptable and resilient workplaces. It strikes the right balance between allowing businesses to meet their operational needs and ensuring that reasonable work from home requests will be protected.

I move that the Bill be read a second time, and I ask that my Second Reading Speech be incorporated into Hansard.

I commend the Bill to the House.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (11:26): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Wednesday 1 July.

Dangerous Goods Transport Bill 2026

Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Dangerous Goods) Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed on motions of Ben Carroll:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (11:28): I am so pleased to rise at this point in time on the Dangerous Goods Transport Bill 2026. I actually heard a lot of the contribution from the member for

Thomastown yesterday, and she talked about the experiences of her own community and how important this bill is, as it directly affects her in the northern suburbs, but I am going to start by just talking a little bit about the intent of the bill. I see the member for Thomastown now, and it was an extraordinary contribution in talking about those personal experiences from the northern suburbs, so I thank her for putting those matters on the record in particular, because this is one of the things that the Labor government really succeed in: listening to our communities and making sure that we respond to those matters that do arise.

I note that this is a framework which has been updated in the most significant way in the last four decades. That is a really important thing in terms of the dangerous goods that are being moved across our state and used by workers across our state and going on to affect communities across our state. This bill delivers on the Labor government's commitment to implementing reforms recommended by Andrew Palmer KC, now Judge Palmer, following a series of really challenging things that happened across our community in terms of dangerous goods. Obviously the amendments that I speak to also apply to the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Dangerous Goods) Bill 2026, as this is a cognate debate covering both of those. Those really challenging events were major chemical fires in Melbourne's northern suburbs and the inner west in 2018 and 2019.

This really fundamentally goes to the illegal stockpiling of dangerous goods across our community and how they have gone on to hurt and affect our community in such a dangerous way. Of course dangerous goods are needed. We do need dangerous goods for all sorts of things, and they can be through agriculture. In the community that I represent in Werribee South there are dangerous goods being used. There is lots of fuel being stored onsite. I was recently with some farmers in Werribee South, and they talked about the challenges of Trump's war in Iran. They talked about how they needed to have more fuel onsite at that point in time, but they have to store that safely. They also use a series of chemicals in different circumstances around agriculture and machinery in particular.

In construction, manufacturing and health care – we use dangerous chemicals to produce our food and support that production. We use them in our hospital environments. We use them in our construction environments. Whether that is fertiliser, fuel, plastic, cleaning products or paint, all of these are across our community and across our economy, but they do carry really inherent risks. We must make sure we protect our community against those inherent risks. We see them on the backs of trucks when we are on the West Gate Freeway in the canisters – they could be corrosive, flammable, combustible, explosive, oxidising. There are many hazardous properties that are dealt with and moved across our state and stored across our community.

I see the member for Melton nodding along. He is one of the people who really had to be at the front line of these matters, because as a former ambulance officer hitting the tools, these are things that must be known when you turn up to an incident. The member for Frankston, who is in this chamber at the moment – a newly minted minister – knows about this in a really sharp way as well, being a former firefighter. The real lived experience of people on this side of government speaks to why these reforms are so important. Dangerous goods also include explosive and security-sensitive ammonium nitrate, and they present security risks to the Victorian community.

One of the matters that I just thought I would raise at this point is that we have a RAAF base in Point Cook – the oldest military aircraft base in the world, established in 1913. One of the things that we talked about at a community consultation, which had several hundred people there – it was an extraordinary community consultation – was the future of the RAAF base. The defence department has identified that it is no longer needed for the defence of the nation, but one of the issues that came up almost immediately was: what PFAS is onsite? What dangerous goods have been stored onsite over time at this air base? It is an air base; of course there is going to be a lot of aviation fuel. There is going to be a lot of challenging material. It is also a RAAF base. There is a shooting range onsite. Of course there has been ammunition and explosive material on that site for a long time. I was very pleased that the defence department were able to talk through the challenges but also the limited challenges on the RAAF Point Cook base site, because that is important for our community as we

think about its future. RMIT has been doing pilot training there for 30 years. It is a really great example of how we support training and improved education across our state – something that I hope continues there for some time. The storage of dangerous goods goes to the future usage of land sites.

Another defence base across Melbourne, the Maribyrnong defence site, knows really directly the challenges of poor storage of dangerous material. We know with PFAS that we have faced as a government real challenges around dealing with that over time. This is why this bill is so important, because it is important both for the present circumstances in storage and movement across our state but also the future circumstances, because if it is not stored right, it does become a real risk for our community. I will get on to a couple of examples of that which really drive home why we need to be so careful about this. As I said, one previously raised by the member for Thomastown is the illegal stockpiling of chemical waste that was occurring across 2018 and 2019.

In August 2018 in West Footscray – I saw the member for Footscray earlier, and I am sure this is very much imprinted in her mind – a warehouse fire broke out. It contained millions of litres of toxic chemical waste – millions. It was an extraordinary accumulation, and it should not have been there. Two hundred firefighters needed to turn up, and 40 firefighting appliances were involved in the response. There were more than 100 injuries reported as a result of that, and health issues from exposure to smoke and other substances, and fatigue, were reported. A number of firefighters, who did an extraordinary job in just turning up – when many in the community need to walk away or get away from a situation, they turn up and they run towards that, and they did – have experienced health problems as a result of fighting that fire in particular. It is an extraordinary thing that firefighters do every single day.

The water run-off from this terrible, terrible incident contaminated the neighbouring Stony Creek. It killed wildlife and destroyed vegetation. There were more than 2000 dead fish recovered. Community health warnings then lasted several months after the incident. So when we are talking about this bill, we are talking about things that go on to have a long tail in our community both for those people who respond to the incident, those firefighters and those emergency workers who turn up, but also the broader community – it goes on to impact livability across our community. The rehab work – well, there were 70 million litres of polluted water that had to be removed. Seventy million litres of water – that is an extraordinary amount. There was more than 2800 cubic metres of contaminated sediment, which upset and destroyed the environment in this area.

I do not need to go on further on that one. But in Campbellfield in Melbourne's northern suburbs – and this is what the member for Thomastown really drove her points home around – in April 2019 another large fire broke out at a chemical waste processing facility. I am not going to get long enough to go through all the issues that I want to cover in this, but I do want to just thank the minister for bringing forward these bills. I also want to thank all the ministerial team and departmental staff and the EPA, who have been working on these matters for some time. These are important works in front of the Parliament. I hope the opposition is supporting this bill – I am looking over, but I am not seeing any nods. I commend this bill to the house.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (11:38): Acting Speaker De Martino, it is good to see you in the chair. I just want to give a shout-out. Yesterday you provided me with a little gift from Sicily, which is fantastic. It is a bottle opener, and I am sure it will be put to good use, so thank you.

A member interjected.

Steve McGHIE: No, I have not drunk it yet, because it is a bottle opener. We are talking about dangerous goods. I can assure you that what I will be using it on are definitely dangerous goods. Anyway, thank you for that.

I rise in support of the Dangerous Goods Transport Bill 2026 and the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Dangerous Goods) Bill 2026. Dangerous goods are something that most of us rarely think about, yet they are part of our everyday lives. As the previous speaker, the member for Point

Cook, raised, a lot of the dangerous goods that are in our community are used for many, many products – for cleaning products, fertiliser, food, fuel, plastics, paint and many other products. We just take it for granted that these dangerous goods are safe, and we only think about them when things go wrong. But every day, dangerous goods travel along our roads and railways and move through our ports and are stored and used in workplaces right across Victoria. They are used to produce the food that we eat and of course the fuel that we rely on and the medicines that treat us. Building materials are made up of them, and they are used to construct our homes and our buildings. They are products that we use every day. That is how important these goods are, and that is why we need to treat most of them with caution but also transport them with caution. They are certainly essential to our economy and our modern lifestyle, but of course they do carry some inherent risk.

Of course when dangerous goods are handled safely we do not notice them. It is fine. Everything goes well. But when they are not, the consequences can be devastating not only for the workers that are directly involved but for all the emergency services personnel, the surrounding communities and the environment – again, as has just been alluded to by the member for Point Cook, the damage that has been done by some of these spills and fires and things like that. That is why this legislation is so important.

These bills represent the most significant reforms to Victoria's dangerous goods framework in more than 40 years, and they implement the recommendations from the Palmer review. I think there were 49 recommendations. They modernise the legislation that has simply not kept pace with contemporary industry and strengthen the powers available to WorkSafe Victoria to prevent tragedies before they occur. That is the whole idea. It is about prevention of any disasters that may occur around these goods. For us as legislators, our responsibility is not simply just to respond after a disaster strikes, it is to learn from any failures that we have had in the past and ensure that our laws will reduce the likelihood of any failures ever occurring again. That is what we hope to do with these legislative changes and the introduction of this legislation.

We have been fairly fortunate in Victoria, but we have experienced some reminders of what can happen when dangerous goods are not managed appropriately and properly. In my former career as a paramedic I certainly attended a number of incidents involving dangerous goods that I have kept in my mind since finishing as a paramedic. I will go to two events that I certainly attended. I actually looked them up in some media stories today, but the first one was back in 1986. It was called the Sims Metal explosion in Brooklyn. I was a paramedic working out of the Sunshine branch. It was quite a distance from this factory, and unfortunately this factory exploded because of a furnace exploding. Unfortunately four men were killed and seven people were seriously injured. We were the second ambulance to arrive at the scene. I was working with a good friend of mine who is now retired, Gavin Hall, out of the Sunshine branch, and we were directed to a gentleman. When we arrived at this Sims Metal explosion – and this was a massive sort of warehouse-type building – it was flattened. It looked like a bomb had hit the place – absolutely flattened – and the poor gentleman that we were directed to had all of his clothing blown off. He was squatted down on the ground. He was conscious. All of his skin was falling off him, but he still had his work boots on. As I say, he was conscious, and we transported that gentleman to Western Hospital, Footscray, and then on to the Alfred Hospital. He would have suffered with at least 90 per cent burns. I do not know the outcome for him. I assume he did not survive. I am assuming that. As I say, there were four dead and seven men that were seriously injured in that incident. To see the size of that building that was flattened through this explosion was incredible.

A few years later I attended the Coode Island fire and explosion, which happened in August of 1991. There were a couple of incidents there at Coode Island. There was an incident on 21 August 1991, and it happened in the afternoon at around about 2 o'clock or a quarter past 2, where there was an explosion there. A 600,000-litre chemical storage tank exploded. I think there were several hundred firefighters involved in the response to that fire. They did contain that after a few hours, but interestingly enough a pipe the next day exploded also. They were such significant fires for the people that remember the

Coode Island fires. People were evacuated from nearby suburbs, Footscray Primary School was evacuated, buildings were closed down and the ships ceased coming up the river, so there were many surrounds affected by it. I remember we responded to that incident, but we were stood off it. We were put up at the Western Bulldogs football ground at the time, and many, many emergency service workers were there just on standby to attend to that incident that went for a number of days and affected the local communities.

I think the clean-up bill for that was around about \$35 million in regard to that incident. So you can see the devastation of these particular things that occur when they do occur inappropriately. It makes you think about that down the track. Of course when you attend dangerous goods events as an emergency service worker, there are a lot of unknowns – things such as: what are the chemicals that are present and are they stable, is there a risk of another explosion, is the smoke toxic, is the structure safe, has everyone been evacuated, can crews safely enter? Fortunately for paramedics, generally they do not go into those scenes until the fireys declare them safe. Thanks to the fireys for doing that. But, as I say, paramedics will not engage directly into those facilities unless they are declared safe. So you can see the importance of this legislation in regard to how it affects our local communities and all of our emergency service workers that attend. A shout-out to the fireys in regard to the outcomes of these incidents for them, because many, many fireys suffer from the outcomes of these incidents due to their exposure to these chemicals. It is certainly very, very dangerous for the emergency service workers that are directly involved in these incidents.

We have got to reduce the risk, and that is what this legislation provides for. It provides for greater powers to WorkSafe to investigate and to enter facilities to prevent – and that is the key to it – any chance of these fires occurring and these chemical exposures happening. They have been referred to, the two fires that happened in more recent years, in 2018 in West Footscray and then the 2019 one out at Campbellfield, and the damage that was done by those and who was exposed to them. I think 200 firefighters were involved in both of those situations, and there were surrounding suburbs that were affected and the clean-up costs. But these bills provide for greater penalties. They provide for greater investigation and allow WorkSafe to enter premises to detect and prevent any potential risk to the community. They are important bills, and I want to thank the minister responsible for bringing this legislation forward and these two bills. I commend the bills to the house.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (11:48): I too rise to speak on this cognate debate on the two pieces of legislation before us this morning, those being the Dangerous Goods Transport Bill 2026 and the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Dangerous Goods) Bill 2026. The real aim of these two pieces of legislation is to deliver on key recommendations from a really important report, the Palmer report. They make some of the biggest changes to Victoria's dangerous goods framework in over 40 years. These are two really good bills that will have immeasurable impacts in my community in Melbourne's west.

I would like to begin by acknowledging that dangerous goods are really important in my local economy in Melbourne's west but also here in Victoria's economy. They are used to produce essential goods, including cleaning products, fertilisers, plastics, paints and so many things that we use without thinking too hard about how they are made. So many of these factories are actually in the electorate of Laverton in the industrial belt that I also have the privilege of representing. The industries that use these dangerous goods are really important. There are lots of jobs attached to them, and the work that goes into handling these dangerous goods by workers is just as important. Most people do the right thing. What we know is that the folks who work in these industries – the people who make the chemicals and the people that make the plastics, the explosives and the paints – so many of them live in Melbourne's west in my electorate, but they also come there to work. They deserve to be able to work safely and go home safely under a legislative framework that protects them from these dangerous goods and prevents the risk that their workplace, at the end of the day, goes up in flames.

The member for Melton has just talked about some of the experiences he remembers from when these places went up in flames. It is a truly horrendous thing, seeing the impact and listening again to the

impact these workplace accidents have had on workers. The reality for Melbourne's west is that we have had some really horrendous, bad safety hazards, chemical explosions and major fires that have broken out in our local community just over the past couple of years. In 2018 there was – this just feels like yesterday; I remember it like yesterday – a massive, big warehouse fire that broke out in West Footscray involving millions of litres of chemical waste. This fire took more than a week to put out entirely; it just kept burning and burning. It was so close to the boundary of my electorate, and I have no doubt it impacted folks who live in Braybrook and Sunshine but also folks who work in Tottenham and Brooklyn, to say nothing of the impact this had on Stony Creek – if you are a Westie, everyone knows Stony Creek – with the fire water runoff and contamination. It killed over 2300 fish and eels, which were collected from the estuary. This stuff hits really close to home. It is something that I do have to say sits in the minds of Westies, and we remember these incidents like they were yesterday.

This was the one fire that took more than 200 firefighters and 40 firefighting appliances to put out. It burnt for a week. There was another one in 2019 in Campbellfield in Melbourne's north. Same story: another chemical waste processing facility. That too took several days to get under control. Both of these events were why our government commissioned the Palmer review of the Dangerous Goods Act 1985 in the first place, and its associated regulations. In the meantime in my electorate in Melbourne's west, we have gone on and we have seen further incidents. Just a few years ago – I think it was probably about two years ago – there was a set of chemical fires in Laverton North and in Derrimut, which fall partly in my electorate. You may have seen the plumes of smoke billowing all the way up from the other side of Port Phillip Bay in St Kilda. If I recall correctly, this was not the only one. So when I say my community are interested in these two bills and that these two bills are so important, I mean it, because what we are seeking to do is prevent this from happening in the first place and make these places so much safer.

We want stronger regulations. We want stronger protections so that workers and the locals who work in these factories are safe from major chemical fires and explosions and so that communities nearby can enjoy cleaner skies and waterways free from fire, water contamination and horrible industrial and hazardous pollution. The Palmer report was handed down in 2022, and what it actually told us was that the existing Dangerous Goods Act was no longer fit for purpose and that we needed to change how we handle dangerous goods here in Victoria. Forty-nine recommendations came out of this inquiry, of which we accepted 22 in full and another 14 in principle. Eleven required further consideration and work. What both of these bills do today is address the 24 recommendations from the review, and all of them require legislative change. Most importantly, they also enable the other accepted recommendations to be implemented through these regulations.

What I will note is that the report also made two alternative suggestions for these reforms: either incorporate dangerous goods laws into the existing OH&S legislation or create a new standalone piece of legislation. We have actually gone ahead and opted for the latter. One of the reasons for doing so is that we think it will reduce the risk of inconsistency with other acts over time, which is really important. It is also going to make it easier for duty holders, like the businesses that will need to comply with the act, to be better placed to understand their obligations and compliance requirements if there is to be one piece of legislation that governs this framework that they need to understand. Basically we are going to make it simpler for businesses to follow the laws and ensure these workplaces are safe and that we no longer have these terrible workplace incidents and fires that seem to happen all too often, particularly in Melbourne's west.

What exactly do these two bills do to make good on these changes? We start off with the amendments to the OH&S act to make the main regulator for dangerous goods – manufacturing them, handling them, using them and so on. We are going to introduce a new general duty that requires a person who undertakes activities that involve dangerous goods to make sure, as much as they can, that they are undertaking these activities in a way that is safe and manages the potential risks that their activities pose to the health and safety of others, which is really important.

In addition to this, the bill also introduces a number of new offences for people and for businesses who do not do the right thing when handling dangerous goods. These include making it an offence if they fail to comply with the new general duty, as well as aggravated blatant breaches of the general duty where someone actively does the wrong thing and risks the health and safety of others. Enforcement tools will be expanded to address these breaches, which will include the introduction of civil penalties, as well as stronger powers for WorkSafe Victoria to go in and investigate and enforce the law against businesses who might not be doing the right thing and taking the right precautions and duties required when working with these goods. I think our government's messages to businesses are clear: we are making the law easier for you to understand, you are not having to go to numerous pieces of law and regulations and legislation to see what your duties and obligations are, and if you breach them and you do it on purpose, we are coming after you and you will face the full force of the law. That is something people in my community will wholeheartedly agree with and have wanted to see for a very, very, very long time.

WorkSafe inspectors will have the power to enter a property if they need to intervene and address a risk with these goods. This will make sure that we are being proactive in identifying risks and failures to be safe early on. So before an incident occurs we want to be able to identify those risks and not just have to come in after the place has gone up in flames or people have lost their lives.

These are two really important bills. There is a lot to talk about in relation to them and there is a lot that has been talked about. I think I am the last speaker. I do have to say that they might not make the front page of the news or the 5 o'clock news or 6 o'clock news, whatever you are watching tonight, but these will make a huge impact within my local community. I know a lot of people raise some of these dangerous goods and hazardous goods facilities in Melbourne's west. Like I said, a lot of people work at them. But what I can say to people now is that we have put in legislation that is looking at preventing things from happening in the first place, and for those doing the wrong thing, they will face the full force of the law with WorkSafe coming after them.

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (11:58): Thank you, Acting Speaker Kathage, for replacing me in the chair so I could speak on these two incredibly important bills, this cognate debate in support of the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Dangerous Goods) Bill 2026 and the Dangerous Goods Transport Bill 2026. I listened with great interest to both the member for Laverton and the member for Melton and previous speakers about these bills. They are vitally important. It has been about four decades since we have really tackled this area in legislation with new legislation, and it could not come at a better time.

I am not sure if you know, but my husband has been a national OH&S professional manager of health, safety and environment – the title sort of changes depending on where you work – for a good quarter of a century, which makes him sound very old and he probably will not appreciate that from me, but tough. But really it speaks to the fact that over his 25 years of experience in occupational health and safety I have heard many of his points of view on OH&S and the importance of ensuring that we are safe when we go to work and that we come home in the condition that we went to work in. But also in terms of dangerous goods, it is vitally important that the wider public is safe as well – those frontline workers who turn up, the workers themselves who manage and handle the dangerous goods but the greater public too.

As the member for Melton was describing before, these dangerous goods are really important goods; we cannot function without them. Many things that we do in society require these dangerous goods. They are used in agriculture, they are used in construction and manufacturing, they are used in health care, they enable production and distribution of essential goods – that is, fuel, fertiliser, cleaning products, plastics, paints and food. We need dangerous goods to operate in a modern society, but we need to ensure that the way they are handled, stored and distributed is with as much care as possible to prevent terrible incidents from occurring. Unfortunately there have been past incidents where dangerous goods have not been managed correctly, and the impacts on the community and on the environment have been so profound and have been devastating for some.

The chemical fires at West Footscray in 2018 and Campbellfield in 2019 were really defining moments for our state. That warehouse in West Footscray, which was storing millions of litres of chemical waste, ignited in a fire that burnt for over a week. I know my colleagues have described this fire, but to actually try and conceive that more than 200 firefighters were deployed to respond to it – that is an extraordinary number of people, and many of them sustained injuries and long-term health impacts as a result of toxic exposure.

I mentioned before my husband being a 25-year career professional as a national manager of occupational health, safety and environment. He is also a volunteer firefighter. He would not have turned up to West Footscray, because he is not a professional firefighter and we live out in the hills of course, but I know that it is incredibly important that first responders, frontline responders, are not exposed to things that are going to have a long-term health impact on them. It is incredibly vital, and these two bills are absolutely essential. The environmental damage as well – it is no surprise that I have quite a passion for the environment, given the nature of my electorate and my background in organics. I know that there are a lot of dangerous goods used in food production, but toxic fire water run-off contaminating Stony Creek killed thousands of fish and damaged ecosystems. It can take an incredibly long time for those ecosystems to recover, if at all. Communities were warned at the time that they had to avoid contact with the water for not a matter of hours, days or weeks but for months. That is quite the environmental impact, but the potential impact on human health too was profound.

Then in April 2019 another major fire broke out at a chemical facility in Campbellfield, and again firefighters were deployed in large numbers and workers ended up hospitalised. Toxic smoke spread across surrounding suburbs, and that forced school closures, disrupted daily life and had an incredible impact on people. It is quite frightening as a person to think, ‘I can’t breathe the air outside. It may do damage to me.’ Again, in the wake of these incidents we realised more needed to be done. Regulators actually uncovered multiple sites across Melbourne and regional Victoria where dangerous chemicals were being illegally stored. It is abhorrent that this goes on. It is abhorrent that it occurred in the past. This legislation that we are debating today means that there will be real teeth, because we saw that there were systemic weaknesses in our regulation, oversight and enforcement of dangerous goods, and the system simply had not kept pace with the risks. Well, it is going to now.

The Palmer report, which was delivered in 2022, found Victoria’s Dangerous Goods Act 1985 was no longer fit for purpose and was outdated, inconsistent with modern approaches and misaligned with the occupational health and safety framework which governs workplace safety more broadly. Forty-nine recommendations were made to modernise the system, and these bills give effect to that work. They are not minor amendments. This is not tinkering around the edges. These are structural reforms designed to create a safer, more coherent, more effective framework for managing dangerous goods.

The first major reform is delivered through the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Dangerous Goods) Bill. This bill incorporates dangerous goods regulation into the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, making it the primary framework governing how dangerous goods are handled, stored, manufactured, processed, used and supplied in Victoria. It is a significant and practical change. Previously, obligations were spread across separate legislation, and that creates complexity and potential inconsistency. There is nothing more dangerous, I think, than complex laws. You do not know where to find them, how they overlap, how they interact with each other. It makes sense to bring them into a single coherent framework, one that is already well understood by industry and already aligned with modern risk-based regulation. This is actually going to make my husband’s job easier.

It will make it easier in many ways for OH&S professionals to understand exactly what the legislation is and how it should be applied, because ultimately these laws are about one very critical principle: every Victorian deserves to be safe, from the workplace to the wider community, and our laws must reflect that expectation, and they must ensure that it is made possible.

The duty at the centre of this framework is a new general duty. This duty requires any person undertaking activities involving dangerous goods to ensure as far as reasonably practicable that those

activities are carried out safely and without risk to health, safety and property. It is a fundamental shift. It moves beyond a purely prescriptive model to one based on proactive risk management. It requires duty holders to identify hazards, assess risks and take reasonable steps to eliminate or minimise those risks. It places responsibility where it belongs: with those best positioned to control the risks.

Complementing this reform is the Dangerous Goods Transport Bill. It establishes a standalone act to regulate the transport of dangerous goods by road, rail and inland water and introduces its own general duty requiring that dangerous goods are transported safely and without risk to public safety, property and the environment. The separation is both deliberate and necessary. Transport involves unique risks and is governed by national frameworks, including the Australian dangerous goods code. By creating a standalone act Victoria is now aligning with most other jurisdictions and ensuring consistency across state borders, and that alignment is critical. Dangerous goods are transported across jurisdictions every day, and a consistent regulatory approach supports compliance, reduces confusion and enhances safety outcomes nationally.

I was listening with intent to the member for Laverton talking about the strong laws being supported by strong enforcement – that is critical to these laws. Both bills introduce a range of offences that reflect different levels of culpability, from failures to comply with duties to aggravated breaches to reckless conduct that places lives at risk. These provisions send a clear message: safety is not optional, and serious breaches will carry serious consequences. It also expands the use of civil penalties. It provides regulators with a more flexible and proportionate enforcement toolkit. Not every breach requires criminal prosecution, but every breach must result in accountability, so courts will have access to a broader range of orders, including injunctions, monetary penalties and requirements to undertake safety improvements. This ensures enforcement is not just punitive, it is preventative, and that is such a critical focus of these reforms. There is so much more to this, talking about the strengthening of WorkSafe Victoria's powers. With only a few seconds left on the clock, I do commend both bills to the house.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit – Minister for Youth, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (12:08): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (12:08): I am delighted to rise and make a contribution on the Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026. I am new to this portfolio. I am delighted to be part of this racing portfolio, and it is my first speaking opportunity as the Shadow Minister for Racing. I want to put a few comments on record before we begin and remind us all that racing is an extremely important industry in our communities in our state. It is much, much more than just horses running around a track or those having a cheeky punt on a Saturday. It is about the horses, the greyhounds, the owners, the trainers, the jockeys, the feed suppliers, the fashion and the entertainment, but most of all it brings people together, and it does not matter whether you are at the harness races, the dogs or the thoroughbreds. It is also a sense of community, an opportunity for people to meet and chat and have a laugh. Picking a winner is part of the joy, but it is not the ultimate prize – thank heavens for that because rarely do I pick the winner. Hopefully in this portfolio, member for Berwick, I might be able to improve that as time goes on by studying the form guide a little more. It is about making an effort to dress up and making an effort to support others.

Racing is just as popular in the regions as it is in metropolitan Melbourne. We know the big races in Melbourne of course, the big days out: the Melbourne Cup, the Caulfield Cup, the Cox Plate. There are too many to mention, but the list is long. Victoria really is the heartbeat of the racing industry in Australia, but we have got to make sure that we continue to keep that.

Apart from the thoroughbreds, obviously the AG Hunter Cup is the big event for harness racing. Of course the world's greatest greyhound events are here in Melbourne as well: the Sportsbet Melbourne Cup for greyhounds, the Australian Cup at the Meadows and the Phoenix, plus many, many more. All three codes play an extremely important role in Victoria's economy. In fact the racing industry contributes \$4.7 billion annually to the Victorian economy, and that turns into 35,000 full-time jobs across the state. More than 121,000 Victorians are directly employed, volunteering or participating in racing activities. As I said before about regional Victoria, not surprisingly more than 50 per cent of the economic contribution occurs in regional Victoria. That is phenomenal.

I know in my own electorate of Ovens Valley, the Dederang Cup is one of those picnic races – there are few genuine picnic races left on the calendar these days where you can drag your own esky in and you have a great day watching the horses run uphill at Dederang to the finishing post. That is a terrific event on the calendar in February in my electorate, and it is followed by the Wangaratta Cup, which is at the Wangaratta Turf Club. I know Neil Membrey as chair and Emma Merlo run a great organisation there. In fact I was out there on Sunday for one of their events. Again, it is an outstanding turf club, with a great track and plenty of trainers. Sunday was like a spring day; it was certainly a beautiful day to be racing in the middle of June. You would not have thought the weather would be as beautiful as it was, but when you live in God's own country, it always is quite nice in Wangaratta.

As I say, there are many parts to it, but I look at the trainers, and in Wangaratta again I look locally with John Ledger, Benny Brisbane and Dan McCarthy, to mention a few, and there are plenty of trainers. The trainers are a very important part of the economic activity around the Wangaratta Turf Club, and they would be for all clubs around Victoria. Many of us have had a small stake in a horse – well, some of us have had a small stake in a horse once or twice or three times. It is just that excitement of being part of a horse. It does not matter whether you own a hair on the mane or what it might be; it is just exciting to be part of and be involved in the racing industry. As I say, it brings people together and brings communities together. And then once you have got a small share, you have got skin in the game, you are connected, and from there on, you get to enjoy it. There are those that are more serious into horse racing and have invested heavily into it, whereas people like us have just got a small investment but get just as much fun out of that small investment. And if it turns into a profit, that is more luck than good management.

As I say, it is not just my electorate, but so many of the electorates are home to some form of racing, whether it is harness, thoroughbreds or the greyhounds. It really is an important industry, and the thoroughbred sector is by far the largest component. A study has recently found that the thoroughbred component contributes \$3.2 billion and supports 25,000 full-time jobs – just the thoroughbred industry. The Victorian industry is estimated to generate more than \$500 million annually in taxation revenue, so it is a good thing for the state – it is a revenue earner. I mean, it is a win-win-win. Of course we always know we need to look after those who have got a gambling problem, and there is lots of compliance around that, and we understand that and we agree with that. But we also need to make sure that those who are punting safely are generating the income, and it is important – it is a very handy income for the state government. The spring carnival, as I mentioned, is one of the largest events in Victoria. Just going back a couple of years, the Spring Racing Carnival generated \$785 million in economic benefit, and the Melbourne Cup Carnival alone generated \$502 million for the Victorian economy.

That is my summary on the industry itself, and certainly I will tackle a bit more of the bill now as we go forward. I am mindful that as we speak, we are still in discussions with the minister on a couple of changes to this bill. We thought we had an agreement on a couple of issues, and I will go into those.

We still plan to not oppose the bill in this house, but we may have to consider our position in the upper house as we go forward. I will go through that a little bit further.

We are supportive of the restructures of the greyhound racing industry and Harness Racing Victoria to make sure it is the same as Racing Victoria, adopting that legal structure of a company limited by guarantee. It is important that these changes take place to be in harmony with Racing Victoria and that they are made as we go forward. Changes are also being made to the Victorian Racing Tribunal, and they have been well received by the sector. We have got no opposition to correcting the prior oversight, with the amendments being made to the Australian Grands Prix Act 1994 in relation to the powers of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation regarding motorsport events – I will talk about those in a bit – and some concerns with the changes proposed to remove duplication in the racing industry, particularly regarding the proposed merger of the integrity bodies. Some of those have been addressed.

The Liberals and Nationals agree with the removal of duplication of integrity oversights but have been concerned about the funding of the new merged entity, the timing of the bill and the new structure. I will talk about the funding in more detail, on which, again, the minister has worked with us to seek a better outcome. But my understanding is that we still have a little bit of work to go. On the funding of the new merged entity, this is where our concerns lie. At this stage the Department of Justice and Community Safety contributes about \$1.5 million to \$1.8 million annually into racing integrity, and the industry itself contributes about \$500,000 annually. So we are talking about a 25–75 per cent split.

The bill says that over a period of a couple of years this entire cost would be shifted to the industry, which we think is unacceptable. We struck an agreement to say that the industry would not be paying any more than what they currently pay. I heard just before I rose on this bill that that may not be the case. I think it is really important that we cannot have integrity bodies being totally funded by the industry, because that is like marking your own homework. You cannot have an industry that says, ‘If we’re in charge of integrity, we’ll just cut that down to \$100,000 a year because it’s in our best interests or it doesn’t suit us to have a too fine a point on the integrity.’ You need to have integrity bodies completely removed from the industry, and that is why the government should be contributing. As I say, that has been about 75 per cent, and the industry contributes the other 25 per cent. We just cannot go shifting who funds that. For moral reasons and obligations and certainly for practical reasons about, as I say, marking your own homework, if you are the one who pays the bill for integrity, you can then choose to turn or dial that up or down as it suits you. We have still got some concerns there, but as I say, I think we can still work through that with the minister between houses and I will be happy to do that as we go forward.

As I said, the industry raised concerns. The industry is concerned about footing the bill. Dollars are tight in the racing industry, and we have to make sure that we are fair. As I say, it is more about the look. It is not a good look if the industry is paying that entire integrity bill and then becomes in charge of integrity. That raises a couple of concerns, the first being that the industry is already facing financial headwinds and cannot afford to assume the entire cost. Secondly, as I said before, it is not a good look that the industry is entirely funding its own integrity department. We have suggested a better approach for a structure similar to the Queensland model, where the industry makes a contribution but the integrity commission is predominantly funded by government. We will continue to pursue that between the houses over the winter break to make sure that we get the best result for the industry and the best result for everybody.

We want integrity. I will go on to say a little bit later how important integrity is to this industry. It is absolutely paramount. But again, at the same time we have got to make sure that it is done the right way and that not only do we have integrity but we are seen to have integrity as well. That is really important, because there are those who do not support this industry, and we have to make sure that we are squeaky clean when it comes to integrity.

The other part of the bill is the timing of this bill, which seemed to us to be a little bit odd. I know we have to get bills through before Parliament is prorogued later this year, but it is also important to

understand there is an integrity commission report being handed down in New South Wales and due to be handed down on 30 June. Brad Hazzard is a former politician, and he has been given the job of looking into matters of integrity and proper regulation of thoroughbred racing in New South Wales. Again, if this report is handed down on 30 June, and it is there for all to see, it is an odd time to see what might come out of that integrity bill, because we are talking about the two pre-eminent racing jurisdictions: Victoria and New South Wales. It would be interesting to see what is in that. If it is handed down when it should be on 30 June without any further extensions, we might be able to roll some of those and have those discussions between houses, because we do not want to have to go and revisit this bill again somewhere down the track because something has come out of this integrity report, the Hazzard report, that we think we should be adopting here in Victoria as well. It would be a waste to then go on and have to redraft legislation if we can mould it into this legislation as we go through the upper house. So the jury is out a bit on that, and we will see what happens when this integrity report, or the Hazzard report, is handed down. Most industry participants agree that it is beneficial to have uniformity in integrity right across the racing jurisdiction in this country. We have got jockeys who fly from one track to another. They are in Victoria in the morning and then New South Wales in the afternoon or in Victoria today and in Sydney tomorrow. If we can try to keep integrity structures steady across particularly Victoria and New South Wales, it will certainly be beneficial to the whole industry.

On the new structure numbers, I spoke with the minister about what the numbers were in the bill as it reads. The current integrity commissioner has an office of four, the Victorian Racing Integrity Board has a nine-member panel and a CEO, 10 all up, so that is a total of 14 across the integrity agencies. This bill, prior to our discussions, suggested that that would just drop down to three people in that panel, so all up we would go from 14 down to seven in total. Although stakeholders are supportive of basic restructure, there is also concern that the state of integrity has been cut in half from that 14 down to seven. We have spoken to the industry and spoken with the minister and have proposed five, and that amendment is coming through before our eyes. I have been handed what that amendment will be, and that is:

1. Clause 32, page 27, line 6, omit “3” and insert “5”.
2. Clause 32, page 27, line 29, omit “3” and insert “5”.

That is changing from three board members to five board members. So again, the minister has worked with us to ensure that that takes place. I think it is a better number. It is a clearer picture when we are dropping down, as I say – still making sure that integrity is the most important component of all this.

There is a section in here on the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, and in the bill briefing we discussed that there is an oversight under the Australian Grands Prix Act 1994 regarding motorsport competitions on the day of either a Formula One GP or a MotoGP at Phillip Island. Sadly, as we all know, we are losing the MotoGP to South Australia. As a keen MotoGP supporter myself, even if Jack Miller is further down the standings at the moment, it is very sad to see the MotoGP leave the island after 28 years. We have lost another international event under this government’s watch. I was there when Wayne Gardner won his world championship, and I saw a couple of Michael Doohan’s – I think he won five all up. I do not think I saw any of Casey Stoner’s world championship wins. Again, it is a shame to see the loss of the MotoGP at Phillip Island, but this tired government has certainly failed Victorians by letting that event move interstate, and that economic activity will be dashed in places like San Remo and Phillip Island and in all the pubs and cafes that lead to the island. If I can be a little more specific, I even find in my electorate of Ovens Valley, which is 3 or 4 hours away from Phillip Island, when the MotoGP is on the bikes come down Hume, and they will peel off and they will come through Wangaratta and go over to Myrtleford and up over the top and go down through Bruthen and down to Phillip Island that way, or they will get to Benalla and they go over the Black Spur and head down through Pakenham.

It is the pubs and clubs and cafes and everything that benefit from those heading to the island. It does not matter where you are heading from, whether you are coming from Brisbane, Sydney or beyond. It

is a broader community than just the Phillip Island and San Remo community that is missing out. That will be a massive loss to that community and all cafes and pubs en route to the island. If we could get that race back again in the future, it would be a significant leg-up. It is a shame to lose that.

We look at the racing calendar. From a racing perspective Peter V'landys and those from New South Wales are breathing down our neck and looking to take any opportunities that Victoria has because we are the king or the queen of the racing industry here in Victoria. We need to be careful that we do not lose races like the Moto GP, that we do not lose harness, thoroughbred or greyhound races to any other states. I will certainly be fighting tooth and nail to keep both our metropolitan Melbourne meetings intact and our regional racing in Victoria on track, because the financial success and the economic input is just so important to our smaller local communities regionally.

In harness racing there have been plenty of challenges, and we have got to work through those challenges, whether it is the sale of the land around Melton. There are certainly some expectations that we have got to keep this industry strong, and we will step through this process. I know the industry has concerns, and we have got to make sure that we get responsible management and then a clear path forward to make sure that harness racing remains strong in Victoria. We cannot afford to lose an industry like that, and we have just got to work through how we are going to achieve that.

This bill amends the eligibility criteria for appointment of a deputy chair to remove the requirement that all deputy chairs be former or current judicial officers and that each deputy chair has knowledge and experience in a specific racing code. It removes that obligation to have been a judicial officer or currently be a judicial officer.

Dylan Wight interjected.

Tim McCURDY: The member for Tarneit is very keen, trying to wind me up because he is now back. He said to make sure that I did not finish before he was back, but now he is back and he gets to listen to me for just a little bit longer.

The old saying is 'You don't know what you've got till it's gone'. Well, we know what we have got in the racing industry. It is just so important to our economic communities, to our state, to regional communities, to all concerned. We know what we have got, and as Neale Daniher would have said, 'Just don't muck it up.' That is what we cannot afford to do with racing industry.

We need continuous investment into the racing industry, into thoroughbreds. It is in good shape, but it needs continuous work and continuous investment. We have seen in recent years a huge investment in Flemington and the redevelopment of Moonee Valley is going on as we speak. Caulfield, under the helm of Tanya Fullarton, is always striving for continuous improvement. Harness racing, as I say, needs the complete vision: it needs a strong plan, a healthy vision and financial security. I am not sure Labor has ticked all three of those boxes yet. We have to make sure that we tick all three of those – the strong plan, the healthy vision and the financial security – to make sure harness racing is secure going forward. Greyhound racing has had its ups and downs, we all know, but now it is on track, it is a consistent performer, and I am looking forward to supporting that industry.

As I say, we are not opposing this bill in this house, but we will reserve our position in the upper house pending negotiations and discussions as we go forward. We will see what the Hazzard report comes back with, and where possible or if needed we can talk about that between houses over the winter break, because it is important that we get that right. If something significant comes out of the Hazzard report, and there may not be anything and it might be just not worth worrying about, it is certainly something we should consider. Integrity in racing is what this bill is all about. We know integrity is the cornerstone of the racing industry. If you do not have integrity in the racing industry, you are heading down a slippery slope and you are putting \$5 billion of economic activity at risk. It is important, you must make sure that your integrity framework is in place, because that is the cornerstone for this industry, and the industry is keen to move through this legislation. They want to see it through as well, to get all the integrity issues tied down and tucked away before the election in

November, or the Parliament's dissolution. It is important that we do that for the industry to give them security and to understand where they are.

For those who want to see the end of the racing industry, shame on you. There are people, even some who frequent this building, who are not supporters of the racing industry, and shame on them. Local economies thrive – animal welfare is not just top of mind for this industry; it is international best practice. The greyhound, harness racing and thoroughbred industries treat their animals like royalty, and they are exceptionally well looked after. Shame on those who try to stop or slow this industry from being the economic powerhouse that it is, and shame on those who would close this great industry down if they ever got the opportunity.

On the coalition benches we have said that we are not opposing the bill in this house and will continue to negotiate in good faith between the houses. But on the whole the changes that we have suggested have been treated fairly, and we look forward to the bill going through the upper house. As I say, we have to get this right; it is paramount to the industry. On thoroughbreds, we need to keep all of our race meetings and for harness racing ensure that framework is in place. There is the rationalisation of the greyhound industry, and they will continue to need support.

But never forget the punter. The punter pays for a lot of this – half a billion dollars we heard before. They keep this industry going. We need to keep the industry sexy, competitive, uncomplicated and fair. It is really important that the racing industry, right across all three codes, is in great shape and its integrity is never questioned. With those comments, I will commend the bill to the house.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (12:31): I have never heard the racing industry called sexy, but it gives me great pleasure to follow the member for Ovens Valley. Just to pick up on a couple of points that he mentioned – and I do appreciate the bipartisan nature in which the opposition are approaching this bill, and I know this will be spoken to in more detail coming up in this debate – the government is still working with the industry on funding and on a shared funding model, particularly for the new integrity body. I believe that there will be spoken about shortly a commitment that the industry will pay no more for that integrity body than what they currently do, apart from indexation year by year, and discussions are still being held on the size of the new integrity body, and what I mean by size is how many members there are on it. That will be spoken to in this chamber at more length as this debate continues, perhaps even following this contribution.

We have to acknowledge that the racing industry in Australia in particular is an industry that must continue always to work for the social licence that it has and that it needs. In order for the racing industry to do that we need to ensure that it has the legal framework in an integrity space that it needs to be able to self-regulate as best as it should, to make sure that it can maintain that social licence. With that social licence does not just come an industry that people like me and you, Acting Speaker Walters, enjoy participating in and watching on the weekends and having a bet, with it comes \$3.4 billion of economic activity in our state and 34,500 full-time equivalent jobs. And a significant number of those full-time equivalent jobs are in regional Victoria, in places where industry, frankly, has changed with the decline in regional manufacturing over the last couple of decades. We need to make sure as a government – and the industry needs to make sure as an industry – that racing keeps the social licence that it has to deliver those jobs and that economic activity in our state.

People's livelihoods, families' livelihoods and the food that they put on the table rely on the work that they do across the thoroughbred, harness and greyhound industries, from trainers to strappers to people working at venues and courses all around the state. It is too important for us not to get this right. The member for Ovens Valley touched on those that would like to see the industry close. I do not care whether you like racing or not. If you do not like watching racing, that is for you. I enjoy it, but I think, frankly, it is irresponsible of people to talk about the closure of this industry and for it to be no more, considering the people's livelihoods that rely on it in places like regional Victoria and outer suburban Melbourne, places where people typically earn less and where unemployment is higher. Why on earth

would we want to put 34,500 jobs at risk? That is why we are here debating this today. I am the member for Tarneit, as everybody knows.

John Mullahy interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: I am going to go to two, member for Glen Waverley. Wyndham, the LGA that Tarneit is in, holds a special place in Victorian racing, because did you know that just about every Melbourne Cup winner for the last 15 to 20 years has come through Wyndham before it has won the great race? In Wyndham, Melbourne University run their veterinary clinic – the Werribee International Horse Centre and University of Melbourne Equine Centre, to be exact – a world-leading facility where international horses can come and can get their scans, can get their MRIs and their CTs, as they arrive in Australia to take part in our fantastic spring carnival. The member for Werribee, the member for Point Cook and I have had the great pleasure of touring that facility now on two occasions to see the fantastic work that happens. We talk about animal welfare in the industry. There is world-leading equipment there to make sure that every horse that arrives, which may still be in quarantine down at the Werribee Racing Club, can get their CT scan and make sure that they are fit to race and to make sure that they are not at risk when arriving at the racecourse and taking part in our fantastic spring carnival, which brings our city alive each October and November.

A member interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: Indeed the member for Caulfield should. Let us face it, our spring carnival races are now dominated by international riders. The vast majority of those horses that have won the Cox Plate, whether they be perhaps from Japan or from Europe, and won the Melbourne Cup or the Caulfield Cup have come through the City of Wyndham before they have gone on to win those great races. We talk about the economic contribution that this industry makes to Victoria. Wyndham plays a significant role in allowing that to happen, because a decent chunk of that economic contribution is made over Melbourne's spring carnival. As I said, the City of Wyndham plays a significant role in that, as do Melbourne University, and they do a fantastic job.

Also in the City of Wyndham we have the Werribee Racing Club, an absolutely amazing local organisation which does more, to be fair, than just racing. I think it has about 11 meets a year now, so not as many as it did, although the Werribee Cup is still a pretty popular event for constituents in my area, sponsored by the member for Werribee and me. I think we have got the John Lister MP and Dylan Wight MP Maiden Plate at about race 2; it is an absolutely fantastic day. It is a fantastic organisation that contributes significantly to the fabric of our community. Because it is such a large piece of land, they are able to hold festivals through times like Eid and through Ramadan as well, when they hold an enormous iftar, and Holi festival as well. They do absolutely amazing work, and of course they hold the bingo twice a week. It is a fantastic community asset, and they do absolutely everything they can to bring those festivals and to have a place where the community can gather in special times for them.

As I said at the beginning of my contribution, the racing industry is an industry that no doubt – as it should – has to continue to work to have the social licence that it needs to be able to operate in this country and indeed in this state. By making the changes that we are today, we are giving the industry the tools it needs to be able to self-regulate and operate with the utmost integrity to continue to have that social licence and continue to put \$3.4 billion into the Victorian economy, both in metropolitan Melbourne and also in regional Victoria, which absolutely needs it. It provides 34,500 jobs to people in regional Victoria and to people in metropolitan Melbourne, into places like Cranbourne, into places like Werribee, into places like Bendigo and Geelong and into places like Gippsland. We will as a government continue to provide the legal framework to allow Racing Victoria and the racing industry in this state to keep its social licence and provide those jobs.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:42): In making a contribution to the Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026, I want to begin this contribution by

saying this is just yet another example of a chaotic government that is making stuff up as they are going along. We still are unsure in terms of where we are sitting with this particular bill. We still are unsure in terms of why we are actually debating this bill, other than cost shifting and cost issues with a government. I do agree certainly with many of the members that have made contributions from both sides citing the importance of the racing industry and the contribution of racing to Victoria. That is very, very important, and certainly we should be doing everything we can to strengthen that, support that and also ensure that we look at all kinds of other elements in terms of dealing with the racing industry more generally.

But can I say that I am still unsure in terms of what the problem is that we are trying to solve here. We have racing integrity, which is really important. We have had certainly a number of issues when it comes to racing, but what the government is doing with this particular bill is asking the industry to mark its own homework – to do its own integrity or to oversight its own integrity. It reminds me a little bit of some of the corruption issues that we have had under this government. I am not for one minute suggesting that there are specific corruption issues within the racing industry per se. But if you are asking an organisation to actually run its own integrity and fund its own integrity, then one would question: where is the independence? Where is the governance? We have real issues with that on this side of the house, we have proposed changes and, again, we are none the wiser with that. Therefore it is very hard for us to support a bill when the government are unclear themselves in terms of what they have arrived at in their own position.

We also know that in New South Wales they are undertaking the Hazzard report, which is looking at the industry more generally, and that report is set to come down by the end of the month. It is very surprising that we would be rushing into some legislation now without considering the Hazzard report, which is looking at a number of issues that we have here. Because we have a government that is running around very manically trying to bring legislation to the house, it would not be surprising if we were back after the Hazzard report delivers its findings in New South Wales with more amendments and with more changes. It is a chaotic government making stuff up as they go along, and it is certainly doing nothing to provide stability to an industry that provides so much funding, so many jobs and so much economic activity to this great state.

While I am on that, can I also give a shout-out to the Melbourne Racing Club and the racecourse which I have in Caulfield – very, very important in terms of what that provides and very key in terms of what it provides. But can I say this is another example where the government talks out of both sides of its mouth, because on one side we have the Melbourne Racing Club, which is not being properly consulted about the Melbourne Football Club coming to Caulfield and how that would affect the racing industry more generally. The racing industry has suggested that the Melbourne Football Club coming to Caulfield could shut down the industry for 12 to 18 months. What does that mean for racing, which is all about economic activity and jobs, which this government proclaims are so important? Yet on the other side they are prepared to shut down one of the key racetracks in this state, at Caulfield, because they want to attract the Melbourne Football Club – mind you, with no dough; there is no money on the table. It is just so the Minister for Sport and Major Events, the member for Oakleigh, can cut a ribbon and say, ‘Look at this. We’re going to allow Melbourne Football Club to relocate themselves to Caulfield,’ shutting down racing for 12 to 18 months and – here is the kicker, because my electorate knows that I have been fighting for community sport since I first came into this house – locking out the racing club for community sport, which is something we must be fighting against. I am on record saying that locals and community sport must come first, so I side absolutely with the racing club to say that, way ahead of an AFL football club coming to Caulfield, I want my local football clubs to be able to play sport first and foremost in our electorate – an electorate that has the lowest amount of open space of any place around the state. We already have basketball, football and a lot of other local community clubs that have to travel 40 minutes with their kids just to find a venue to play sport. We believe that that should happen right in the heart of Caulfield Racecourse Reserve and right where the old Aquanita stables are, which is currently being considered for the Melbourne Football Club.

I will leave that part there, because I want to take the next part to talk about the Australian Grand Prix Corporation changes, which are specific to my portfolio when it comes to major events. Again, what we have seen is a government that is so chaotic that it has moved some more amendments when it comes to the grand prix corporation, because the grand prix corporation had two jobs: one was the grand prix, one was the MotoGP. That was all running really well, and we know it was, because it was only a few months back that we had changes to the grand prix corporation to get them to do a whole lot of things. But they never thought that they would be losing the MotoGP. Why? Because they were not focused on it. They had their eye off the ball, focused on a whole range of other things. Surprise, surprise, the MotoGP has now gone to South Australia, and the grand prix corporation, which had responsibility for two jobs, has now only got one job and needs to find more stuff for its staff to do. I am told that about 25 per cent of their workforce activity has now been freed up for them to look for another opportunity. Well, we all pay for that in terms of the taxpayer, and now we have got a change to the legislation before the house to give the opportunity to the grand prix corporation to go out and shop around to find other motor events to come to Phillip Island, or anywhere for that matter, because we do not know where the grand prix corporation will be running these events. Poor old Phillip Island has been left deserted in terms of a major event and what that brought to the local economy in Phillip Island – gone, finished. Who knows what will happen from that.

But in terms of the grand prix corporation, who knows what they are able to provide. We need investment. Grands prix, certainly tennis, events more generally – they are the lifeblood of our state. We are the events capital and certainly have been for so long. We need to ensure that the likes of the grand prix corporation are able to go out there and do their job and secure events. We certainly will not be fighting against the changes when it comes to the grand prix corporation changes in here more specifically. But what I do think all Victorians need to understand is this is chaotic, this is last-minute and this is catch-up, because we saw a cancellation of a major event in Victoria – an event that should have never been cancelled is now cancelled. It just says very clearly that if you do not invest and if you do not do the work then you end up losing these major events.

That is why we will make it an absolute priority. Should we be given the good fortune of coming into government after November, events will be a key element in our state. We will go out there and we will aggressively target events. We will ensure we get home-grown events, and we will invest in home-grown events in Victoria, and we will not take our eye off the ball and see other events go to South Australia, Queensland or New South Wales that are up and about at the moment.

It was \$600 million to cancel the Commonwealth Games. It was going to bring so much revenue and so much infrastructure, but that is gone. We now see Glasgow about to host the Commonwealth Games with Victoria funding it. We cannot fund anything else in Victoria, but we can fund the Glasgow games. We found \$600 million to fund the Glasgow games, but we cannot fund anything else in this state. When you think about local footy clubs, local sporting organisations, community organisations, racing – which we are cost-shifting – that is all happening, but the government has cut a cheque to Glasgow to fund the Glasgow Commonwealth Games. What a disaster.

When everybody will be tuning in and watching our favourites – go Aussies, because we still want our Aussies to bring home gold – hopefully we get some sponsorship opportunities out of that. I doubt we will, because it has just been a big donation because the government could not manage a chook raffle. The government has not been able to manage the Commonwealth Games. This government has not been able to manage the MotoGP, and who knows what is going to follow. We certainly support the opportunity for the grand prix corporation to go out there and secure more events. But when they are not funded, when they are running from hand to mouth like Visit Victoria currently are on a day-to-day proposition, no wonder we are losing major events in this state, because this is a government that has no idea what it is doing.

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Defence Industry, Minister for Skills and TAFE) (12:52): Under standing orders, I advise the house of house amendments to this bill and request that they be circulated. As part of the consultation on this

bill, I understand some concerns were raised by those opposite about the size of the board overseeing the new Racing Integrity Commission Victoria. The original proposal was for a board of three, given the current Victorian Racing Integrity Board is made up of seven members with capacity for up to nine. Some concern was raised that this might reduce the breadth of skills in these important roles. The government thinks we can address those concerns by expanding to a board of five, while still improving the overall efficiency of integrity oversight in the Victorian racing industry.

This bill is not about cost-cutting; it is about enhancing the integrity framework in Victorian racing. The minister has demonstrated that by being prepared to engage on matters like the size of the board. While I am talking about cost, this was another issue that was raised during consultation with the shadow minister and his predecessor. We want to give a commitment here that the government has no plans now or in the future to have the racing industry controlling bodies contribute more to integrity agencies than their current contributions plus indexation.

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (12:53): It is a pleasure to rise and make a contribution on the Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026, and I thank the minister at the table for circulating those amendments. I think we do have a good relationship between the two sides here – apart from the ones that sit behind us up the back there – in relation to the racing industry, and I think that the government's, I guess, ability to appease us in these discussions and make these minor changes will result in improvements. I am very, very pleased with that.

The racing industry does have its share of challenges coming up. Whilst this bill relates to issues of importance – there is no doubt about that – there is much more that lies ahead that needs addressing for our industry. As previous speakers have said, it is a fantastic industry across the three codes. It is a major employer. We talk regularly about the economic input it has into our great state, but it is just a great industry to be involved with. There are areas that will need addressing. Across the three codes we have a downturn in revenue that is putting a lot of financial pressure on the ability for some clubs and codes to exist. And we have in this state – I do not think anyone would disagree – a duplication of structure. We are addressing one of those today, but there is a great duplication right across the codes and right across some of the clubs that needs addressing.

Some of the other challenges are in harness racing. The industry needs some security from government that it will be able to realise, after it has paid back what it owes to the government, at least a large balance of the profits that come out of Melton Entertainment Park. They need to secure their financial future. This is the one opportunity that the government is going to have to do that to allow our great harness racing industry to keep its head above water. Prize money levels are making the competition with other jurisdictions a sort of race to the top or a race to the bottom, however you want to put it, but we cannot have our owners suffering from diminishing returns in the form of prize money. The harness racing sector has gone through that, and we need to make sure that we can remain very competitive with other jurisdictions in that regard.

I touched on a little earlier that we have some people in this place, and there are none of them sitting up there in the back at the moment, who I am sure are going to come in and oppose this bill, because they generally just hate racing. We love racing. That is one of the foundational differences that we have with the Greens party and the Animal Justice Party in the upper house. They want to close everything and shut down everything that a lot of us find enjoyable and fun. They are anti-fun, and their attack on the racing industry is one example of that.

I am very, very pleased that the member for Bundoora has given that unequivocal commitment to the racing industry that while we are basically getting rid of the Victorian Racing Integrity Board and that panel will come in under the Office of the Racing Integrity Commissioner, the industry will pay no more in perpetuity above CPI. This one was a big one for the industry. With the previous shadow and with the current shadow, we have had a lot of discussions with the three codes and fought hard to secure that commitment. With the Minister for Racing at the table, we are pleased that we have been able to find that landing place, which I think will be for the betterment of the industry.

It will be for the betterment of the industry for two reasons. The first one is – and I have spoken about some of the headwinds that the industry is facing – they cannot afford to then cop in one, two or three years time the additional cost of funding the racing integrity commissioner, which I believe is about \$1.8 million annually from the bill briefing that we had. We cannot put that additional impost onto the sector. But probably more important than that – and the member for Tarneit touched on this – we cannot have the industry funding its own integrity arm. Racing is one of those sectors that history will tell you has had its share of challenges, and different issues pop up from different times, and we need to have an integrity arm that does sit slightly separate from the body it is overseeing. That is why it is important for the government of the day to predominantly fund that arm. The industry can make a contribution; they already do make a contribution of about half a million dollars to fund the Victorian Racing Integrity Board, which is getting merged into the racing integrity commissioner's office, and the industry in our discussions have said they are more than happy to continue to make that contribution, but they do not want to be lumped with the whole lot. I think that that is a fair and reasonable outcome, and it is great to get that commitment from the member for Bundoora, obviously, via the racing minister, to have that, so I am very, very pleased with that.

The shadow minister and indeed the member for Caulfield touched on the fact that we have this Hazzard report pending, and that is an inquiry that has been conducted in New South Wales by a former long-term MP by the name of Brad Hazzard. One of his terms of reference was to look at the integrity structures in New South Wales. I will stand here and say that our integrity structures in Victoria are better than in New South Wales, as we stand here now, and that is probably why they are having an inquiry, because it has not been quite up to speed, but it will be interesting to see what comes out of that. That report is due to be handed down by 30 June. Whether it is then or a bit later time will tell, but we have that commitment, which I think the member for Tarneit read into his second-reading speech, that any recommendations that may pertain to integrity issues in the Victorian sector will be considered between houses, because after this week we go to the midyear break.

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

Business interrupted under standing orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Construction industry

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): My question is to the Premier. The Premier was asked three times by Sarah Ferguson on the ABC's 7.30 last night how much crime and corruption had cost Victorian taxpayers, and three times she refused to answer. If it is not \$15 billion, how much is it?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:03): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question and for the opportunity to outline to the house the strong action our government has taken, particularly in the context of the question that has been asked, and can I make it absolutely clear that any dollar that is lost to corruption is a dollar too many, which is why we took that strong action.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was not about any dollar, it was about how many dollars.

The SPEAKER: The Premier has only just commenced her answer. She was being relevant.

Jacinta ALLAN: As I was saying, any dollar lost is a dollar too many, which is why we took strong action, because we have zero tolerance for criminal activity on worksites. It is why we have strengthened the powers of Victoria Police and the Labour Hire Authority, and the action they are taking is working. To clean up this action, we have seen Victoria Police lay 88 charges, 150 construction industry licences have been cancelled –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question. It was a very direct question: how much?

The SPEAKER: I cannot direct the Premier how to answer the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: The action we have taken, as I said, and I repeat for the benefit of the house, is that Victoria Police have laid 88 charges and 150 construction industry licences have been cancelled. When it comes to claims about amounts, I have said on a number of occasions that if there is any evidence, if anyone is holding any evidence, they should be putting it to the relevant authority because, as I have just outlined to the house, the authorities are taking action.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Premier is being evasive. This is a very simple question. Just like the Premier did not answer the question three times last night, we have asked the question today and we are waiting for an answer.

Anthony Carbines: On the point of order, Speaker, I would just like to clarify if there was a point of order or what the point of order was. I point out further that in *Rulings from the Chair* chapter 20 makes it quite clear that points of order must not be used to deliberately disrupt the proceedings, which is what the Manager of Opposition Business is doing.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order. The Premier has concluded her answer.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Mordialloc is warned.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:06): Is the Premier refusing to give a figure because she is disinterested in the \$15 billion of corruption under her watch?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:06): The answer is no. When it comes to this figure that the Leader of the Opposition is quoting, it refers to something that Geoffrey Watson said a number of months ago. More recently Geoffrey Watson has said of this figure:

This is one of the things that they keep misquoting.

So we have a situation where the person –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I ask you to respect the fact that I am on my feet. I will not tolerate members yelling when I am on my feet, member for Rowville. The Premier, without assistance.

Jacinta ALLAN: When it comes to Geoffrey Watson's claim, he himself has said he was misquoted.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Rowville, you are warned.

Ministers statements: organised crime

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:07): Young kids should be out there doing things that young kids want to do. They should be in school, they should be playing sport and they should be spending time with their families and friends and looking forward to their future. But as we know from the advice from Victoria Police, vulnerable young kids are being coerced into crime by evil adults who know exactly what they are doing. Hiring children to do your dirty work is absolutely appalling. It is just disgusting. It is shameful. But what makes this worse is that some of these kids that are being preyed upon have intellectual disabilities. This is just disgraceful behaviour, where organised crime is using these kids to commit crimes like arson and carjacking. Today our government is introducing legislation to stop this evil practice, creating a new offence of recruiting a child to commit a serious

crime. The penalty will be life in prison, and the offence will apply whether the crime is carried out or not, because if you prey on young children, if you exploit young children and if you put Victorians at risk you should face the full force of the law.

This is one part of our fight against organised crime. I want to here acknowledge the work of Victoria Police and Operation Eclipse, which has seen more than 65 arrests and 370 charges have been laid over arson attacks. We have here in Victoria the strongest bail laws in the country and, with adult time for violent crime, the chance of jail is stronger and sentences are longer. This is our plan to keep Victorians safe, not the plan of those opposite to cut Victoria Police and to cut the violence reduction unit. We are backing Victorians to keep them safer.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for South-West Coast, you are warned.

Construction industry

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:10): My question is to the Premier. Does Women in Construction, a company owned by a convicted serial family violence abuser and which has operated on the Big Build, still hold an active labour hire licence?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:10): The advice I have is that this is an active matter currently under investigation by the Labour Hire Authority, who have issued a show cause notice. I will not make any comment that prejudices an investigation to ensure that any allegation of criminal behaviour is appropriately investigated and dealt with. I also remind the house that we have strengthened the Labour Hire Authority's powers, which is why they have cancelled 150 construction industry licences. For completeness, I note those opposite opposed the establishment of the Labour Hire Authority.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Malvern and the member for Polwarth are warned.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:11): Given Women in Construction still holds an active labour hire licence, will the Premier admit that the 'immediate action' she claimed to have taken last night and the zero tolerance she just said she has for corruption on Big Build sites have in fact not happened at all?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:11): Let me outline to the house how wrong the Leader of the Opposition is in her question. In strengthening the powers of the Labour Hire Authority and in strengthening the powers of Victoria Police, we have seen Victoria Police lay 88 charges and 150 construction industry licences have been cancelled. In terms of the action that we have taken –

Jess Wilson: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this is specifically about Women in Construction. I make available to the house the active labour hire licence for the Premier.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Jacinta ALLAN: Further to this, we undertook an independent review, which has also established separate whistleblower pathways to protect workers to lodge complaints or claims about alleged behaviour and required construction company bosses to report any allegations –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Premier is being evasive again.

Ben Carroll: On the point of order, Speaker, *Rulings from the Chair*, page 154:

Relevancy. A minister may answer questions as he or she sees fit ...

The Premier can be relevant, providing she sees fit it is relevant. And it is entirely relevant. The Premier has outlined all the actions she has taken, which is what the question was: what action have you taken?

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

Jacinta ALLAN: I just reiterate that we have zero tolerance for any allegation of criminal behaviour, which is why we have strengthened the authorities' powers. We have provided new reforms that have seen the culture in workplaces changing, and we will not rest while we support the work of the authorities to change this culture.

Ministers statements: rental reform

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Cost of Living, Minister for Renters, Minister for Men and Boys) (14:13): As you know, moving house is stressful enough. Working Victorians should not have to save up thousands for a second bond before they have even seen their first one back. From 1 July they will not have to. Labor's portable rental bond scheme is going live, which means renters can transfer their existing bond to a new home. Other states have talked about a similar scheme, but Victorians will be the first in the country to use it. For workers chasing a new job or a family putting down roots, this will mean more money staying in their pockets. This is the latest in 150 renters rights reforms that this Labor government has delivered. We banned rental bidding, we stopped no-fault evictions and from October a landlord must show evidence before they can touch a renter's bond. That is what backing working people looks like. But not every party can make that claim. There are those who have consistently opposed strengthening renters rights, and with \$40 billion worth of cuts on the table they will gut Consumer Affairs Victoria and strip back renters rights to the bare bone. One Nation will cut your pay, but the Liberals will scrap your rights, and that means less money in your pocket.

Members interjecting.

Paul EDBROOKE: Oh, he is a bit sensitive.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, it is inappropriate for the minister to attack the opposition, and I would like –

The SPEAKER: Order! Thank you.

James Newbury: Speaker, can I finish?

The SPEAKER: You have made your point of order, member for Brighton.

James Newbury: I would like to make another point, Speaker. The minister has already been sat down twice for abusing this rule, and I would say the minister clearly does not understand this rule.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Brighton, for your insight. Minister, I will again remind you about how to deliver a ministers statement without attacking the opposition.

Paul EDBROOKE: As I was saying, this means a lot less money in your pocket and fewer rights when you need them. It is a unity ticket against working people, this coalition, and only Labor is on the side of working people. We on this side of the house are focused on renters. We are focused on people in the property market buying houses. We are focused on keeping money in the pockets of renters, when those opposite are firmly, firmly focused on keeping One Nation in their pocket.

Construction industry

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:16): My question is to the Premier. Last night the Premier claimed her government's action on corruption on the Big Build is working. In that case, can the Premier guarantee that the company Women in Construction is not operating on a single Big Build site in this state?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:17): For the benefit of the Leader of the National Party, I answered that question earlier. This has been referred to the Labour Hire Authority; they are investigating. They have issued a show cause notice.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, on the question of relevance, this question went specifically to whether Women in Construction was operating on the Big Build – not whether it had a licence, whether it was operating on the Big Build.

The SPEAKER: I am aware of the question. I have it in front of me. The Premier has answered the question.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:17): When will the Premier take action to remove the Women in Construction company from Big Build sites?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:18): I remind the Leader of the National Party of the answers I have given already today and on previous occasions. We have already taken action. Some of those actions were opposed by those opposite in not supporting the work of the Labour Hire Authority. The Labour Hire Authority is undertaking its investigation, and I will not prejudice that investigation, because we want to see this rotten culture cleaned up. We have zero tolerance for allegations of criminal behaviour, and we will not stand in the way of agencies doing their work.

Ministers statements: renewable energy

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:18): On this side of the house we back Victorian families every day, saving them money on their bills and working hard to make life that bit easier for them. We know that right now Victorians need good local jobs, cost-of-living relief and locally generated power that they can rely on. That is what the transition to renewable energy is helping us to deliver. This is what our policies are delivering: 68,000 jobs in energy by 2040, 37 per cent of those in regional Victoria, the lowest power bills in the country and 11.3 per cent of our electricity generated by rooftop solar on people's homes.

I want to refer members to a report released just this Monday by the Clean Energy Council about the risks of alternative policies that are out there in Victoria. The Clean Energy Council has stated:

A two-kilometre setback would gut Victoria's development pipeline and with it, any credible path to meeting future energy demand.

We know that if you do not have enough electricity, the price of it goes up and you drive up power bills for every Victorian. The report goes on to say that this alternative policy would make:

... Victoria the most restrictive clean energy jurisdiction in Australia.

Victorians support more renewable energy, not a brake on it, because they know that it makes good sense on their bills and it provides jobs for their kids – good jobs, 68,000 of them, and 2000 more apprenticeships through the SEC apprenticeship academy – and real bill savings every day, freeing up more money that they can use at the supermarket.

As confirmed by One Nation today at the National Press Club, the One Nation–Liberal coalition will stop renewable energy projects, and every Victorian family will pay the price. Not under the Allan Labor government.

Construction industry

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:21): My question is to the Premier. Last night the Premier told Victorians her government had taken immediate action on criminal behaviour on Big Build worksites. The Labour Hire Licensing Act gives the Labour Hire Authority the power to immediately suspend a licence. Why has the Labour Hire Authority failed to take immediate action by suspending the licence of Women in Construction, a company owned by a serial family violence abuser, which employed women on the Big Build while rorting taxpayers?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:22): The answer to this question is consistent with previous answers I have given today. We have strengthened the Labour Hire Authority's powers. We

established the Labour Hire Authority, which was opposed by the member opposite and his colleagues. The Labour Hire Authority has issued a show cause notice. It is undertaking its independent investigations as part of dealing with the allegations that have been put, which are allegations that go to unacceptable behaviour. It is because we have zero tolerance for this behaviour that the Labour Hire Authority has stronger powers, and it is using them.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:22): If Women in Construction, a company owned by a convicted serial family violence abuser, which rorts taxpayers on the Big Build, does not meet the threshold for immediate suspension, then, Premier, what does?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:23): Again, I will not be invited by the member for Sandringham to prejudice the independent investigation by the Labour Hire Authority. We have strengthened their powers. They are using their powers and are currently undertaking their independent investigation.

Ministers statements: housing

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (14:23): The Oxford dictionary defines a NIMBY as someone who says they support new development but opposes it when it is proposed anywhere near them.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The house will come to order. I would like to hear the Minister for Planning's ministers statement.

Sonya KILKENNY: That definition sums up those opposite perfectly. While those opposite look for reasons to say no, the Allan Labor government is getting on with the job of delivering more homes for more Victorians. We reject nimbyism, we reject the anti-housing agenda that sits behind it –

Richard Riordan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Polwarth, this is your last warning.

Sonya KILKENNY: and we reject the idea that young Victorians should be locked out of housing because some people simply do not want to change. That is why in the past 12 months alone the Allan Labor government has approved more than 55,000 new homes across Victoria. That is 55,000 new homes in Kew, in Geelong, in Glen Waverley, in Bentleigh, in Albert Park, in Bayswater, in Melbourne, in Brighton, in Clarinda, in Ballarat and in many communities right across our state.

While we are approving homes, not everyone shares that ambition. Just two weeks ago the Liberal–National opposition and One Nation combined in the other place to vote against the Allan Labor government's plans to deliver more homes for Victorians. They voted against more housing opportunities for young people. They voted against tackling the housing shortage. They voted against the homes Victorians need. Victorians deserve to know the truth. If you oppose more homes, Victorians need to know it. If you want to return to the failed status quo, Victorians deserve to know it. The Allan Labor government is standing up for more homes, more opportunity and a stronger Victoria.

Operation Richmond

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:25): My question is to the Premier. Operation Richmond has gone on for longer than World War II, yet this morning every Labor member voted against legislation that would ensure that the Operation Richmond report can be released finally. Why won't the Premier look Victorians in the eye and admit that corruption is taking place under her watch?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:26): That is the sort of question we expect from the member for Brighton, isn't it – absolutely true to form. Let me say this to the member for Brighton about how he is not only wrong but he and his colleagues are deliberately deceiving –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is required to be factual. We are seven years in, and there is no report.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Jacinta ALLAN: Again, the member for Brighton is attacking the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission. That is a matter for him.

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

The SPEAKER: Premier.

Jacinta ALLAN: The government has already announced that we are going to embark on wideranging reforms to strengthen the integrity agencies to give them additional powers. I make this point: central to that is the acceptance by our government that you need to change the definition of 'corrupt conduct'. The advice we have from the integrity agencies is that everything else that falls from that recommendation in the parliamentary committee's report is rendered toothless if you do not adjust this definition. Who opposes that? Those opposite.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, again, the Premier is required to be factual. That is just a complete and utter lie.

The SPEAKER: I remind the member for Brighton about unparliamentary language. I do not uphold that point of order.

Jacinta ALLAN: Again the member for Brighton is undermining his leader, because it was his leader who made that commitment to the media two weeks ago that she did not want to see that definition change.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The house will come to order. Members will be removed without warning from this point onwards, Leader of the Opposition.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, repeating fibs does not make them true.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Anthony Carbines: On the point of order, Speaker, again, on *Rulings from the Chair*, we would also point out, per Speaker Plowman:

Repeating the same point daily. Raising the same point of order (regarding the answering of questions without notice) each day simply wastes the time of the House ...

as the member for Brighton continues to do.

The SPEAKER: I have ruled the point of order out of order.

Jacinta ALLAN: We will continue this work. We will continue this work and bring legislation to the Parliament in the future, while those opposite do not support strengthening IBAC through changing the definition.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:29): When did the Premier first become aware of the identity of the applicant seeking an injunction to stop the publication of IBAC's report into Operation Richmond?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:29): I can confirm it was when it was reported in the media last week, following the court processes that lifted the suppression of the identity. And I reiterate, for the benefit of the house, that the government was not a party to that case or not a party to the release of the report.

Ministers statements: education funding

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Medical Research) (14:30): If you ask any Victorian student, they will tell you that one of the first things they learn when writing is the rule of threes. In books and in life, bad things always come in threes. Macbeth had three witches, Goldilocks had three bears and now Victorian schools have three Liberal cuts. They have given us the first two already. First, they committed to cut regional school infrastructure. They tried to hide it. They said it is a 25 per cent guarantee. Although, when Labor is investing 31 per cent, 25 per cent is a cut. But it gets worse. The deepest cut of all, though, is when it comes to disability inclusion. Under our government, \$5.5 billion is being invested in a strength-based disability inclusion system. Under the Liberals, there is a \$500 voucher, letting families fend for themselves. A \$500 voucher for special needs kids is not an investment. That is the biggest significant cut to our most vulnerable children in the state. The big question every Victorian has got when things come in threes – regional schools cut, disability inclusion cut – is what is coming next. That is the question for the opposition.

Brad Rowswell interjected.

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

Member for Sandringham withdrew from chamber.

Constituency questions

Sandringham electorate

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:33): (1688) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I ask: how will the government financially compensate local businesses, like the Flour House, who are being hung out to dry by the works at the Graham Road and Bay Road intersection at the moment? The Highett Common development in Highett has resulted in the developer commencing works on installing traffic signals at the Graham Road and Bay Road intersection. With access to Graham Road from the southern end now blocked off, local businesses are rightly ropeable about the effect that these works have had on their businesses. These businesses are having to cut staff and continue to pay rent and their bills while their income is being strangled. While the developer continues to profit from the sale of this project, local businesses suffer. They are beyond angry about the effect this closure has had so far on their customers, trade and livelihoods, yet the project will not be completed until early next year. I call on the government to ensure these businesses have real financial support and to work with the developer and local councils to help these businesses with that real support.

Cranbourne electorate

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (14:34): (1689) My constituency question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. When will the notorious intersection at the corner of Berwick-Cranbourne Road and Thompsons Road reopen to the public? Everyone knows that if you live in that patch, it is the intersection outside the big Bunnings, and I cannot wait – I know you do not like us banging on the table, Speaker, so I am doing a very quiet drum roll up in the air. It is coming soon, and I cannot wait to find out what a difference it is going to make to our community. If you live in Clyde or Clyde North, if you live in Cranbourne or even Cranbourne North and Narre South, this is a big deal. I know it is coming soon, and I cannot wait for the minister to tell me when.

Mildura electorate

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (14:35): (1690) My constituency question comes from John Burfitt of Red Cliffs, and his question is: how does this government justify supplying –

The SPEAKER: Who is the question to – which minister?

Jade BENHAM: The Premier. How does this government justify supplying convicted criminals in Victorian prisons Ozempic and Mounjaro whilst families are having to pay thousands in non-PBS medications to save their children? John is an absolute community champion. He runs a charity called C.H.A.I.L.I.S, or Children Having an Illness Living in Sunraysia, and currently he has a family on his books who need to find an extra \$7500 per month for a trial medication that could save their 12-year-old son's leg from being amputated. John is obviously a little frustrated at the media reports that have come out over the past week, and he has had to have some hard conversations, so he is asking simply: how on earth does this government justify that?

Thomastown electorate

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (14:36): (1691) My constituency question is for the Minister for Public and Active Transport. The question I have is: when will the Wollert transport study, which will help identify and deliver transport outcomes in the outer northern suburbs, be released? Residents of the Thomastown electorate welcomed very positively the new and extended bus routes that we have announced and are putting in place at the current moment. As the electorate grows and more people move into the area, it is also important to see what this study will bring in terms of other public transport options.

Evelyn electorate

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:37): (1692) Our emergency services respond to all types of emergencies and help keep communities safe. Lilydale SES provides vital emergency response in times of storms, floods and other emergencies and is a 100 per cent volunteer unit, and we thank them for their tremendous work. The Victoria State Emergency Service deserves increased and sustainable funding to ensure volunteers can access modern and fit-for-purpose vehicles and equipment. My question to the Minister for Emergency Services is: how much capital and operating funding is allocated to Lilydale SES in the 2026–27 state budget? I am concerned because the Victoria State Emergency Service annual report shows that the Labor government cut funding to the SES by \$10 million last year despite promising more. There is no certainty funding will flow to the SES front line from Labor's new emergency services and volunteers tax, because decisions about funding for the SES remain at the discretion of the minister and government year on year. That is not sustainable, is not transparent and provides no certainty. I will keep pushing for an essential services guarantee, no cuts to funding and more to the SES over time.

Wendouree electorate

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (14:38): (1693) My question is for the Minister for Renters. How is the Allan Labor government's portable bond scheme making life easier, fairer and more affordable for Ballarat renters across my electorate of Wendouree? I know that moving homes is a stressful time for many renters, particularly those waiting for their bond to be refunded. That is why I am so pleased that our government is introducing Australia's first portable rental bond scheme on 1 July 2026. This is great news for renters, who will be able to transfer their existing bond between properties and avoid the financial stress of paying two bonds at once. We are on the side of renters. We have delivered more than 150 reforms, including banning rental bidding and no-fault evictions and introducing minimum rental standards and strengthened protections around bond claims. Those opposite – the Liberals, One Nation and the Nationals – are not. I look forward to the minister's response.

Brunswick electorate

Tim READ (Brunswick) (14:39): (1694) My constituency question is for the Minister for Housing and Building. In August 2023 in Parliament I alerted the then minister to my constituent Asena's dire public housing situation. She is a single parent with a disabled son. Back then she had just been displaced from her public home at short notice for mould remediation and left to cover the cost of emergency housing and storage herself. In response the then minister assured Asena that the department would reimburse her. In early 2024 she provided receipts to the housing office, with no

response. She followed up in August 2024 – still nothing. In April this year I wrote to the minister again asking for action – no response. Asena cannot sleep, because of mounting bills she cannot afford to pay. Will the minister ensure Asena is reimbursed in full as a matter of urgency?

Pascoe Vale electorate

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (14:39): (1695) My constituency question is for the Minister for Veterans. How is the Victorian Labor government investing to support our veterans community across the Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West communities? On 8 November 2025 I had the privilege to attend the Coburg RSL Remembrance Day service to officially unveil the RSL's new accessibility ramp at Coburg, made possible by the Victorian Labor government. The new ramp will provide much-needed and smooth access for both RSL and community members, dedicated to life members Jill Doyle and the late Glen Doyle and the whole Doyle family for their contribution, including Kathy Doyle. The ramp pays tribute to their decades of service to the Coburg RSL and community. I thank all who attended that moving service, including the Minister for Veterans, Minister Suleyman; federal Assistant Minister for Defence Peter Khalil; Sheena Watt MLC from Northern Metro in the other place; Kelvin Thomson, former federal member of Parliament; Coburg RSL president Michael Pianta; and 150-plus other locals. More recently, on 4 June, I had the pleasure to welcome long-time and hardworking members of the Pascoe Vale–Coburg Women's Auxiliary to Parliament House for an afternoon tea, including Margaret Lang, Lois Congram, Cheryl Congram, Patricia Walden, Lillian Porter, Teresa Leech, Justine Mannix and Susan Congram.

Shepparton electorate

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (14:40): (1696) My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the information I seek is: when will the lights at Shepparton's Wyndham Street and MacIntosh Street intersection be activated? The traffic lights were part of the stage 3 Shepparton line upgrade that was completed in December 2025 and are aligned with the crossing and signalling at that intersection. We were advised that the lights would be activated following the completion of these works. The lights have been sitting inactive and covered up for over five years since installation. This is a very busy intersection on a major road and is causing driver confusion and safety concerns. It is also a very dangerous road for pedestrians, and the pedestrian crossing is also part of the activation. This is a matter of community safety, and I look forward to the minister's response.

Narre Warren South electorate

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (14:41): (1697) My constituency question is for the Minister for Emergency Services and concerns the recent increase in funding for our emergency services. Minister, how will the government's investment support my constituents in Narre Warren South? The state Labor government is ensuring our hardworking emergency services have the tools they need to continue keeping us all safe. This year's budget alone invests nearly \$2 billion into our emergency services to build more stations, get new trucks on the road and make sure those in our emergency services have the modern equipment that they need. The state Labor government's investment in emergency services exceeds what is raised by the emergency services and volunteers tax by over \$1 billion. Those opposite have been very clear about their intentions to scrap the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund, which will only rip out the essential tools these services require for their day-to-day operations. I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

Tim Bull: On a point of order, Speaker, I would just like to bring to your attention that I have 20 overdue questions across seven different portfolios. One in housing dates back to last year. Another one in the roads portfolio is from February this year. I would just like to get the ministers to do their jobs with your encouragement and get those questions answered in the not too distant future.

The SPEAKER: I ask you to give the list to the clerks, member for Gippsland East.

Tim Bull: I will give the list to the clerks via email.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

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Legislative Assembly

Wednesday 17 June 2026

The SPEAKER: I remind members of the correct way to raise a point of order.

Nathan Lambert: On a point of order, Speaker, on standing order 121, which requires that members do not walk between the Speaker and someone on their feet, the member for Caulfield walked directly in front of the member for Pascoe Vale while he was making his statement, which I note also blocks the camera for that member. I would ask you to caution the member for Caulfield to obey that standing order.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Preston. If I see members not adhering to the standing orders, I will call them out.

David Southwick: On the point of order, Speaker –

The SPEAKER: On which point of order?

David Southwick: On the point of order just raised.

The SPEAKER: The one I just ruled on?

David Southwick: Yes.

The SPEAKER: Am I ruling on a different point of order or on that point of order?

David Southwick: Again, a new point of order. I would ask you to again rule on the issue in terms of when somebody is on their feet, which is on the corner of where I sit, it is very hard for me to actually cross from either one side or the other side. I did what is the convention of the chamber and not walk through –

The SPEAKER: Member for Caulfield!

David Southwick: Speaker, I am entitled to finish my point of order, surely.

The SPEAKER: I have ruled on that point of order.

David Southwick: This is a new point of order.

The SPEAKER: Is it? What is it about?

David Southwick: I seek clarification. When a member is walking through the chamber when somebody from this side of the house is on their feet, and I clearly entered from the other side, what side should a member actually enter when somebody is on their feet?

The SPEAKER: Members are required to be familiar with the standing orders. If I see a member walking in front of another member on their feet, I will call it out.

Annabelle Cleeland: On a point of order, Speaker, I also have a substantial number of questions that are overdue. Some of them date back more than nine months, and one I have raised four times as being overdue.

The SPEAKER: Order! Could you refer to what they are, please, member for Euroa.

Annabelle Cleeland: 3013, 3096, 3158, 3160, 3197, 3199, 3222, 3225, 3268, 3269, 3270, 3281, 3277, 3278, 3271, 3272, 3273, 3274, 3275, 1630, 3349, 3350, 3351, 3346, 3347. These are really important to my community. Can the minister please do their job.

The SPEAKER: Member for Euroa, I ask you to give your list to the clerks.

Martin Cameron: On a point of order, Speaker, I also have some outstanding questions: 1259 to the Premier, 3309 to the Minister for Education, 1697 to the Minister for Public and Active Transport, 3339 to the Minister for Emergency Services. My constituents would like these answered also.

The SPEAKER: I ask you to give your list to the clerks. I remind members that points of order are not an opportunity to make statements. You state the minister and the question outstanding.

Kim O’Keeffe: On a point of order, Speaker, I have important adjournment matters: 1322 to the Minister for Housing and Building, and 1491 for the Minister for Public and Active Transport, which I have been waiting on for quite some time.

Chris Crewther: On a point of order, Speaker, I have four outstanding items: 1621 to the Minister for Housing and Building, 1618 to the Minister for Environment for the Nepean ratepayers association about the FSC Group report, 1612 to the Premier and 1672 to the Minister for Police.

Bills

Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (14:47): It is a pleasure to resume my contribution. When we went to lunch I was talking about the fact that we have in New South Wales an inquiry going on that has as one of its terms of reference to directly look at and review racing integrity. I note in my discussions with the minister, and I am sure he will not mind me saying this, that there is I guess a concession that should that come out on time – and that will only be a couple of weeks away, if it comes out on time – that we will have an opportunity to review that between houses and see if there is anything that is pertinent to Victoria.

In finishing up this contribution, given that it is on racing, it is a great industry. It is an industry that I have certainly been involved with for a long time, originally as a part-time employee. I spent 10 years on a racing club committee, and I have been in a few racehorses over the journey. Tomorrow I have a clash with question time because I have a horse running at Moe, having its first start for us. I hope that it can get over the line. If you hear a little cheer in question time, Speaker, that might mean that it has won. Another one goes in on Saturday at Flemington and then one is in at Ballarat on Sunday. It will all be happening in the next few days. I give a shout-out to the member for Morwell, who recently sold the horse that he had a share in, and it has gone to Queensland and looks like it is going to be pretty good – after he has got out of it. That is a bit disappointing for him, but we are getting a bit of fun and humour out of that.

In winding up on this bill, I just want to reflect on a couple of things that I mentioned before we broke for lunch. The amendment to move the board that was originally the Victorian Racing Integrity Board into the racing integrity commissioner’s office and increase it from three to five members is a welcome amendment. We also are pleased that the industry will not have to fund any more than it currently does in its contribution to racing integrity, noting that it funds \$9 million or \$10 million itself through its own stewards network and internal integrity, but this is from an oversight perspective. That is very, very important, as is the concession that we will have a look at the Hazzard report that comes out of New South Wales. If there are any changes – the racing industry has had bipartisan support on bills that pass through this chamber, and we do have open discussion and open dialogue – I am sure that we can discuss any findings of that report that are pertinent to our jurisdiction and implement them should they be needed between chambers. I know our side of politics and the new shadow minister will be very happy to have those discussions and work with the current minister, as we have done in the past. With those amendments and those commitments, we wish the bill a speedy passage through this chamber.

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka – Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Agriculture) (14:51): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Committees

Standing Orders Committee

Membership

The SPEAKER (14:51): I have received the resignation of Mary-Anne Thomas from the Standing Orders Committee, effective from today.

Bills

Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Appropriation

The SPEAKER (14:51): I inform the house that I have received a message from the Governor recommending a further appropriation for the purposes of the Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026.

Building Legislation and Treasury Legislation (Tax Relief) Amendment Bill 2026

Council's amendments

Message from Council relating to following amendments considered:

1. Clause 1, line 5, omit all words and expressions on this line.
2. Division heading preceding clause 3, omit this heading.
3. Clauses 3 to 44, omit these clauses.
4. Clause 82, lines 16 to 22, omit all words and expressions on these lines.
5. Clause 83, omit this clause.
6. Clauses 85 to 88, omit these clauses.
7. Clause 90, omit this clause.
8. Long title, omit "places of public entertainment,".

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh – Minister for Housing and Building, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:52): I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

At the outset I want to say that this government has been committed to rebuilding the building industry, and this bill is the latest in a long legislative agenda to do so. In establishing the Building and Plumbing Commission, for example, we established an integrated regulator combining insurance and dispute resolution and regulation of an industry that is very important to Victorians – so important to Victorians because for most Victorians the greatest investment they will ever make is in their home. Too often Victorians buying a home have been left high and dry with homes that have been riddled with defects and even crushing financial consequences, like what we saw with Porter Davis.

Ensuring that we swing the pendulum to protecting consumers has been important. It is exactly what this government has been about, and this bill has been the latest in a long line of legislation to do just that. It has included laying the groundwork for decennial liability insurance, which is a 10-year insurance scheme which exists interstate, which in future we will be able to form here in Victoria. From 1 July further protections take effect in our state, including the first-resort home warranty

scheme – not the sort of last-resort insurance that we have at the moment, but first-resort insurance. Also rectification orders take effect on 1 July. Next year we will have developer bonds. Every step of the way the government has been protecting consumers buying a home.

It is with regret of course that I inform the house that last night those opposite teamed up with the crossbench to water down the government's proposals for the place-of-public-entertainment permit system, or POPE as it is colloquially known. The regulation of event safety keeps Victorians safe and protects the value of our nation-leading events calendar. We will not accept any changes which simply slash protections for young people at Victorian events and festivals. We were committed to streamlining the process so that events could continue without compromising the safety of Victorians. But last night those opposite teamed up with the crossbench to water down those amendments – in fact to sneak through their own amendments, which would have exposed young people to bushfire risk and to crowd crushes, among other risks. That is not acceptable to this government. We have put forward these amendments so as not to jeopardise the other parts of the bill, which are all about enhancing protections for Victorian homebuyers. I commend the amendments to the house.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:56): If you want to see a backflip, you just have to look at the Allan Labor government. We have the Commonwealth Games coming up shortly, and we will see the diving events, but you will see more backflips by this government than you will see during the Commonwealth Games. We have got another one when it comes to this building legislation. The minister just spoke about needing to build more homes and more affordable homes, yet everything this government has done adds to the cost of building and construction.

This government does not talk to the industry. This government does not talk to builders. This government has no idea what the industry, what builders, what consumers have to say. And again they have been caught out because the amendments that the government has put forward – these are not our amendments, these are the government's amendments – kick the place-of-public-entertainment (POPE) permits, which deal with the events industry and regulations around the events industry, down the road. They have kicked them down the road because the government have not done the work. They have not spoken to industry. They did their own consultation, only to find out that the industry has been up in arms over further regulation, further uncertainty.

The one thing that we have been doing very well as a state in recent times is events, even though we have lost a lot of major events, yet this government wants to add more regulation and more red tape. Victoria is the only jurisdiction in Australia with a duplicate approval process for POPE, which means when you are getting approval for an event you also have this POPE process – which is place of public entertainment, which is what that is being used for – and you are dealing with additional surveying and other jurisdiction costs and building surveyor costs that run in parallel with council. You have got council regulation and you have got government regulation, and it all gets passed on to the consumer. We cannot have this government continuing to mislead Victorians by saying it is all about safety, because this government is not all about safety. This government is all about bureaucracy and red tape and cost, because all it does is add to their union mates, providing more jobs, more cost and more issues back to industry at a time when they need that absolutely the least.

We are seeing so many industries heading to other places, so many event companies that cannot make a go of it because of the cost that this government continues to impose. Victoria, the only jurisdiction in Australia to have a POPE process, wants to run regulation like there is no tomorrow. The council process, which brings together specialists in crowd management, traffic and emergency services, is a more genuine way of being able to do this, rather than having a POPE, which the government has done. POPE has expanded far beyond 2006 when it was first introduced. It now requires full engineering sign-offs on a 3-metre by 3-metre pop-up marquee. That is a full engineering sign-off, and it means things like compliance costs could add an additional \$5000 to \$25,000 on events. Again, we are not talking about big major concert events. We are talking about a kind of festival, we are talking about a kind of fete, or we may even be dealing with the likes of an Anzac Day service in a local community – a council-run Anzac Day service.

Imagine a school running a fete having to then put forth another \$5000 to get a POPE for their marquee. This is the kind of bureaucracy that this government is all about. Let us create another level of bureaucracy and let the parents association fundraise. The very fete that they are fundraising for to raise money for playground equipment is actually running for permits. They are fundraising for permits, not for playground equipment. What a joke. This is where this government has got to. They are absolutely diabolical when it comes to red tape.

What we should be doing instead of having these discussions of bills before the house is every time we bring one of these bills forward we should have two days worth of red-tape reduction, because that is what Victorians expect – reduction in red tape and cost of living, not additional red tape which Victorians all pay for, taxpayers pay for. To the small businesses that have been up and about and saying that the government have got their heads well and truly buried in the sand, the government are not listening. We heard today from their very own state president, saying none of them are making calls into their electorates – none of them are doorknocking their electorates. They do not listen to constituents. They do not listen to small businesses. They do not listen to what people have to say. If they listened once to small business, they would find out that the additional regulation that this government is proposing is hurting small business and hurting taxpayers, because ultimately it is taxpayers that pay for it. That is why we did not support it, because unlike the government, which did not listen to the industry, we actually did.

I want to put on record my thanks to Simon Thewlis, who has been a very strong advocate, running an events business. He was there right through COVID to look at how they could keep a lot of the events industry up and about and surviving during those very difficult times, and he has continued to advocate for the industry and to sit down with industry. Despite the government not listening, Simon Thewlis did certainly consult and try to warn the government that the additional POPE legislation that they were putting through could have caused more regulation, caused more red tape and affected the very businesses they were trying to help – the outdoor festivals and events, the community-run events, the schools, the markets, the fetes, the Anzac Day services and the community types of things that we do every single day to keep some of these community organisations, these not-for-profits, alive. I am a big fan of community organisations and not-for-profits, and when they work every single day just to keep their doors open and are told by the government, ‘You know what, if you want to run a cake stall, you might need a permit. The money that you were raising for the cakes to go to help the kids, instead of helping kids, is helping to fund a permit,’ that is a joke. It should not happen, but it does under the Allan Labor government. It does every single day. That is why we actually did not support these changes, but we proposed amendments that would have made them more workable. Instead of the government looking at these amendments, they said, ‘No, it’s too hard. We didn’t consult. We’re going to kick the can down the road.’ I will tell you what, if the government had actually listened to industry, then we would have got it right the first time and not had the backflip that we have got now.

But this is not the first time. In this bill – and the reason why we did not oppose this bill in the first place – is another backflip. The other backflip is the minimum financial requirement. The minimum financial requirement could have added another 30 per cent onto the cost of construction. When we hear the member for Bentleigh, the minister, stand up here today and say, ‘We’re all about reducing cost and building homes,’ the minimum financial requirement, which the government has had to amend because they did not get it right the first time, would have put small builders out of business because they could only take on a certain amount of jobs each time. They would have had to wait until a year was out before they could take up another job, even though they had concluded that job – another lot of bureaucracy and red tape. Rather than looking at the capability of a builder to do the job and turning around and saying, ‘Right, off you go, and once you’ve finished a job, big tick, go off and do the next job,’ this government said, ‘No, you can only do a certain amount of jobs each year depending on what your turnover is, and we’re going to limit that even if you’ve got a number of employees – bad luck. This is the formula that we’ve got worked out that will determine how many jobs you can do in each given year.’ That was unworkable.

We had the Housing Industry Association come here and actually do a press conference with the member for Narracan and me. We did a press conference in this Parliament only a few months back to say the bill that was before the house was unworkable and that we were not going to support that building bill because it was going to add up to 30 per cent to the cost of construction and building a home, which meant that 30 per cent would be passed on to the consumer, which also meant that builders were not building homes because they were just not going to add up.

Where are we, fast-forwarding to today? The government passed that legislation a couple of months ago and completely ignored industry. They ignored the housing industry and the Master Builders. Master Builders also said this was unworkable. You had two peak bodies, Master Builders and the Housing Industry Association, who both said these laws were unworkable, and the government ignored them and said, 'We're going to push on anyway.' Fast-forward to today, and we have amendments or changes to the bill which actually get rid of the minimum financial requirement, because the government was wrong – not wrong in a year or two years, wrong in a couple of months. That is how bad this government are. They cannot even get things right in a couple of months. They rush things through. We have the same thing with the bill that we are dealing with on the racing legislation – same stuff.

We are having it now, where the government has had a backflip on two key points of this legislation. We know that it is so hard for Victorians to buy a home or to build a home. We have the lowest amount of housing being built in this state in a decade. The government talk about the Big Housing Build, that they are building more homes everywhere. We know that is just simply not true. Even though the government might be approving permits, as I have said many times, you cannot live in a permit, you only live in a home, and you do not live in a home if they are too expensive to build. Forty-three per cent of building a home in Victoria is taxes and regulation, and we will not build more homes until you reduce tax, you reduce regulation and you allow small businesses to operate in Victoria. That is what a Liberal–National government will do – more homes, more choice and more affordability.

Juliana Addison interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: The government can interject all they like, but they know that they are simply not delivering when it comes to housing. It is an absolute shame that we see that. Again, we see lots of legislation that is before the house to try and change things, but none of it is working, because it is a supply issue. It is not a permit issue, it is a supply issue, and the supply issue is all about cost. We have just seen the Victorian government's counterparts, the Albanese government in the federal Parliament, absolutely smash the housing industry apart in some of the changes that they have made in their budget. Not only have they completely smashed housing federally, but the one thing that the Labor Party are in unity with is doing it at a state level as well. When it comes to building, when it comes to construction, you will always pay more under a Labor government because the Labor government will look at how many other feeds can they give everyone else along the way.

We are seeing the Big Build – or the big bill – with the CFMEU absolutely in the trough for \$15 billion worth of corruption. Again, the Premier could not answer questions today when it came to that. All we know that is happening under this government is they are going to transfer the big bill of the Big Build on their transport projects into the big bill of the Big Housing Build in the housing projects with their activity centres, and that is what is happening – 60 of them. You will not build any of these homes in activity centres. You will not build them in the growth corridors unless you deal with the supply issue. On taxation, the Liberal–Nationals have said that we will reduce land tax, we will reduce stamp duty –

A member interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: No, this is tax we are talking about. We will also reduce payroll tax, allowing those that work in the building industry to work in the building industry and not be taxed further, which is another disincentive to encouraging anyone to work on housing in this state.

When you see a Victoria that is really struggling and acronyms like ABV – anywhere but Victoria – because of the cost of doing business in Victoria, I can say that under a Wilson Liberal government we will ensure that we are the best place to do business, not the worst. We will roll out the red carpet to business and we will make sure we have housing right across the state, not just in these activity centres that do not stack up. They just clearly do not stack up.

The government has not dealt with the 8000 empty apartments in greater Melbourne, 8000 apartments that have been built and that are locked up and no-one is occupying because they are now too expensive to buy. They are houses sitting empty in greater Melbourne. The government says it is going to build another 60 activity centres and build 80,000 homes a year and people are going to live in them. What about starting with the 8000 empty homes that have been sitting there for years? No-one has ever lived in them. They have been built, constructed – high-rise – sitting there unoccupied, because they cannot sell them. Yet this government magically thinks it will build more – this was years ago – in the current environment at a more expensive price and people are magically going to be able to afford for them. This government has no clue about economics, no clue about money – zero idea about money. That is why this government can say anything they like about housing but no-one believes them.

Let me say to this government: no-one believes a government that could not manage a chook raffle, that could not manage anything. They could not manage a home budget, let alone a state budget. This government could not manage their own home budget, let alone the state budget of Victoria, and that is why we are approaching \$200 billion worth of debt. That is why it is costing us millions and millions of dollars an hour just to pay the interest on the debt, and that is why debt is running out of control. The government is spending like there is no tomorrow, but there is a tomorrow. Victorians need certainty and Victorians need –

A member interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: Again, the government is just ignoring the fact that their popularity is completely through the floor. People have had enough. They have turned their backs on the government because this government has turned its back on them. This government is not listening, and that is why Victorians have had a gutful of them.

John Lister interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: I would say that the member for Werribee, who has made no calls and doorknocked no homes, does not talk to his constituents. I can tell you that when I have been to Werribee –

Members interjecting.

David SOUTHWICK: I can tell you where Werribee is – absolutely, I can tell you. I have been to Werribee more than you have, that is for sure. I can say that the people of Werribee tell me that this government has ignored them. This government has completely ignored them. They are not building any homes because they are not building any infrastructure. They are not building anything in Werribee, because this government will not put the infrastructure into Werribee. People in the west of Melbourne – all the way through Point Cook, through Laverton, through Werribee, through Melton – are telling me that there is no infrastructure, so they are missing out. It is no surprise why the government want these activity centres in inner Melbourne, because they have got no money to put infrastructure into the west. That is why the people of the western suburbs are saying that this government, the Allan Labor government, has stopped listening. Member for Werribee, your own state director is saying that you do not even make phone calls into your electorate. That is what the state director is saying. The state director of Labor is saying that this government will not even do the work in their own electorates to get themselves elected. That talks volumes.

Members interjecting.

David SOUTHWICK: This government, the very members that are interjecting, like the member for Werribee – he has made zero calls into his electorate, done zero doorknocking in his electorate. This member wants you to believe that he is listening to his own constituency –

John Lister: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is required to be factual. If he is referring to the figures that he believes are true, I actually made around 170 knocks in my electorate in the period that was reported, and in fact I made over 200 doorknocks over the last weekend. The member is required to be factual in this place, and if you want to play that game, show us your figures.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Kim O’Keeffe): That is not a point of order.

David SOUTHWICK: Again we can see how touchy this government is. The government’s own state director published a report, and the report was made public. I do not know who leaked it, by the way, but somebody from their own government has leaked a report that has shown that all of these members, about 18 of them, do not doorknock, do not listen, do not make any phone calls and have failed to listen to their constituents – failed.

John Lister: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I believe the member on his feet has strayed very far away from the amendments – so far that he has started talking about a party process rather than the actual bill at hand, and I ask you to draw him back to the bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Kim O’Keeffe): Please come back to the bill, member for Caulfield.

David SOUTHWICK: It is clear that in the likes of the western suburbs the government has failed to do any work to ensure that we are going to get any infrastructure or any housing. This government gets up and says that it is going to provide more homes. What an absolute joke that is. Provide more homes – are you kidding? This government has no idea how to build more homes or provide any legislation for more homes, because the government has no idea about economics. And as I have said, if you have got 8000 –

John Lister interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: As the member for Werribee wants to keep interjecting, I would like the member for Werribee to explain to me this: if you have 8000 unsold homes in greater Melbourne, in high-rise apartments that have never been lived in, how will you make 60 activity centres work when the cost will be two years later and about 20 per cent more? Very simple – you will not. It is clear that the government do not understand economics, because they say, ‘We’re just going to build these 60 activity centres, 80,000 homes a year,’ but the government could not get that right, because they are 50,000 short in two years. So what this government have now done is said, ‘We won’t do 80,000 a year, we’ll do 800,000 over 10 years.’ Why? Because this government will not be around in 10 years. The member for Werribee will not be around in a few months, let alone 10 years. He will be shown the door along with so many others, because this government has stopped listening.

This government is the worst government that Victoria has ever seen. It is a corrupt government that has allowed \$15 billion of taxpayer money to be used by the CFMEU, and the Premier herself will not get to the bottom of it. It still allows Women in Construction to be out there with all the rorting that Women in Construction have been doing, and this Premier thinks that it is okay for them still to be up and about in business. If any government wanted to show leadership, they would show Women in Construction the door and delist them. Yet this Premier says, ‘No, that’s okay. We’ll allow it to work its process.’ Well, that is the construction-related industry that we are all paying the price for. How are you going to build more homes when you allow the rorting of the likes of Women in Construction to continue to happen? And this government – now they are all silent, by the way. Now they are all very silent. They are all looking at their phones. The member for Werribee is down on his phone because he does not want to talk about Women in Construction, that rorting company.

John Lister: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I do believe the member has again strayed from the amendments at hand, and this is definitely not on topic.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Kim O’Keeffe): There is no point of order.

David SOUTHWICK: I will keep going, thank you very much. This is specifically about Women in Construction. I think the member for Werribee needs an education lesson, because this is a building legislation amendment specifically talking about construction. These are building changes. You cannot make the changes if you have got corrupt organisations that this government sponsors and allows, and that is what has been happening. The Women in Construction organisation has allowed corrupt processes to happen, has taken government grants meant to be helping to get more women into construction, but it has taken grants and spent them for its own benefit. What a disgrace. This government should hang their heads in shame. They are all very quiet now. The government is all very quiet now because they know how corrupt this kind of stuff is. It is corrupt at its core. We will not build any more homes when you have a corrupt government like we have here, and that is why we have got to show them the door in November. This is the worst government we have ever seen. \$15 billion, CFMEU corruption, Big Build –

A member interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: This is construction. It is coming to a suburb near you, with the Big Housing Build and 60 activity centres. The CFMEU are coming to you, and this government knows it. It is jobs for the mates. That is what they are planning, and that is why we have got to make sure we rip this up. The activity centres will be ripped up, because it is just another portal to allow the CFMEU corruption to play out in areas and suburbs near you, and it should never happen. We desperately need more housing across the state. We need to ensure we have more supply across the state. We have got to make it more affordable to build across the state.

Belinda Wilson interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: I would say we absolutely welcome building in Caulfield. The member for Narre Warren South can argue and interject –

Belinda Wilson interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: Exactly. The member for Narre Warren North can interject all she likes, but let me say this –

John Lister interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: The member for Werribee is just completely off the charts. Let me say that we want more housing. We want more housing in Caulfield. We want more housing across the state. We support more housing across the state. I have not seen where there is anyone negating that. But what we do want is we want it to work. We do not want it to just be a press release, and that is what we have from this government – it is all a press release. Again, the minimum financial requirement, which is what this bill originally was going to deal with, was going to put 30 per cent on the construction of homes and put a lot of small building businesses out of business, and this government think that is okay.

We have a National Construction Code which is going to add further costs to the building industry, which has been delayed in just about every other state. But in Victoria it is like, ‘Come in, spinner. Let’s charge more small builders more costs.’ And do you know why? You put more small builders out of business, and you bring the big multinationals and the union-connected businesses back into the game. That is what this government is all about. They want to put small business out of business because they hate small business. We have got the Minister for Small and Family Business at the table, and the small business minister knows that this government hates small business. I am even surprised that the Allan Labor government has a small business minister. I am surprised that this government has a small business minister, because this government hates small business.

Natalie Suleyman: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I think the member knows clearly that he has really strayed from what is before the house. Let me say, for the record, I am very proud to be the Minister for Small and Family Business, and we on this side love businesses in Victoria, with 123,000 in the last 12 months opening their doors.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Kim O’Keeffe): Member for Caulfield, please come back to the amendments.

David SOUTHWICK: I was specifically relating to small business in the building industry, and that is very much on this bill. The small businesses that I speak to absolutely know that this government has turned its back on them. The small business minister actually needs to walk the talk. The small business minister needs to talk to a few of the building small businesses that have left the state or gone broke under this government’s watch, because this government –

Members interjecting.

David SOUTHWICK: For the record, I am talking down this useless Allan Labor government. I love this state and I hate what the Allan Labor government has done to this state. They have failed Victorians. The Allan Labor government has failed Victorians. This is the most corrupt government we have seen. This is a government that hates small business. This is a government that hates anyone that has a go. When we finally get into government in November, once we see half of the Labor government being booted out or looking for another job, who would employ them, quite frankly? Who is going to employ this lot? Who is going to employ a failed, useless former member of the Labor government? Who is going to employ them when they have not been able to manage a chook raffle? You would not give them the responsibility of managing a school fete, let alone a budget, let alone a business. That is why we need to fix things and make every dollar count. We see the waste. There has been \$50 billion on the Big Build wasted. We have the Suburban Rail Loop still costed at \$35 billion – years ago. What a joke. This government is a joke. They cannot manage anything. They cannot add up. They are corrupt. They have a small business minister who completely does not care. This government just does not care. They do not care about small business. The Liberals absolutely will ensure that small business has a go and gets a go, because that is what they need. We need to be able to support small business.

Natalie Suleyman: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I think the member on his feet has been totally misleading the house, and I ask you to bring him to order and ensure that he is speaking on the bill that is before the house. It is important that people do this in this chamber and that the audience also gets those facts. He needs to continue to ensure he is factual.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Kim O’Keeffe): Would the member please come back to the amendments.

David SOUTHWICK: I ask the small business minister to finally do her job and look after small businesses and not turn her back on them.

Motion agreed to.

The SPEAKER: A message will now be sent to the Legislative Council informing them of the house’s decision.

Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (15:26): I am very, very pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026. What

a state we have in Victoria, where racing and major events are really so much a part of the calendar. And boy, we are not going to talk about racing without talking about Cranbourne, because there is a lot going on in Cranny.

I have got a lot to say about this legislation, but I have to get some really interesting goss onto the public record. The member for Wendouree had her second date with Mr Addison at the Cranbourne Cup, so the Cranbourne racetrack is the place to be. You know, there are a lot of people swiping left and right, and there are a lot of other people who find all sorts of methods to meet people, and I think that they are all worthy and everyone ought to be happy and have time to spend with somebody that they love. But I am going to use this opportunity to send all my love to Mr Addison and say that when you took the member for Wendouree – she was the future member for Wendouree at the time – to Cranbourne racetrack for that second date, or when the member for Wendouree took you, then that was actually a very wise choice. You are made for each other, and I wish you all my love.

This bill will amend the Racing Act 1958 and consolidate the functions of the racing integrity commissioner and the Victorian Racing Integrity Board into a single entity. It is going to facilitate the establishment of Greyhound Racing Victoria – and I cannot wait to also get on the record some pretty exciting news about what is going on with greyhound racing down in Cranny – and Harness Racing Victoria as public companies limited by guarantee. And of course harness racing, the trots, down in Cranbourne is also a place where there is a lot of fun, there is a lot of joy and the community come together. I have got a lot to say about the people who are involved in harness racing down in Cranny, and I will be certainly making sure that they are immortalised in *Hansard* too. The bill provides a legal authority for Greyhound Racing Victoria and Harness Racing Victoria in their new structures to act as the controlling bodies for greyhound and harness racing in Victoria and grants those bodies specific powers to enable them to fulfil their purposes. It makes various other amendments to improve and modernise the operation of the Racing Act.

Greyhound racing is terrific. I have been down to Sandown because, in fact, the Cranbourne Cup has been operating out of Sandown. I was there with the member for Mulgrave just a few months ago, and I was pleased to be able to have some time down there but also to spend some time with the terrific people from the greyhound racing industry, who do care so much about the dogs. It was wonderful to be there with some of the wonderful pooches who are such an important part of the care and love that the industry puts towards greyhounds in my patch.

Work has been happening on the redevelopment of the greyhound racing track down in Cranbourne. I am going to take the opportunity to recognise and thank Andrew Fennell for the incredible work he has been doing to bring this really important project to life. I have been down and had a couple of look-sees at how it is going along, and the work is going gangbusters. Not only are we going to have a safer track for the dogs and a better experience for people who are going down to enjoy greyhound racing, but I know that there have been many people involved in the work and the employment of getting the greyhound racing track going. The project is going to contribute an estimated \$34 million in additional total expenditure and deliver a \$23 million boost in value-added economic impact over the next five years. I think it is important for us to make sure that we are acknowledging the impact of greyhound racing, particularly once we get this new track up and going. I plan to be there and celebrate with so many people. I know the member for Narre Warren North has been down as well, and we all love Cranny.

On the economic impact of the racing industry in the City of Casey, there is some really interesting and important research that has been done. When I was first elected, I was told very early that the tri-code Cranbourne racing track was the largest employer in my electorate. At the time I think there were about 700 or so people working down there. It is a little bit of a TARDIS; you get there and you do not realise how big it is and how many trainers there are. I am now advised by the most recent information I have that there were 1590 full-time equivalent people employed down there, so that is the number of FTE. But of course there are so many more than that, because down at the racetrack there are people who work in all sorts of roles, not just as it relates to the trots, not just as it relates to

the turf club, not just as it relates to the dogs, but also those who provide hospitality. There is a \$207 million economic contribution to the City of Casey, and a really significant amount of household income is generated. It is not cute to say that many of the people who live in Cranbourne, who live in the constituency I serve and who in fact live near where I live are employed down at the racetrack – 876 trainers staff and volunteers; 2779 owners; 298 breeders staff and volunteers; 744 racing club staff; and other participants. We have got a total of 4772 people who are involved or participants in racing in my part of the world, and that is really important because not only does the racetrack provide a place for people to come together and enjoy the day, it is also a place where I have attended many, many school events and multicultural events. We are very fortunate that BAPS, one of the big faith groups, were able to bring an important faith leader to Cranbourne, and that is an important way that the Cranbourne racetrack does support the community.

I am just going to deviate to harness racing for a moment and acknowledge David and Linda Scott, who are terrific members of the Cranbourne community and have been instrumental in their leadership in harness racing down in Cranbourne. David and Linda are part of a community of people who really do enhance that inclusive environment, and I am very grateful to them every time I see them.

This bill recognises the enormous contribution that racing makes to our state. I think I have undertaken quite a lot of effort in unpacking how important it is to my own community. It contributes \$4.7 billion annually to the economy and generates over \$500 million in tax revenue and 34,500 full-time equivalent jobs. Cranbourne has established itself as one of the most significant racing centres in Australia. I know when a lot of the trainers left Caulfield and came to Cranbourne that was something that was very much welcomed in our community because of that economic generation that comes with having so many trainers move to the centre of the universe. When we discuss the future of racing in Victoria, we have to recognise that decisions made in this Parliament have a direct impact on communities like Cranbourne.

The strength of our integrity systems, the effectiveness of our governance arrangements and the confidence of participants all influence whether our racing industry continues to thrive. At its heart, this bill is about ensuring that the structures governing racing remain fit for purpose in a changing environment, and one of the most significant reforms contained in it is the establishment of the Racing Integrity Commission Victoria. Public confidence is essential for the success of any sporting industry, so whether we are participants or punters or members of the broader community we need to have confidence that racing is conducted fairly transparently and with appropriate oversight.

This is an opportunity for me to acknowledge that when the greyhound community were concerned about the track work and whether the government did continue to have a commitment to the track work that was going to be undertaken – and has nearly been completed – in Cranbourne, I did have a number of families from right around Cranbourne, particularly Cranbourne South, Devon Meadows and Pearcedale, come to see me, and I want to take the time to thank them for being so generous. They came to my office and spoke about their love of the dogs. They spoke about how important the greyhound racing community and fraternity is and why it was important for them to be able to have a track in Cranbourne. Many of them have been travelling to different parts of the state because there has been no other option. It is going to be a moment of terrific celebration, the opening of the track at Cranbourne. We are going to be so happy to have the Cranbourne Cup back where it belongs, at the centre of the universe. It has been nice that Sandown have been able to look after us for this interim time, but to be able to have this here is going to be such a surprise.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (15:36): The Greens will oppose the Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026. This is a significant restructuring bill. It abolishes the Victorian Racing Integrity Board and combines its functions with those of the racing integrity commissioner in a new Racing Integrity Commission Victoria. The bill also changes the Victorian Racing Tribunal and gives the Australian Grand Prix Corporation broader commercial powers for motorsport events. Most significantly, the bill abolishes Greyhound Racing Victoria and Harness Racing Victoria as statutory authorities and transfers their property, rights, liabilities and

employees to new not-for-profit public companies limited by guarantee. The minister will appoint their directors, while Parliament will have limited power to disallow later changes to their constitutions.

The minister says these changes will remove duplication between the integrity commissioner and the integrity board, clarify responsibility and create a more streamlined integrity system, but the test is not whether this bill is more convenient for the racing industry; the test should be whether it produces better outcomes for the public, for the people harmed by gambling, for animals used by the industry and for the taxpayers who underwrite it. On gambling harm, this bill fails that test. It establishes no gambling harm prevention objective or duty for any controlling body. It requires them to promote and develop racing commercially but does not balance that function with the statutory responsibility to reduce harm. There is no requirement for public health expertise on boards, no harm minimisation plan, no transparent reporting of wagering dependence and no mechanism linking public funding to reductions in gambling harm. The bill excludes some wagering interests from board eligibility, but one conflict-of-interest rule is not a comprehensive harm prevention framework. That omission matters when racing's business model is so closely tied to gambling revenue. We see here again a bill that entrenches commercial promotion while remaining silent on gambling harm and only reinforces this existing imbalance.

The animal welfare provisions are also inadequate. The bill lists promoting animal welfare as an objective and allows the integrity commissioner to audit welfare-related policies and procedures, but it does not establish enforceable welfare standards, independent inspections, mandatory outcome targets or comprehensive reporting of injuries, deaths, euthanasia, breeding, traceability and rehoming. The same organisations will continue to promote racing to grow its commercial returns, to regulate participants and to oversee animal welfare. That structural conflict remains. Day-to-day integrity responsibilities also remain with the three controlling bodies. The new commission provides oversight but is not an independent animal welfare regulator.

Transparency and accountability are further areas of serious concern. The government has told Parliament that Harness Racing Victoria has received \$86.8 million in support, including a \$41 million taxpayer loan. The Victorian Racing Industry Fund provides \$72 million over four years, with further public money directed through event and infrastructure programs. With that scale of public support, accountability should be strengthened, not weakened. Yet the bill expressly provides that the new Greyhound Racing Victoria and Harness Racing Victoria companies will not be public entities under the Public Administration Act 2004 and will not be public bodies under the Financial Management Act 1994. Public assets, contracts and liabilities will be transferred to companies that control racing funds and property. Moving functions to new corporate structures must not reduce public scrutiny or access to information.

Before any transfer occurs, the government should provide a statute-by-statute account of the successor companies' coverage under freedom-of-information laws, Victorian Auditor-General's Office oversight, the Ombudsman, IBAC, public interest disclosure protections, privacy legislation and the Public Records Act 1973. The legislation should also guarantee the continued tabling of annual reports and audited financial statements in Parliament. The government must explain precisely what the new structure means for public sector financial directions, procurement, executive remuneration, public records and whistleblower protections. Racing Victoria's company structure is compatible with freedom-of-information laws. There is therefore no justification for failing to guarantee equivalent coverage for the new entities.

There are also significant concerns about the future of public assets and land. All property and liabilities will be transferred to the successor companies, but the bill does not provide the safeguards that should accompany that transfer. The Greens believe publicly derived assets should remain in public hands, ensuring that land cannot be sold, transferred or mortgaged without strict safeguards and that its value remains dedicated to an approved public purpose. The Greens will be asking questions of the minister about this during the committee stage in the upper house. The legislation should also set out what happens to those assets if a successor company becomes insolvent, is wound up or loses

its certification. This is particularly important given the value and future development potential of Harness Racing Victoria's land at Melton.

Public funding must come with enforceable conditions. Every grant, loan guarantee, wagering distribution and infrastructure contribution should be publicly disclosed. Financial supports should be conditional on independently verified improvements in animal welfare and reductions in gambling harm. The structure of the new companies raises additional governance problems. The directors will be the only members of each company. The minister will appoint the boards, and the use of an independent advisory panel is optional. There is no guaranteed representation for animal welfare, gambling harm prevention, workers, community interest or regional communities on the boards. The companies and their boards will also determine director and chief executive remuneration. There are serious questions about whether the new integrity commission will have sufficient independence, authority and resources. The integrity board will consist of only three people, although now we have an amendment to increase it to five, and the commission will be funded through costs recovered from the bodies it oversees. Its principal powers appear to involve auditing, investigation, recommending and reporting. These functions are not sufficient unless they produce real consequences. Reports should be published. Controlling bodies should be required to respond publicly, and there must be a clear enforcement pathway when recommendations are rejected or ignored. Even the commissioner's own-motion inquiry powers are constrained by a requirement for agreement that a matter is sufficiently serious. Recommendations can still be ignored, with escalation to the minister rather than direct enforcement. That simply is not good enough when it comes to racing and gambling.

Let us talk about this state's obsession with racing and gambling. Victoria is one of only two places in the entire world that has a public holiday dedicated to a horserace, and Adelaide is the other one – only two places in the world, and they are both here in Australia. Victoria has more greyhound racing tracks than the whole of the US – in fact six times more. We have 13 active greyhound racing tracks in this state, while the US has just two. I hear Labor members on the other side saying, 'Hear, hear! Isn't this fantastic? Isn't it great that we are the racing capital of the world.' I do not think that is something to be proud of. I do not need to tell people here about the cruelty and the unnecessary deaths caused by horseracing and greyhound racing. The Greens have been talking about this for decades.

Victorians also know about the extensive gambling harm that racing causes to Victorians and their families and the cost to taxpayers in support services needed to mop up the mess, and the Labor Party does not seem to care about this one iota. What I do not understand is why this Labor government is so obsessed with continuing to promote cruel racing practices. The Labor government is giving \$900 million – nearly a billion dollars – of our taxpayer money to the racing industry over 10 years. At the same time, the Labor government is cutting costs to the things that Victorians actually need. They have cut over \$2 billion from schools, they are refusing to pay healthcare workers a fair wage and they are demolishing public housing homes as we speak with no intention of rebuilding any public housing. This government's priorities are all wrong, and it is no wonder that Victorians are looking for a better option as we head towards the election.

The bill also bundles these racing governance changes in with expanded commercial powers for the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, including ticketing, supporting facilities, commercial sponsorship and broadcasting rights. These provisions deserve separate scrutiny rather than being attached to a major restructuring of racing regulation.

If you take these things together, this bill is nothing but a gift from Labor to both the racing industry and the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, and this is after Labor has already found \$400 million of taxpayer funds to fund luxury corporate box upgrades at the grand prix. Isn't it funny that Labor also say that they cannot afford to make public transport free for good, that Labor say they cannot afford to build public housing, that Labor are cutting more than \$2 billion from Victorian public schools, that Labor cannot afford to fund our community health centres or the community services that we need, but they can find \$400 million of taxpayer funds for luxury upgrades at the grand prix. Heaven forbid that Labor's corporate mates at the grand prix would have to pay for their own luxury corporate box

upgrades! And I guess it must only be a coincidence that the chair of the grand prix corporation is none other than the former Labor racing minister Martin Pakula. You literally could not make this stuff up.

Danny Pearson interjected.

Ellen SANDELL: The Labor member for Essendon is asking what my point is. My point is that Victorians are fed up with this game of mates. They are fed up with people in the Labor Party giving tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars to racing and to the grand prix while they are struggling and do not have the services that they need. It is no wonder that people are deserting the major parties and deserting Labor when they continue to make decisions like this. It is no wonder that no-one trusts the Labor and Liberal parties anymore, because we are here in Parliament today, and what have Labor chosen to spend their time on? Introducing a bill to make life easier for the racing and gambling industries rather than making life easier for everyday Victorians. Labor are so captured by vested interests and their corporate donors that it would almost be laughable if it actually was not so serious.

We could be here in Parliament today introducing laws for free public transport, to put a cap on rents, to build more public housing – the things that Victorians are crying out for. But no, instead we are talking about Labor giving more support for the gambling lobby, more support for the racing industry and more support for the grand prix. Isn't it interesting that no-one in their speeches on the Labor side during this debate has mentioned the donations that Labor gets from the gambling industry. No-one has mentioned the fact that the chair of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation happens to be the ex-Labor Minister for Racing Martin Pakula. It is no wonder that people feel that the system is rigged against them, because it is. And it is no wonder that Victorians are angry – I am angry – when the major parties play this ridiculous game of mates and give more and more favours to the big end of town when ordinary people's lives get harder and harder.

These are exactly the conditions that Labor and Liberal have created. These are the conditions when the far-right snake-oil salesmen move in. It opens the door for people like Trump, as we have seen in America, like Farage in the UK and like Pauline Hanson's One Nation right here in Victoria to thrive. These right-wing opportunists take all the justified anger that exists in the community –

Danny Pearson: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I fail to see what Donald Trump and Nigel Farage have got to do with the Victorian racing industry.

Ellen SANDELL: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, as the lead speaker I have licence to go wider than the specifics of the bill.

Danny Pearson: No, you do not.

Ellen SANDELL: I do as the lead speaker. Maybe you have not been the lead speaker on a bill yet.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Kim O'Keeffe): I do not uphold the point of order.

Ellen SANDELL: These right-wing opportunists take all that justified anger that exists in the community, the anger that has been created by the failure of the major parties, but then they take it and they try and direct it at migrants, at trans people or at anyone else that they think they can scapegoat to distract from the groups that are actually responsible for life getting harder. The real story, the real scandal, is that the rules of our economy have been written by politicians and their corporate and billionaire mates to benefit themselves. But let us be clear: swapping one corporate-backed party for another will not fix this. One Nation, Labor, the Liberals, the Nationals – all of them do the same thing: they take donations and marching orders from the big end of town and then make laws to benefit the big end of town. That is exactly what this law that Labor is bringing today is doing to help the gambling and racing industries and lobbies and the grand prix. Let us be clear: One Nation are controlled and funded by the same big end of town, and they are using this political moment to get more power so that they can get into power and write more laws to protect the profits of people like Gina Rinehart and the big corporations while Victorians continue to get screwed over. Otherwise, why would Gina Rinehart support them if she was not getting something out of it?

All of this comes at the expense of ordinary Victorians. Let us be clear: One Nation is a symptom of the failure of the old major parties, and the old parties are playing right into its hands by their failure to act on the big issues that are actually facing Victorians. But make no mistake, the two-party system is dying – it is on its last legs – and right now, all around the world, ordinary people are fighting back and demanding better. People are refusing to accept that this is just the way things have to be, because the answer to a broken system is not more division; it is coming together and building something better. One Nation has had the same racist playbook for 30 years, and they have been waiting for this moment. We cannot give them that satisfaction. Pauline Hanson wants people to be angry at each other, but instead we need to be angry at who rigged the system in the first place. If enough of us do that, if enough of us stand up to the major parties and fight for the things that Victorians actually need, we can build a future that is fairer, kinder and better than the one that the old parties have given us.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon) (15:53): Mercifully, that is over. I mean, what a load of drivel. This industry is a vitally important industry that employs thousands of Victorians, many of whom actually live in my electorate. I am so grateful and fortunate to have both Moonee Valley and Flemington in my electorate. I note that the member for Melbourne is slinking out of the chamber, going back to have her tofu, and she will not be reading the form guide in Sessions, I reckon. I am pretty sure she is not going to be doing that. She is instead going to be the wowser that she is lording it over the rest of us. This is an important industry because it employs thousands of Victorians. And for me, I am of a certain age where on Saturday night there was *Penthouse Club*. Not sure if you remember *Penthouse Club*, Acting Speaker. There are a few in the chamber that remember *Penthouse Club* with Ernie Sigley and Denise Drysdale, a variety show on a Saturday night. They would have the trots.

Matthew Guy interjected.

Danny PEARSON: I am that old, and I remember seeing the trots go around at the showgrounds in the 70s. I will tell you, when you are a young fella, you think, ‘This is just magic.’ It is a thing of wonder and beauty.

Why I find this particularly interesting is that, if you compare and contrast and think about the way in which ancient Rome has played a pivotal role in the way in which we govern as a modern society, back in the day the Circus Maximus was the preferred form of racing. Whereas now we are more into the thoroughbreds than harness racing, for the Romans it was the reverse, Acting Speaker, and I know you will be delighted to hear this. The Circus Maximus was a long oval lap of seven laps. It could have about 150,000 to 250,000 spectators. When you think that ancient Rome had a population of a million, that is quite a turnout. You had two options: the four-horse chariots, known as quadrigae, or the two-horse chariots, which were bigae. The reality is that many of those drivers of the chariots, who were called aurigae, were slaves and many were freedmen. But what I learned and I did not realise is that there were four racing syndicates that dominated ancient Rome, and they were based around the colours red, white, blue and green. In actual fact blue and green were the preferred ones. It is almost like the Carlton and Collingwood of what you would see at the Circus Maximus. I discovered that while the Romans frowned upon gambling if it involved a game of chance, they were quite accepting of gambling where it resulted from a level of skill. This was viewed far more favourably. It is interesting that chariot racing around the Circus Maximus was seen as the desired form of horseracing, as opposed to the less common horseriding which we would be familiar with, which was a smaller affair. But again, for a young fella in the suburbs of Melbourne in the 1970s, it was just – every half hour they would cross to the trots – absolutely fantastic. In the 1990s I do remember going to Moonee Valley and seeing the trots racing around. It was a thing of wonder, and it was thoroughly enjoyable.

I think what this bill does – I am pleased that the major parties recognise this important industry, recognise the support of this industry and recognise the fact that thousands of Victorians earn their livelihood in an industry that is a very good industry, despite the commentary from the member for Melbourne and the Greens political party – is provide the opportunity not only for that direct employment for those involved but for the way in which Melbourne comes to life.

It should come as no surprise to anyone that I am an atheist, but I must say, if there is a heaven, it surely must be the Flemington straight. You go there in spring, and you have got the green grass in the members. Honestly, heaven would have to be spending the rest of your life gazing over the Flemington straight with the sun out – Melbourne in springtime, having a punt, getting on the p155 and just enjoying yourself. It is just a thing of beauty. I think that when you go out to Flemington in the Spring Racing Carnival, as an exercise in a form of leisure and entertainment, it is incredibly democratic. When you wander through the general area at Flemington, you see people from all walks of life. You see people who are passionate devotees of racing. You see people who are quite happy just to be able to bet on their one day of the year or couple of days of the year. You see people who are from all walks of life. I think that when you see the races like that, it is at its finest and at its best. It is something that I have always derived an enormous amount of satisfaction and joy from. You see Melbourne, this thriving metropolis, a modern-day Rome, at its finest during the Spring Racing Carnival. It is something where I think that we all – many of us, anyhow, who support the industry – recognise we are putting our best foot forward. You see the way in which people come down from Sydney; they want to see the Melbourne Cup. I must personally confess I am more of a fan of Derby Day. I think Derby Day is the finest day of racing on the calendar, and it is a thing of joy.

I have got to say, I have learned to discover the benefits of a quaddie. Anyone who has not done a quaddie, do yourselves a favour. You want to have a few runners in the different legs. You might want to anchor it with one or two. You have a low percentage but a wide field selection, and it is a bit of entertainment. I think that is a good thing. Shame on the Greens political party for being quite disrespectful towards the pastimes of the working class. I commend the bill to the house.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Matters of public importance

Opposition and One Nation policy

The SPEAKER (16:01): I have accepted a statement from the member for Mordialloc proposing the following matter of public importance for discussion:

That this house condemns the opposition and One Nation on their plans to cut \$40 billion out of Victorian schools and hospitals, as well as one in seven public servants.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (16:01): At a time when our political system is how it is, this could not be a more important matter before the house, because we know exactly the impact that a One Nation and Liberal coalition would have, with cuts to Victorian services like we have never seen before. If timing was everything in politics, and it certainly is, we have seen one of the most extraordinary press club addresses in living memory. We have seen now the impact that a One Nation coalition would have, because we know federally now that they are one and the same. Angus Taylor as the federal opposition leader has taken the Liberal Party down to 17 points. That is right. For those tuning in over at opposition offices over there, it gets far worse when you let the populists in. Seventeen points Angus Taylor now presides over federally, and Pauline Hanson and One Nation are on a tear of the Liberal Party and Nationals.

There are things going on at the moment over in the federal Parliament and there are things going on in this place to salvage the living memory of the National Party as they exist today. The Tasmanian tiger, you might know, went extinct. There are some granular black-and-white photos of the Tasmanian tiger. They took those at that moment when there were one or two last ones. There are photographs being taken of Nationals now as the last living memory relic. They will be extinct very soon. We will not have a Nationals member of Parliament going into the future. This is why we are not talking about the Nationals and Liberals and One Nation cuts, because the Nationals will cease to exist. On any mark of polling and information now – multilevel regression and poststratification; any sorts of numbers – the Nationals are in all sorts. This is what happens when you do not stand up for something and you stand for nothing. This is what happens.

The only reasoning voice federally in the conservative landscape at the moment is former Prime Minister John Howard. He went on that leading podcast, the *Karl Stefanovic Show*. He got a bit of a free run. We get more pushing questions through that. John Howard said on that podcast:

In politics, if you train all your venom on someone you elevate them, and I didn't believe in elevating her. And I still don't.

He was referring to Pauline Hanson and One Nation.

Let One Nation set up their stall, tell us what they believe in, it would be interesting and it would be interesting to get two or three versions.

That is the only person that is a Liberal who is standing up to One Nation right now, because Tony Abbott, after being sent out by John Howard to challenge One Nation, has vacated the field. They will sign a coalition agreement in the government. Angus Taylor has said that as well. He will sign a coalition agreement. That will be done. It will be it. There will be preference deals all over the place.

So now is the challenge for the member for Kew, the Leader of the Opposition. What will they do in Victoria? What will be their plan when the member for Kew has already announced \$40 billion in cuts and one in seven public servants? I thought maybe that was an original thought from the member for Kew – to cut so many jobs, to have such an austerity measure that would make Margaret Thatcher blush, that would see carnage come across in confidence in business and community and government investment across our state. I thought maybe the member for Kew had an independent thought, but no. It was not hers. It has come deep from Queensland One Nation policy. These policies make One Nation blush. Pauline Hanson today announced, as reported in the *Age*, that a slew of government departments will be cut. Where have we heard that? From the member for Kew. The member for Kew has talked about cutting the public service by one in seven workers, taking an axe to the public service and sacking teachers and nurses across the state.

Members interjecting.

Tim RICHARDSON: It is hard to hear, I know.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, the speaker on his feet is required to be factual, and the statements that he is making are completely false and baseless. I would ask you to ask him to be factual.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order. This is a matter for debate.

Tim RICHARDSON: It is really hard to hear. I was shocked, member for Evelyn, and I said so in a grievance debate a little while ago. I stood there and I could not believe the Liberals would do this, that they would take One Nation policy and make it their own and try to dominate it like never before.

Bridget Vallence interjected.

Tim RICHARDSON: The member for Evelyn says it is not. Member for Evelyn, Angus Taylor and Pauline Hanson have agreed to a preference deal. I know it is hard to take. I was shocked. I stood back and said, 'I can't believe it.' I know that One Nation tracks well in Evelyn – we have seen it. We have seen the numbers. It does not go well in Sandringham, does it, member for Sandringham. Go a little further out to Evelyn, and it gets a bit 'Don't know if there'll be a preference deal out there. We don't know what's going to happen.' But it is hard to hear, because when you play to the populace, when you play with that audience, this is what happens. This is why One Nation now has the Liberals on the ropes federally, at a primary of 17 points, and the leader of your party nationally, the most senior voice in the Liberal Party, has abandoned the field. This is what happens when you do this.

As I was saying, this cuts agenda is exactly what Pauline Hanson has announced. What did Pauline Hanson say about childcare workers today? This is astonishing. Pauline Hanson said that these educators:

... should not need a qualification such as a university degree to look after children ...

Hear that language: 'look after children', not 'educate children', not 'support their education' or 'invest in them'. In a push that has come after a series of media reports, Pauline Hanson said, on the record, they do not need a pay rise:

Didn't they get a pay rise just not so long ago?

We know right now that that means cuts to their wages, cuts to their conditions. We see now that not once has a Liberal or One Nation member been on the side of working people or supported a wage increase. That is right – not once have they supported wage increases in our nation or Victoria. They have always been on the side of big business. We know in Western Australia that one of the biggest backers of Pauline Hanson and now Angus Taylor is Gina Rinehart. Who is going to be defending against these cuts? There is only one political movement that stands in the way of a One Nation-led coalition government.

We know if it came to be, if the member for Kew was able to hold off the teals, it would be a deputy premiership. We know that. We saw the reports in the *Age* that on the conservative side of politics there will be one or two Nationals left – that is it. Nationals gone for good. It will have less members of Parliament than One Nation. That is where they have taken us because of Tony Abbott's work to vacate this space and agree to a coalition agreement. And now we see the member for Kew has been asked 50, 60 times – it might be more – over and over and over whether they will sign a preference deal with One Nation. We know today that that will absolutely be the case, and they will be a minority partner in whatever make-up that looks like over there.

The consequences of that will be felt everywhere. Remember that first speech when we tuned in and we heard the member for Kew say that it is business that creates jobs, not government? To the hundreds of thousands of people that work in government sectors – the nurses, the teachers, our police officers, our emergency services – see you later. That is it. You are done, because it is business, it is outsourcing, it is privatisation. It is government by consultants that we saw under Baillieu and Napthine that would vacate that field. It is a crisp reminder for those opposite – and the member for Evelyn challenges the cuts that we have put forward – that this was said on 16 August 2024. I know it is really hard to hear. It elicits a response each and every time because it is so personal. And they said the quiet bit out loud. I know those opposite wanted to hold it until at least a week out. I remind those opposite of the immortal words of the then shadow finance minister, the now Shadow Treasurer and Leader of the Opposition:

Current spending is simply not sustainable ... That means we're going to have to make cuts when it comes to our health services. Schools aren't going to be built or even fixed.

Sky after dark – I will give credit. There were probably about 30 people watching, but I tuned in, I was one of them, and I heard it crisply with Steve Price. Even Steve Price was a bit shocked. If you watch the exchange with Steve Price and you look at him, he went, 'Hang on, I don't know if you're meant to be saying this bit just yet,' but it was honest, and I give the member for Kew those dues, that it was honest. It was honest in that moment. It said exactly what their agenda is: cuts to education, cuts to health. It is in their DNA, and we have seen that time and time and time again played out.

The member for Kew has been honest in coming forward and saying that on the agenda is \$40 billion in cuts to our hospitals, our health systems and our emergency services. But what does that translate into? What does it mean to take the engine room of the nation's economy into austerity? What does it look like to try to cut your way through? Because these services are not just academic. When you start to cut health workers, rocking up to your emergency department takes longer, it takes longer to see a doctor, it means that you are paying out of your pocket more, it means it hurts to go to schools because

you are cutting funding to the services that matter, it means you cannot pay for uniforms, you cannot pay for books. It has a tangible reality. And, guess what, when confidence in our economy starts to drop, when you cut the place to pieces, businesses invest less, and it has a direct impact on employment. Show me a jurisdiction internationally that has cut its way through austerity back to prosperity. It does not happen.

The cash surplus agenda that the member for Kew has put forward is not to build a single thing over the next decade and to scale everything back, and the trauma that would inflict on working Victorians into the future will be generational. We saw that through Kennett and we saw that through Abbott and Hockey's budget; it had generational impact and significance, and that is what we would see. The One Nation–Liberal coalition agenda that we would see brought forward would be one of the worst impacts that we would see. Some of the comments that have been made by Pauline Hanson as the leader – they do not even have a leader in Victoria at the moment, and the Liberals are cosy up for a preference deal with this organisation. The populism that has happened over the last few years – we saw it during the pandemic, all the way through – has led to the erosion of the political base that they see now. It has inflicted that harm; it has been self-inflicted.

I go back to that. Why is it that John Howard stands up and say 'Enough', that we should not be pandering to populists – he has the integrity to say that – but not one Liberal in Australia has done that? In fact they are desperate to do a preference deal and harbour what seats go next. This is serious stuff in our political discourse and the impact into the future, and someone has to stand up and take leadership and push them back. Someone has to put this forward.

Today, 7.5 million Australians were born somewhere else. That is right – 7.5 million Australians. When One Nation gets out there and says multiculturalism does not work, it is a direct attack on people who have been born somewhere else, paid their taxes, built their houses and built their communities. How many businesses have been created on the backs of migrant Australians, who have then put generational contributions in, who love and cherish our nation, who rock up at citizenship ceremonies beaming with the biggest smiles and the brightest personalities and all the hope in the world? You see them, and it moves you to see just how much they love our nation and the prosperity that it brings. To say that that does not work, and for no-one on the conservative side to stand up and attack and challenge that, is absolutely devastating.

This is more than just the next election. This is more than it being just 24 weeks away from the state election. There are moments in time when we need political leadership. We need to stand up to some of these forces into the future. That is the challenge that has been played out time and time again, over and over. We see today, once again, the impact that vacating that field would have.

So what will Labor governments do? Well, they will always do the hard thing. We will always front up and support working people, because we have seen this play out time and time again. This movement are disruptors. We put forward policies for working people and we do the hard yards. We make the decisions time and time again that fight for working people and their families, that try to put more food on their table, to get more pay in their pay packet and make sure that they can see a future for their kids into the next generation. We want to make it better for their communities, and we want to build the schools and the hospitals and create the jobs of tomorrow. That is why we have been the engine room of this nation's economy for the last decade or more. It is why we will continue to drive forward. This is not a time to take away things, it is not a time to cut in such a difficult and volatile economic environment, it is not a time to try to tear people down.

We all have a place, as Victorians, to play, and everyone is welcome and loved and cherished in our state. No matter where you are from, if you front up and you work hard, if you love your community and your family, you have got a place in Victoria and Australia. A One Nation–Liberal coalition will not just be about cuts. It will be about taking Victoria back. It will be going back to the Stone Age, it will be austerity, it will be harsh realities and it will be hurt like we have never seen before. If the member for Sandringham has any ticker whatsoever, in the next speech he will front up and say that

he will stand up against One Nation like never before, he will join John Howard in opposing their populism and their hate and he will bring some sort of normality back to what was truly the Liberal Party once and for all.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (16:16): I rise to address the member for Mordialloc's matter of public importance. I am thrilled to see that the member for Mordialloc's what appears to be frequent attendance at Toastmasters is paying off. He is clearly improving in his delivery, clearly improving in his rhetorical flourishes. If only that was matched by the member for Mordialloc's capacity to increase the truthfulness of his contributions, everyone would be a winner. But, no, that is not the case. No, the member for Mordialloc is on the same old bandwagon.

I want to be frank with Victorians in this contribution: the Allan Labor government claim that the Liberal Party is in some sort of cahoots with the One Nation party. The only evidentiary point that I can think of, certainly in recent times, is when the Allan Labor government kept the Parliament in operation until just after 5:30 in the morning during the last sitting week to do a deal with One Nation in the other place. I asked a question at about 5:20 on that Friday morning. It was probably one of my better parliamentary contributions, certainly at that hour of the day, I believe – you be the judge, Speaker. I asked the question then: what deal have this Allan Labor government done with One Nation in order to get the dirty deal of their donation laws through this Parliament? What have they promised One Nation, and what have they promised One Nation in return for One Nation's vote? You will recall me asking that question at about 5:20 on that fateful morning, and I maintain that that is a question which the Victorian people deserve an honest answer to. That is the evidentiary point, and there is no other. So to suggest that there is some sort of agreement, preference deal or cahoots, that is absolute and utter rubbish from that side of politics. The only evidentiary point is the dirty deal done to enable the rivers of gold to flow from unions to the Australian Labor Party's Victorian division on the back of the donation laws that were discussed and debated and agreed to with the help of the deal that was done between this government and One Nation in the other place during the last sitting week. That is the only evidentiary point that I am aware of.

Another falsehood raised by the member for Mordialloc – again, his delivery was very impressive; Toastmasters is clearly working. But if only his capacity to engage with the truth of the matter and facts matched his delivery, that would be perhaps an aspirational thing that he might seek to improve on, and maybe some time in opposition will help him to do that. It is coming. He made the claim that we will cut public servants. That was a claim that the member for Mordialloc made. I have a message to Victorian public servants. In fact I have a message to Victorians. I have a message to Victorians who think there is a mil of truth in the words coming from the member for Mordialloc. Victorian public servants' jobs are safer under a Wilson Liberal government than they have ever been under the Allan Labor government, and that is the truth of it. Let me tell you why. The Allan Labor government do not have an essential services guarantee. When asked in a media interview by a Channel 7 reporter, 'How many jobs? Hundreds?', the Premier was quick out of the blocks to respond with, 'No, thousands.'

We are not planning and we have no intent for one public servant being sacked. And to say anything other than that is an absolute and utter falsehood. In fact I would go so far as to say the propagation of this untruth by the Community and Public Sector Union is not only dishonest, but it is dangerous. It is dangerous because the words that come from that public sector union may very well be believed by members of that union and may very well have an impact on the welfare of members of that union. I think it is not right. I think it is unjust. I think it is uncalled for for these falsehoods to be propagated. Yes, we have announced a public service hiring freeze, but to assume that a public service hiring freeze equates to or is equivalent to or is exactly in reference to a claim of us cutting jobs – it just simply is not. If public servants in this state are in a job, they will keep it.

We have an essential services guarantee. In my shadow portfolio area of education, we do not need less teachers. It is under this government, after they have had a crack – a terrible crack, I might add, for close to 12 years now – of governing in this state, however they choose to define a Temu version

of governing, that we are now in a teacher crisis. As of today there are something like 750 full-time teaching positions in government schools unfilled. For the government to suggest that we somehow do not give a stuff about schools and the educational opportunity that schools provide for kids to learn, to grow and to contribute to a community is an absolute and utter falsehood, and I want to just simply call it out right now as such. It is wrong.

The truth of this matter and the truth of the MPI as moved by the member for Mordialloc is this: the only party in this place that is without a shadow of a doubt responsible for cutting in the space of education is the Australian Labor Party Victorian division, under the premiership of former Premier Andrews and current Premier – well, for the time being, until the member for Niddrie gets his way – Allan. The Victorian branch of the Australian Education Union on 4 August 2025 – and I am happy to make this release available to Hansard for their reference – stated the following:

Australian Education Union Victorian Branch president Justin Mullaly said the Premier had broken her promise to fully fund public schools after deciding in April 2024 to cut \$2.4 billion.

“The Premier made a promise in January this year to deliver 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard to public schools, but what she didn’t tell Victorians was that she had no intention of delivering on that promise in a meaningful way,” Mr Mullaly said.

It goes on:

“In April 2024 the state government had already decided not to deliver any additional funding until 2031, meaning at least \$2.4 billion would not be allocated to our schools.

Mr Mullaly concludes a little bit later on:

“Right now, Victorian public schools are the lowest funded in Australia and every school in the state is affected – that means the learning and wellbeing of every student is impacted.

I will not just provide that to Hansard. For the benefit of every member of this place, in response to the matter of public importance as raised by the member for Mordialloc, I will make that media release from the Victorian branch of the Australian Education Union available to every member of this house.

This is the only political party who is responsible for cutting funding to schools and to education in this state – with friends like the Australian Education Union, it is no wonder members of this Labor government are wandering around in the dark, blindfolded: ‘Find me a friend.’ With friends like the Australian Education Union calling the truth of this out, saying that it is in fact the Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party under this Allan Labor government, the former Andrews government, that has in fact cut \$2.4 billion from schools, that is the truth of the matter.

The Victorian Auditor-General continues to do a power of work. For the work that the Victorian Auditor-General does, to the Auditor-General and to his office and to his staff on behalf of those Victorians who believe in transparency and accountability in the way their hard-earned taxpayer funds are spent, we say a collective, loud and emphatic thankyou, because today, as tabled in the Council and tabled in the Assembly a little bit later in the day, the Auditor-General provided their latest report, *Delivering School Upgrade Projects*, June 2026. It is quite a fulsome report. I commend it to you. I commend it to every member of this place. What is really interesting in this report is that it in fact articulates the circumstance of providing school infrastructure funding under this Labor government. Some of the findings include that 29 per cent of school upgrades have suffered cost blowouts under this administration and 25 per cent of school upgrades have been delayed. The number of schools considered in poor condition rose from 182 in 2022–23 to 221 in 2024–25. These are the findings in this Auditor-General’s report released today, but the Victorian government has pushed back its target of having no school in poor condition from 2030 to 2034.

Interestingly, and this is a very interesting point, the Auditor-General also identified that three of the 10 schools considered as high-priority schools to be upgraded in 2025–26 were not in fact marked or ranked as being in poor condition by the Victorian School Building Authority and the education department. Three of the 10 high-priority schools that were upgraded in 2025–26 were not actually

considered to be in poor condition, meaning that there were other schools that were in poor condition which were overlooked. But these three schools got funding, didn't they? This is actually the interesting bit: each of these schools is located in Labor-held electorates, including the Minister for Education's district of Niddrie.

At the very best this is a mistake. At the very worst – I will not even go so far as to say 'accusation' – the question that I think is legitimate to ask in this circumstance is: did the education minister use his ministerial opportunity to influence where funding for infrastructure upgrades in schools went? I think that is a fair question to ask. In the interests of transparency and accountability in this place and outside of this place as well I would encourage the Minister for Education in the most efficient and direct way to provide a statement of explanation on this matter and at the very least investigate how this happened. How did a school in his electorate get funding when it was not considered as a priority project or in poor condition ahead of those schools that were considered priority projects and in poor condition? This is the culture that Labor have presided over for the last almost 12 years, and it stinks to high heaven. Victorians are sick of it, and we need a fresh start now more than ever in this state.

In the 90 seconds I have remaining I want to say the opportunity that we have in education is to do the right thing by students, the right thing by parents and the right thing by teachers. Under this Labor government, who have had a crack for the last almost 12 years, it is quite clear that they have stuffed it. They have changed the numberplate. They say that Victoria is the Education State. But with some of the data points that I have raised here today, including that \$2.4 billion cut to education, including those delays and cost overruns and what appears to be preferential treatment of infrastructure funding for Victorian schools, how can they possibly claim equity? How can they possibly claim that Victoria is the Education State when investment in education continues to plummet under this lot? They have had a crack. I say to every Victorian who values education: do not take them for what they say but look at what they have done and show them the door at the election this year. We are on the side of students. We want them to have the very best start in life. We are on the side of parents as the first educators of their children, and we want to support teachers to understand and implement explicit instruction as best as they possibly can. We are on their side, and we want them to succeed, because when teachers and schools succeed, so does our entire state, and everyone deserves that.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (16:31): The member for Sandringham sure is wound up this afternoon, and that must be because he has just watched Pauline Hanson giving I think it was her first address to the National Press Club. Oh, my God, it was an absolute zinger. I can see why he is worked up, and I cannot wait to talk about some of the things that she has brought to the attention of not only me but my entire community, which really says a whole lot about Pauline Hanson's One Nation party and what a Liberal Party–One Nation coalition will mean if they are elected here in November. There were some really dangerous comments in that press club address today.

But I am going to start with the \$40 billion in cuts today, because that is what this matter is about – cuts to services. That has been a really big topic, particularly in Melbourne's west over recent weeks and months. I have been out talking with folks in my electorate. People are worried, and they should be worried. My message to people in Melbourne's west is that if the Liberal Party are happy to announce, even before they are in government, that if they win this election they will make cuts to services on the Wyndham Vale and Melton train lines, what else will they cut in our community? They are two of the busiest rail networks here in Victoria and in the country. The member for Bulleen was on radio talking about making cuts to those services and saying that, yes, it will be problematic but they still need to be made. Those services go through some of the largest growth corridors not only here in Victoria but in the country.

Not only are cuts to those services reckless, damaging and dangerous, they are absolutely going to put the situation for working families in Melbourne's west in a whole pile of trouble. These are people that are trying to get home sooner rather than later to spend time with the people that they love, doing the things that they like, whether that is going for a walk of an evening, going to the gym or going to watch their kids play sport in the evening. Cuts to those train lines will mean people in Melbourne's

west are not able to get home, are not able to get on a train and do the things that they like doing with the people that they love. If those opposite are prepared to make those sorts of public announcements now and not even try and walk back those comments – whether those comments fell out of the member for Bulleen’s mouth or not – and not even try and walk them back even here in this place, what does that say that they will do when they are elected, if they are elected, this coming November? That is something people in Melbourne’s west seriously, seriously need to start considering.

This Labor government has made tremendous announcements about upgrades to services and new infrastructure in Melbourne’s west. Are those services and is that infrastructure at risk if the Liberal–One Nation coalition make government this November? I am talking about the \$80 million rebuild of Albion station. I was out there just last week doing a train station handout in the afternoon, talking to folks about not only the 20 per cent off their rego but also whether they had seen the designs for their new station, because the designs are amazing. So many people getting off that train were saying to me that, yes, they have, and they are so happy because the train station that we are intending to rebuild in Albion is absolutely amazing.

A few kilometres up the road, just past the Sunshine superhub – and I will come to that in a moment – we have Tottenham station. As we have got the member for Footscray here, we had a huge campaign, ‘Time for Tottie’. We had hundreds and hundreds of locals from Braybrook, Footscray and West Footscray. It was a very, very, very good campaign, I have to say, and I give all credit to the member for Footscray, a very popular local member. We had hundreds of people not only signing up to the survey to hear more but also wanting to give their feedback. They want a station they feel proud of, they want a station that is accessible, they want a station that is safe and they want a station that they need. And, do you know what, we are going to go ahead, rebuild that station and give them a station that they deserve. All this is at risk, because when you are talking about \$40 billion in cuts, we are not just talking about cuts to public servants, we are not just talking about cuts to hospitals, we are not just talking about cuts to schools, we are also talking about cuts to other big pieces of infrastructure that this government has committed to and is getting on and delivering.

In between Tottenham station and Albion station we have Sunshine station – Sunshine train station, I will say, because I know that the Leader of the Opposition confused this with Sunshine police station in one of my social media reels, which I know we found quite funny and quite endearing. Sunshine train station is one of the most important train stations in Melbourne’s west. It is where the lines really converge, and it is one of the most complex junctions here in Victoria and this country. We are going to unscramble it, and we are going to build the Southern Cross of Melbourne’s west. We are calling it Sunshine superhub. The community is so excited. Works are underway, works are happening, and the community cannot wait to have that moment where we have the Melbourne Airport rail coming through, making its way to the airport and stopping at our little neighbourhood of Sunshine. The Sunshine superhub unlocks some of the busiest and most congested rail networks in Melbourne’s west, including the Melton line and the Wyndham Vale line –

Juliana Addison interjected.

Sarah CONNOLLY: And the Ballarat line, member for Wendouree – how could I forget that? If we do not build the Sunshine superhub and untangle that network, we cannot put on more trains and increase capacity for the outer suburbs in Melbourne’s west, who are so desperate for us to have more trains running, more often, just purely due to the population growth. But is the Sunshine superhub at risk should the Liberal–One Nation coalition be elected in November? I really do think that the Leader of the Opposition needs to front up and needs to answer these questions and tell locals what is on the chopping block: what are they voting for in November?

Pauline Hanson has made it very clear what her agenda is today. She was not beating around the bush. She has made it very clear that Australia needs to have – well, start with one, but we know that where there is one, there are more – the first nuclear reactor. She openly said that. Is the Leader of the Opposition going to be inviting her here to Victoria? We know that Peter Dutton wanted to dump one

not too far away from Melbourne city, can you believe it. It seemed like a crazy idea, but this is the conversation that happened just a couple of hours ago. The Leader of the Opposition needs to explain to people, while she is making these \$40 billion in cuts, if she is going to be opening the borders and inviting Pauline Hanson and One Nation to go ahead and build a nuclear reactor here in Victoria.

One of the other things that Pauline Hanson called into question and said is that there needs to be an investigation. I know that so many of us here in this place have children and have had children in child care. She talked about the \$16 billion that is spent in child care: why is that being spent and on what, and there needs to be an investigation. Child care enables working parents, and particularly women, to go back into the workforce. What kind of message is it sending to Victoria if we have a Liberal Party–One Nation coalition elected in November? I think the Leader of the Opposition should explain to working parents across Victoria if she thinks that the amount of money that is spent on child care is a waste of money. Is free kinder a waste of money? Does free kinder need an investigation to understand the point of free kinder and what that means for the thousands upon thousands of Victorian families that rely on free kinder?

I do want to say this because everyone here knows I have a really big and very beautiful Muslim community in Melbourne's west, and they are the most generous, kind, passionate, welcoming and inclusive people – incredible people. But Pauline Hanson was also there today saying there is a problem with how many Muslims are coming into the country and that Australia is being swamped by Muslims. I think those were her words. Who actually speaks like that? And talking about not wanting Australia to become like other countries like Britain and Canada – I mean, this stuff you cannot even make up. The Leader of the Opposition needs to be honest with the Victorian people and with the Muslim community about what her position is on the opinion of a party – a party that she would be happy to govern with and preference – about Muslims here in Victoria. Do they deserve to be here?

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (16:41): I am very conscious of the rules and traditions around this house and that you are not allowed to use a certain word that suggests untruths. I wonder how an entire MPI can be put forward by the member for Mordialloc that is based on a complete untruth. Seriously, this is just Labor Party fantasy put into an MPI and then used to try and attack the opposition. I mean, where is the \$40 billion? Can someone on the opposition side, please, in their contribution provide the independent advice that shows that there is a \$40 billion proposal by the opposition? It will not be there. I am disappointed that the Minister for Regional Development has gone, but it is like the Minister for Regional Development's media release a couple of weeks ago on this very issue where she said 'independent economists have said' but did not name who they were. She did not provide any evidence as to who these independent economists were. It just goes to show this government has got nothing better to say. After 12 years of being lectured by this government about all the wonderful things they were doing, here we are, five months to the election: what have they got? They are talking about us. It is just emblematic of a government that has run out of ideas; a government that, I might add, is running scared; a government that is not even sure that its Premier is going to be its Premier tomorrow, let alone next week; and a government that is embarrassed about its legacy.

I am disappointed in the member for Mordialloc. I thought he had a bit more spunk to be able to get up and say something wonderful about what this government is doing. But, no, here we are five months from an election, with Victorians wanting to hear what the big plan from the Labor government is and what we are going to hear from them for the next four years. What they have for us is a big scare campaign, talking about One Nation. Who is worried about One Nation? I know who it is: it is those guys over there. It is that mob over there. I will tell you, member for Mordialloc, I back every one of my colleagues every day, and I am very confident that they will all be back here on 29 November. There are some up there who have not been doorknocking, some who have not been –

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Nationals, through the Chair.

Danny O'BRIEN: I am through the Chair. There are a lot of them. Were you on the list, Brooksy? The minister at the table was not on the list, thankfully. There were 23 of them, I believe, who have not been doing it. The member for Laverton is having a good laugh, but you are on the list, member for Laverton. That is a bit of a concern too.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Nationals, through the Chair.

Danny O'BRIEN: I apologise, Speaker. I keep getting excited. This is what we see from the Labor government. When they are under pressure, they do a big 'look over there'. They just say, 'Don't look at what we are doing, we're going to talk to you about something else.'

That is what they are doing here. I was reminded by the member for Evelyn just before I got up that when it comes to the so-called cuts there is only one party in this chamber who has been doing cuts recently. I was reminded of that wonderful video clip from a press conference a few weeks ago where the Channel 7 journalist said, 'You're saying that the cuts are coming from the opposition, but didn't you just cut some public servants?', and the Premier said, 'Yes, we did'. He said, 'How many? Was it hundreds?', and the Premier said, 'No, thousands.' So thousands of public servants cut by Labor – that is okay. No problem at all, Victorians. When the Labor Party does it, it is all good. But when the opposition proposes something very reasonable, then that is bad. When I say 'very reasonable', what our policy is –

Danny Pearson interjected.

Danny O'BRIEN: And look, feather dusters should not be speaking at the moment, when they have been part of the problem. Feather dusters who were yesterday's heroes should not be speaking. They should not be piping up right now, because they have got a pretty bad record to look back on, when there have been thousands of cuts. The opposition, the Nationals and the Liberals, have got a 10-year plan to actually get our budget back under control after this mob has left it with \$200 billion of debt – \$11 billion of interest we are heading for every year. That is more than what this mob spends on police, on ambulance services and on kindergartens – \$11 billion. Imagine what that could do. Imagine what that could do for your community, what it could do for the member for Morwell's electorate, for the member for Lowan's electorate. You could get a train, member for Lowan. The member for Ovens Valley could get dialysis at Cobram – half promised by the government but never actually delivered. The member for Evelyn could get the roads sealed – the ones that were funded by the former coalition government federally and then taken away by the current Labor government. Those are things that could be done if we did not have to spend \$11 billion on interest.

That is why the Nationals and the Liberals have got a 10-year plan, and it is a very simple plan to save some money, which this government, naturally enough, has tried to turn into some horrendous thing. It is a freeze on the back office for the Victorian public service. Anyone who has got a job there now will continue to have a job, but we will not be putting on more, and that will save the budget bottom line \$22 billion. That is not a cut. It is not a cut; it is just arresting the massive growth that has happened under this mob, including the former minister, the member for Essendon, and all of those who have been involved over the years who like to turn up for the cutting of the ribbon but take no responsibility for the fiscal mess that they have left this state in. We will do that. That will save us significant money. It will allow us to send a signal to the business community and investors that we are open for business in Victoria, by introducing changes to payroll tax – increasing the thresholds and reducing the rate – and by increasing the thresholds for land tax back to what they used to be before Tim Pallas said we had to have a COVID recovery debt plan.

It was interesting that Tim Pallas had a COVID debt recovery plan but he did not have anything for the other \$150 billion of debt that he created. There was no plan for that. So we will give relief on land tax. We will give relief on payroll tax. We will introduce a real-time budget tracker, because this mob have never even had a budget tracker at all, let alone a real-time one. The budget tracker for them is 'How much can we just keep spending?' That is how this mob has worked. So we will introduce that.

We will do five tax reductions, including the emergency services tax – and this is where the Labor Party just make stuff up again. They look at our policy, which is to go back to the fire services property levy, but they just completely ignore that and say, ‘Oh, they’re cutting \$1.6 billion.’ No, we are not. Again, the Labor government is trying to mislead Victorians on this stuff.

Another area where they have failed completely is on crime. There are 1500 vacancies as we speak. I bet you there are some in Point Cook, member for Point Cook. I bet you there are vacancies in Point Cook too. I know there are in the west. I know there are in Werribee, although the member for Werribee does not think there is a crime problem in Werribee. He thinks there is not an issue at all. We beg to differ. We know that in every corner of this state crime is a problem, and we know that the 1500 vacancies need to be filled and that we need more police on the beat. That is why we have committed to 3000 new police to tackle crime and why we have committed to ‘break bail, face jail’ to send a signal to the crooks that if you do the wrong thing and you are on bail, you will go to jail. We have heard the Premier say time and again we have got the toughest bail laws in the nation. Actually they are not even as tough as they were when you weakened them two years ago. That is just a fact.

We absolutely need to be tackling these issues. Most particularly from a Nationals perspective, we need to show some love to regional Victoria, because under this mob you would not think regional Victoria existed. We are getting 12 per cent; per cent of the infrastructure spend of the state government goes to regional Victoria. We are 25 per cent of the population, and that is why we have committed to the fair share guarantee – that we will give a minimum 25 per cent of our state’s infrastructure to –

Mathew Hilakari interjected.

Danny O’BRIEN: Currently it is at 12 per cent, member for Point Cook. I know you might like to think so, but you are not regional Victoria. You would not have a clue about regional Victoria. This government just makes it up. They have to make it up because they have got such a terrible performance on the board for the last 12 years. Victorians have had enough. They are seeing through the spin. In fact they are not even listening to Labor anymore, and we will change the government on 28 November this year.

John LISTER (Werribee) (16:51): Firstly, I would just like to say I will not be lectured on leadership by those opposite. Five leaders in four years – you cannot even get it together. The Nationals kind of swapped from Walshy, put him out to pasture. Fair enough, he is done. I beg your pardon, the member for that part of northern Victoria. With respect, I do appreciate the Nationals are in here and I only see a few of their Liberal colleagues here. One of the things that the previous member spoke about was who is worried about people from One Nation. I will tell you, workers are worried. Workers are worried about what a Liberal–National–One Nation spectre – whatever you want to put it together as – means for working people in places like Wyndham, which I represent. Their plan is to cut \$40 billion from Victorian schools and hospitals and to cut one in seven public servants. This matters the most to people like me and my community, and I will go into why in just a moment when it comes to the public service in particular. But I have to say that Werribee is a proud working-class electorate with a rich history. It is where I grew up. I have worked as a teacher, I volunteer as a firefighter and I have the privilege of representing Werribee in this Parliament. Communities like mine are often the first to feel global and domestic instability, but these pressures do not discriminate based on your migration background.

Unfortunately earlier today I decided to turn on ABC News, and I witnessed whatever you could call that National Press Club address from Pauline Hanson, the Leader of One Nation. It was disastrous watching it, and it is disastrous because of what it will mean for workers and working-class people in communities like mine. Whether your family immigrated to Australia in the 1870s like mine or have only recently made this country their home, cost-of-living pressures impact all working Victorians. The frustrations driving people to look elsewhere are real – cost of living, community safety, housing and infrastructure – and they are certainly not seeing any options in the Liberal–National parties. This

is precisely why we see the political situation that we have today in Australia. They are definitely not looking to those opposite for those answers.

I am speaking to constituents every day on the phone or at their doors, and I hear it firsthand. It is absolutely poor form for any political party to take advantage of legitimate grievances and redirect them to the blameless. The answer is instead in real policies that go to the heart of the challenges being faced by working people. In Werribee it is only Labor governments, state or federal, that invest in those things that people in my community rely on every day. For the nine years that the federal mates of those opposite were in government, my community was intentionally starved of any real investment for the benefit of their mates in Sydney.

There was no infrastructure funding, funding was cut to health – slashed – and funding to the Werribee Mercy Hospital was slashed by their mates in Canberra. It is in their DNA. I will get to One Nation in just a moment, but when we are looking at the opposition, it is in their DNA to neglect places like the western suburbs. They come out when it is suitable to them. They come along to a by-election with all their T-shirts and corflutes and they say, ‘Look at all of this,’ but they do not offer anything. They offered nothing at the by-election, they offered nothing at the federal election, and now we hear plans for them to ‘fast-track’ housing in communities like mine – which basically means dumping more housing in communities like mine with no plan for infrastructure. We saw this previously: the precinct structure plans that we have in my community are terrible because they were developed and approved by the former Minister for Planning, the member for Bulleen, from the other side. This is how they work.

It was this state Labor government that stepped up during those nine years. We have invested almost \$300 million in the Werribee Mercy Hospital. We are continuing to strengthen our local mental health care, and we are delivering urgent care clinics and our virtual emergency department, including our Hospital in the Home program with Mercy. We have opened many new schools for our young families and upgraded our existing schools. In fact at one point the vast majority of schools being built were in the Werribee electorate. We have upgraded and continue to upgrade roads. We are making sure that people have better public transport access across the electorate and have made public transport half-price. We are enshrining the right to work from home into law, something I know means a lot to people, particularly in Wyndham Vale, which was one of the top responders to the survey that was put out.

But this is at risk, and it is at risk not only because of the opposition but also because of One Nation and that political party. The track record of Pauline Hanson shows that she does not care about working people. Her track record in industrial relations could not be clearer, and it feels very similar to that of the Liberal–National coalition. Every time that workers needed parties in Parliament to support them, One Nation sided with the boss. Pauline Hanson has consistently opposed minimum wage rises for working Australians. One Nation voted against protecting tradies from silica dust, and I met a gentleman only the other day as I was out doorknocking – which the Liberals are so suddenly obsessed with; it is like they have never heard of the concept before, and if you saw the member for Polwarth’s video, I do not think he knows what doorknocking is. He just stands at the letterbox waiting for someone to come and talk to him. But I spoke to this gentleman, and he told me about his experience, and he told me that it was Labor that stood up for them. One Nation did not stand up for him. The Liberals and Nationals did not stand up for him. One Nation think that the person working next to you doing the same job deserves less, and recently we saw their opinion on the minimum wage rise that Labor supported both state and federally with the Fair Work Commission.

This matter goes to the idea of what it would mean to have a Liberal–National–One Nation coalition in government. We have seen it before. The Liberals, unlike One Nation, have never pretended to care about working Victorians. It is not in their DNA. We talk about the \$40 billion worth of cuts from the state budget, and those opposite have already indicated a few of the different things that they would cut, like the emergency services levy – over \$1.6 billion in, over \$2 billion out, in the emergency

services budget. That money goes towards our SES, it goes to Emergency Management Victoria, it goes to the rolling fleet replacement – all critical things that we need in our emergency services.

It also comes to this idea of trying to achieve a cash surplus. A cash surplus takes away the principle that taking on debt means. It means that you are putting it into productive infrastructure. The member for Point Cook will recall last week we had the Treasurer out for a budget briefing with our local business community, and she went into quite a lot of detail about what this idea would mean for infrastructure. If you are running a cash surplus, it means you do not have the ability to provide productive infrastructure – to borrow to build productive infrastructure that communities like the western suburbs needs. They will not be able to afford it, because at the moment all our bills, wages and operating costs are funded through what revenue we receive and productive infrastructure is funded through taking on those loans for infrastructure.

Again, I spoke about this idea that they are fast-tracking – or they want to dump – more houses in the western suburbs with no plans for infrastructure. If we have the reckless economics that they somehow think is suitable for Victoria, it means that they will not be able to afford to build that infrastructure when they fast-track these houses, and we have seen what that is like. But when they had that last brief glimpse of government between 2010 and 2014 there was nothing built in the electorate of Werribee by those opposite. In fact someone lost their life at the Cherry Street level crossing, and they ignored it for years. This government removed that level crossing. We took on that loan to provide that program and to remove those level crossings at my end of the Werribee line, which means that lives have been saved. We make sure that we have a safe network for people as well. They forget about this. For those years after someone died at that crossing, they refused to do anything about it. They put no infrastructure into the western suburbs. That is what is at risk. And when we talk about who is worried, I am worried for working people about what it will mean if we have people like the Liberal–National–One Nation spectre or One Nation leadership, as we have seen in some of the polling.

To return to public servants just really briefly, I want to point out that 26.1 per cent of the public service is in the north-west metropolitan area, according to data from the Victorian Public Sector Commission. That means that there are thousands of people who do good work, whether or not that is on the front line or in those back-of-house roles that they keep on talking about. And if they are not supported, if they are not actively recruiting, it means that we are not able to meet those service delivery challenges that we have with a growing population. That is why we should condemn those opposite for their plan into the future.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (17:01): It is always amusing to see what the government puts up as a matter of public importance. I was amused again today to read what has been put forward, because one thing is for certain: when the going gets tough, the government are true to form, they start to make stuff up. They start to embark on scare campaigns, and they sometimes start to believe the nonsense that they churn out. When there is pressure on the government, when there is pressure on the Premier, what happens is they fabricate stories about the opposition, and they have done that again here today. I can see how touchy so many of the members of the government benches are – very, very touchy.

We have plans on this side of the house. We know what needs to be done. We can see the sad and sorry state of Victoria at the moment. We can see how let down people are. I will tell you one thing that we see a lot of is the absolute waste – the waste that the government turn a blind eye to. They turn a blind eye to the waste, until somebody starts to talk about it or it is raised in the media. Then it is like, ‘We’re actually doing something about it’, when nothing could be further from the truth. Be assured, a Liberal–Nationals government will not be spending \$13 million on machete bins, a project that was never going to work. As if those who had machetes and were using them for actions of evil rather than good were going to rock up to a police station where there are the cameras and pop them in. Instead, when I was at the Epping police station, I think it was, or South Morang – one of the police stations – we saw somebody who was a local gardener who used machetes, and he put them in. I heard stories of people who handed in ceremonial machetes that had been in the family for years that should not have had to be handed in. We know they wasted \$13 million there.

But \$13 million is a drop in the ocean when you look at the \$15 billion that has been wasted in corruption – the \$15 billion that has gone to outlaw motorcycle gangs, crime syndicates and the senior boffins in the CFMEU, who treat their members of Parliament a lot like puppets. You can be assured that the Liberals and the Nationals will crack down on corruption. We know changes need to be made, and as a result Jess Wilson and the Leader of the Nationals have released our 10-year plan. The Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Nationals have released a 10-year plan to support and secure Victoria's economic future. We know that is not going to happen overnight, because the state is so far down the gurgler that you cannot just turn it around immediately. So the responsible thing to do is to look forward and make a plan for the next decade so that you can get your ducks in order, move things along and make the changes that need to be made to put our state back right where it belongs. We belong at the top of Australia in terms of our economic output and our desirability for people to live here, work here, open businesses here – and keep businesses open here, which is a real problem. We have a plan that by 2032 we will return the budget to cash surplus. We want to reduce the debt and interest burden. We are paying \$32 million a day in interest. Imagine – my electorate would just be so over the moon to have that amount of money ever spent on it. Imagine if that was spent on the roads. My goodness, that would be just too exciting.

We will deliver cost-of-living relief, and we will make Victoria one of the best places to do business. I hear all the time from small businesses, from medium businesses and from sole traders how hard it is to survive and how difficult things are with the cost of freight and transport, with the cost of raw materials, with things going up all of the time and with the number of taxes – the government has had their hand in our pockets all of the time. We want to drive investment and jobs. We will be providing payroll tax relief. Something I am quite proud of, because it is important that young people do get into their own homes: we will exempt first home buyers from stamp duty on properties up to \$1 million. There will be land tax relief. We want to unlock housing supply and reform planning. We need to restore energy security and reduce costs, because while we have uncertain security around our energy and we are rushing into renewables, we could have those black holes for a while. And I guess those black holes are probably black nights and black days without power. We want to shift infrastructure to local priorities, and we will have a hiring freeze on back office roles to guarantee essential services.

The government are doing so much to reframe and to scare people into thinking it is going to be doom and gloom. Well, let me tell you, it is going to be a lot better. We will be looking after people. We will be looking after those that are doing it tough. At the moment, I will tell you who is doing it tough. There are so many people in my electorate in the Murrindindi shire who are doing it tough because they suffered the devastating consequences of the Longwood fires in January, and they are still suffering. There are questions the government are failing to answer. There are things that they are failing to introduce in a timely way. They are talking, but they are not doing, and a lot more needs to be done. We have got local contractors who are not getting the work with some of the clean-ups. People are coming from quite a distance away, and there are locals who are sitting there idle with machinery, with excavators and with the gear that is required to do a lot of the clean-up work. That is not getting done quickly enough, and I see people locally who are missing out on this work – that is just not good enough.

The government had an announcement of \$33 million for 100 new modular homes. We know now in Benalla that there are modular homes sitting in storage that could already be deployed. The government in their matters of public importance are actually ignoring those who need it most. There are issues with fencing. The Upper Goulburn Landcare Network have been doing a lot of work in this area, but they need support. They have had a hearing from government, and they have also had people raise these issues at the inquiry being conducted through the Legislative Council. The government are hearing it but not acting. They are not really listening, and they need to do more.

The Murrindindi shire does not have a list or does not have access to consolidated data – to a database that tracks the recovery journey and living conditions of those who lost their primary residence. How many people have made no headway into rebuilding or having a plan about what they might do and

are living in a modular home, living in a rental property, living in a caravan or, heaven forbid, still in tents? The council cannot act effectively here because they do not have that information. The government have that information, but they are just not handing it over. The council really need to make sure no-one is falling between the cracks, and they need the government's support and the government's help to do that. This is something of particular public importance at the moment. They cannot continue to rely on hearsay. We have had devastating losses across farming properties. 144,000 hectares burnt in the Longwood fires. A majority, 70 per cent, was in the Murrindindi shire, and most of that was farmland. There are grants for primary producers, bushfire recovery grants. The council would love to know and I would be very keen to know just how many of our farmers have applied for those grants and how many of them received those grants. These are questions that we need answers to.

I know one thing is for sure: the members on this side of the house know what is important. We know who needs the support. We have ideas and knowledge about how to do that, and I think this is important. The government are just scaremongering again and making things up because they do not know what else to do. The government are absolutely petrified about the impact of One Nation on their seats, in those outer fringe seats. We know they know that, and they are trying to throw that onto the opposition. I think the government have got a lot to answer for, because it is them who have not been doing the work, it is them who have been letting people down, and they have certainly let people down in my electorate. The Liberals and Nationals have a plan to secure Victoria's economic future, and I am proud to be a part of the Liberal team in this Parliament. I think the Leader of the Opposition is doing everything right. She is putting the plans in place so that Victorians can have confidence and realise when the Labor government are just scaremongering because they have run out of ideas. They do not know what to do. We know what to do, and we have a plan.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (17:11): You cannot really argue with the numbers. I know they are saying we are making things up, but actually Labor has invested \$4.9 billion into education in the 2026–27 budget, so that is a fact. That is not being made up. That is an authentic investment. Thanks to Labor's investments, Victoria's students and schools are leading the nation and families are receiving more cost-of-living relief to take the pressure off. We know the opposition, sadly, have proposed \$40 billion worth of cuts. That means getting rid of one in seven government workers. What does that really mean? Unfortunately, that means really slashing and burning through education and health. As Parliamentary Secretary for Education, I know health also is extremely important. The member who was just on her feet was saying that they know what is important. Well, I know education is important. Are they saying that it is not important? I think it is a fair statement to say that education is a pillar certainly of a Labor government and something we take great pride in – not only pride but actually delivering it – because it is really what sets up the future of Victorian students.

It was interesting, actually, a point made earlier today in question time. It has been made a number of times, because the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Nationals have made a commitment to spend 25 per cent of infrastructure spending on regional schools. That would be all fine and well, except this is a cut from the more than 30 per cent that Labor spends right now. Somebody on that side forgot to check. They did not think to look and see what Labor is actually spending; they just thought they would maybe wing it. Having confidence in what they are proposing – I do not know. It is a little bit speculative, I would say, because it is not too hard to see the difference. You do the math: 30 minus 25 – the difference is there. We could see it clearly here in the chamber, so that was a bit of a boo-boo, really, from the outset. When they are saying they know what matters, if they know what matters, then they would make sure that they at least matched that spending, if not spent more. But anyway, it is on the record. Let us see what they do. Let us see their next step.

Last time they had the chance the coalition slashed more than a billion dollars from education, so they have form. Again, we are not making stuff up. The numbers speak for themselves. We are very happy to go back and re prosecute what they have done and what they have slashed and what they have already proposed moving forward. They have not been shy about it. We will thank them for that, for

at least being up-front about all the cuts that they are proposing. They cut cost-of-living supports like Free Fruit Friday and the young readers program. I do not know what they were thinking. These are really important elements that families rely on. They have form. What about teachers themselves? They tried to make teachers work longer for less. That is why in the coalition's last year in office the number of Victorian registered teachers went backwards by 1038. Again, the numbers speak for themselves. We did not make that up – that is absolute fact. Just like Jeff Kennett, the hero of the opposition leader, who closed over 350 schools – again, these numbers are absolutely factual. No-one is making it up, because it was witnessed. The teachers who lost their jobs were well aware of the cuts, and those cuts had an absolutely horrific impact. Thankfully Labor has rebuilt – we had to rebuild; we had to do it. Of course when you buy land back many, many years later, it is very expensive, but still we did it because it was the right thing to do.

I do not know, in my seat of Albert Park, if they thought that students there would not go to public school, so it would not matter if they closed a school here or there, but thankfully we have done the right thing. You have got South Melbourne Park Primary School and you have got South Melbourne Primary School and, guess what, they are so popular. With the growth in the population, the density is being expanded. There was a \$23 million commitment to expand South Melbourne Primary School, a fantastic primary school. Actually all the schools in my area are absolutely fantastic. Also we have built Port Melbourne Secondary College, another fabulous school, and they have got a really big focus on robotics and STEM. I will get back to that topic of STEM, because it is not only for that school, it is obviously around the state, but I just thought I would mention that. Albert Park College is bigger and better than ever. It now has eight separate campuses around the area. Works have commenced for the youth arts centre, and that is a collaboration between the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School and Albert Park College. It will be really, really fantastic for the local community and others who may use the facilities as well. I am really pleased that that is moving ahead.

Talking about outcomes and talking about the budget cuts that they already made, which are already on record, what did they actually translate to, ergo why do Labor invest the way we do in education? According to the most recent NAPLAN data, Victorian students are not only the top performing in the country, they are also performing better than at any other time on record. Victorian students achieved the highest or second-highest mean scores in 18 of 20 NAPLAN measures. In 2025 Victoria topped the nation, coming first in nine NAPLAN measures. When the coalition was last in government our best result was less than half that: only four measures.

At this moment and on this point I would like to salute the wonderful work of Victorian teachers. Of course they are the heart and soul of our schools and they are absolutely driving these fantastic outcomes, and this is why we need to invest in them and invest in our schools. We cannot have billion-dollar cuts. That is just not a great option for our beautiful state of Victoria. It would have a massive impact. A further point I want to raise is that while the coalition were in government Victoria slipped down the national NAPLAN rankings. By the time they left office Victoria's share of top rankings in NAPLAN measures had fallen by a third. These are elements that have to be considered when you are thinking about what is important and what matters to Victorians. I know in my electorate – and I am sure all my colleagues here will share the same thing – parents reiterate the importance that they place on their kids getting a quality education and having a vibrant school community. This is why we are investing in their future – we know what it means.

The Victorian Labor government have handed down a budget that invests a further \$1.6 billion in education infrastructure. That is a cumulative total of \$20.1 billion invested in building, upgrading and modernising schools since coming into government. When they last had the chance the coalition scrapped the Victorian schools plan and failed to plan for the future of Victoria's education system. School infrastructure funding was cut to a mere \$200 million a year. Again, we can see the numbers; we can see the comparisons. There is no fudging those figures. They are fact. It is what it is. This year we have opened a record 19 new schools, and I am pleased to say one of them is in my electorate – Narrarrang Primary School, an absolutely fantastic school. It also has a kinder that is being built onsite.

It is certainly a firm policy of our government where the opportunity presents itself, certainly with new schools that are being built, to have a co-located kinder so there is one drop-off for the parents or carers who are looking after the kids.

It is just saving a lot of that morning and afternoon hassle, and it means a nice, smooth transition from kinder to primary school. I should say on this side, again, another policy of our government is looking at multipurpose facilities so that the community can take advantage, particularly but not only in the inner areas but I am sure in growth areas as well, making sure that where we have got this precious land it can be used outside hours for community to enjoy. And I am very glad to say that at Narrarrang Primary School there is a futsal court, and there is a multipurpose space that is going to be online very soon. That is really exciting for the local community, and it means that we are really taking advantage, for the benefit of the community, of precious space and making sure that it is providing not only a quality education but an environment that actually supports the teachers and supports the staff who keep the school running and is a pleasant environment for the students to really thrive and grow in.

I should also say that we are on track to complete six new tech schools by 2026, thanks to our \$116 million investment. These schools will deliver free hands-on STEM education – because I did mention STEM a little earlier in my discussion – for 62,000 Victorian students. It blows me away when I see some of the STEM activities that the kids are absolutely thriving in when they do this stuff. I could not even have imagined it when I was in school; it was a lot more basic, I have to say, with the Bunsen burner and so forth. They are doing some pretty fabulous stuff, and it is really exciting to see, but it is because we are backing them in, because education is a top pillar. It is fundamental.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (17:21): Mortgages, rent, groceries and bills are all getting more unaffordable. You used to be able to get by on an average wage and maybe even save for the future; now that feels completely out of reach. While Victorians are struggling to afford the basics, this government lets corporations make record profits. For so long we have been told this is the best we are going to get by the politicians who take millions of dollars in donations from big corporations and billionaires. Now the far right is telling us to blame our neighbours for making things harder, instead of looking at the ultrawealthy, who control our political system. The increasing popularity of One Nation is proof that when governments fail to meet people's needs, the far right fills the vacuum.

Pauline Hanson's popularity is not because of her talent or because the community is becoming more right wing but because Labor has failed the people of this state. In the time that Labor have been in power they could have built enough public housing to end homelessness. They could have capped rents. They could have delivered affordable health care and groceries and bills and permanently free public transport. They could have fully funded our public schools. Instead we see overcrowded hospitals, a housing crisis, crumbling schools, rising costs and growing inequality – all under Labor's watch. And when parties of government fail to improve people's lives, opportunists step in with someone to blame. One Nation's answer to every problem is not to take on the billionaires, the big corporations or property investors, who profit at everyone else's expense, but to point the finger at migrants and refugees. They offer division instead of solutions. They tell you to turn on your neighbour to distract you from the fact that it is their billionaire donors who are making life harder for everyone.

The reason why One Nation is suddenly everywhere is no mistake: it is advertising money. Gina Rinehart is buying your vote. One Nation is no different from the other major parties. They all take dodgy donations from corporations and give them special treatment in return. One Nation talks endlessly about being on the side of ordinary Australians, while defending the very economic system that is making ordinary Australians poorer. It is a party that distracts workers with culture wars, while their wealthy donors continue to accumulate more power and more wealth. One Nation is not a workers party. It is not a party for renters. It is not a party for people struggling to pay the bills. It is a party that channels legitimate frustration into prejudice, while protecting the interests of those at the very top.

We have seen One Nation's politics of division since day one. Thirty years ago, when Hanson first got elected in 1996, in her inaugural speech she spouted horrendous racist, anti-migrant rhetoric. The chamber emptied. Members from across the political spectrum left the chamber, refusing to give it any oxygen. Cut to today: a National Press Club address. We need to be honest about how these ideas gain traction. Racism and anti-migrant sentiments are not new, but in recent years they have been further normalised by billionaires, politicians and media commentators willing to scapegoat vulnerable communities for their own gain. The Greens offer a politics of hope, not fear, and because we are not funded by the dodgy corporations, we have the guts to make them pay their fair share to fund the things that we all need. A better future is possible where people and the planet matter more than profits, corporate greed no longer rules our political systems and we all have what we need to lead decent lives.

Under Labor Victoria has the lowest funded public schools in the entire country and the worst paid teachers. Labor's proposed cuts over the coming years to schools across Victoria will have devastating consequences – \$2.4 billion in cuts across the state, with \$20 million of those cuts in public schools across Collingwood, Fitzroy, Cremorne, Clifton Hill, Abbotsford, Richmond and Burnley, in communities already struggling with the rising cost of living and inequality. All 12 schools in my electorate will face cuts in the next seven years: Abbotsford Primary will face cuts of \$645,000; Fitzroy Primary will be \$726,000 worse off; Bindjiroo Yaluk Community School will be cut by \$231,000; Yarra Primary, cut by \$888,000; Richmond West Primary will lose \$1.08 million; Spensley Street, more than \$1.1 million; Collingwood English Language School will lose \$1.3 million; Richmond Primary, also \$1.3 million; Richmond High School, over \$2 million in cuts under Labor; Clifton Hill Primary, almost \$2.5 million in cuts; Collingwood College, a whopping \$2.7 million in cuts under this Labor government; and the biggest single cut is to Melbourne Girls' College, who will lose \$5.1 million under Labor. We cannot let Labor get away with short-changing our public schools.

On top of this news, just this week the Victorian Auditor-General released a report on Labor's delivery of school upgrade programs, which found that the Victorian School Building Authority does not make recommendations in line with its strategies for improving school conditions, that it is not always transparent and that it makes recommendations not always based on need but rather on informal undocumented processes, including pressure from the community and political considerations. We know from experience that the Victorian Labor government uses our local schools to pork-barrel before an election; now we have it in writing.

Because Labor refuse to publish the condition of schools across Victoria or an account of the funding that they have or have not delivered, the Auditor-General has done it for them. You can now go on to the Victorian Auditor-General's Office dashboard and see it for yourself. I was shocked but not shocked to see that the overwhelming majority of schools in my electorate have declined to now rate as being in poor condition the last time that they were assessed, with only two considered in good condition. That is a shameful record for Labor. What message does it send when our schools are struggling to get by but Labor is more than happy to splash \$400 million on a corporate stand upgrade at the grand prix? Labor's priorities are plain to see. Our teachers and our education staff deserve better, our parents and our families deserve better, but most of all our children deserve better.

My constituents are concerned with the Minister for Planning fast-tracking inappropriate developments, bypassing community consultation and dodging accountability. Fast-track programs like the development facilitation program are meant for projects that make a significant contribution to Victoria's economy and deliver substantial public benefit, like affordable housing or job creation. In Burnley, though, a multistorey, 24/7 storage facility is under consideration – not a single home planned. How a self-storage facility delivers job creation and economic value to Victoria of a scale deserving of leapfrogging standard planning processes is unclear to me.

Along the Birrarung River in Richmond, on a quiet, narrow street where five storeys is currently the maximum, a 12-storey edge-to-edge development is under consideration for fast-track approval. The residents have some great ideas on how to improve it. They fully support accommodating a growing

population, but they have contacted me in despair because there is no formal avenue for them to have their feedback considered.

Labor likes to point the finger at local communities for holding up developments, yet we are seeing cases of fast-tracked developments being land-banked after being approved. Take, for example, the 400 corporate rentals on Langridge Street in Abbotsford still sitting abandoned after fast-track approval in 2024. The fast-track developments route is Christmas come early for property developers. Some are getting fast-track approvals and then flipping the vacant lot. Let us not forget the megadeveloper Assemble, who used affordable housing as a Trojan Horse to get two fast-tracked approvals in Brunswick and Coburg, only to gut those commitments to make their projects more profitable. Their profits are protected and the promised social outcomes are not, and it is communities who pay the price. A month after the news of Assemble's backflip, the Gurner Group applied to fast-track 685 luxury apartments at the Harry the Hirer site in Richmond. They are promising just 10 per cent affordable housing, which is lame in the first place, but given Labor's track record, it is fair to question whether that promise will be kept once approval is granted. The fast-track pathway should not be a mechanism to ram through private developments without checks and balances.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (17:31): I am very pleased to rise and speak on this matter of public importance submitted by the member for Mordialloc:

That this house condemns the opposition and One Nation on their plans to cut \$40 billion out of Victorian schools and hospitals, as well as one in seven public servants.

In doing so I just want to begin with and take us to what is at risk this coming November and how much as a labour movement and a Labor government we have achieved. We continue to stand up every single day to fight for working Victorians, families and everyone across our community. No matter your faith, culture or background, our Victorian Labor government has been on your side and will continue to be on your side. Whether it is across jobs, education, transport, health, environmental action, social justice, community safety – most importantly – or cost of living, we have continued to take action and be on the side of all Victorians.

Almost 900,000 jobs have been created since 2014, since we came to government, and that is because we have continued to invest and stimulate economic growth and support jobs and skills pathways, particularly around frontline service. Whether it is more doctors, nurses, teachers, early childhood workers, those in the construction sector and so much more, we have continued to support job creation as a central pillar to our state's prosperity. 120-odd new schools have been and continue to be delivered here, and over 50 per cent of the new schools in this country are built right here in Victoria. There has been the landmark rollout of free kinder for three- and four-year-olds through the Best Start, Best Life initiative. There are new hospitals – Footscray Hospital and Frankston Hospital – and Melton Hospital is progressing. There are the community hospitals we have been delivering, including around the member for Greenvale's area as well, our adult mental health and wellbeing hubs off the back of that landmark Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, our virtual emergency departments, the community pharmacy program and our perinatal wellbeing centres as well, with one being in train in Northcote. In transport there are the Metro Tunnel, the West Gate Tunnel, North East Link, 80-odd level crossings that have been removed, including in my community as well, and Melbourne Airport rail.

When it comes to environmental action, we have brought back the SEC, and we have landmark renewable energy projects and targets: the Solar Homes program, the default energy offer, the Victorian energy upgrades program and the amazing container deposit recycling scheme as well. We have ceased native forest and old-growth forest logging to protect our environment and biodiversity. On cost of living there are the 20 per cent rego rebate, free public transport and half-price public transport, free dental in schools, free glasses in schools, the \$200 sports voucher and so much more. On social justice and community safety, most importantly, there has been our landmark Royal Commission into Family Violence, which led to over 230-odd recommendations being fully

implemented, and there is our Orange Door program. Our investments into community safety are so critical, with \$33 million through the violence reduction unit as well. These are all the things we have committed to. These are all the things we have continued to deliver and progress for our community. These and so much more are the very things that the Liberal, Nationals and One Nation political movement have been totally opposed to since day dot and would cut the moment they ever got the chance to come back into office.

I will just pick up on the falsehoods of the Greens political member for Richmond, because there were so many, even from the Greens political party perspective – always coming into this chamber seeking to claim the moral high ground but climbing simultaneously that mountain of hypocrisy. They always do that day in, day out. Never forget that this is the Greens party that delayed climate action for over a decade in this country by delaying the carbon pollution reduction scheme. They teamed up with the former Prime Minister Tony Abbott, the current Liberal Party president of Australia, to delay climate action. Let us never forget that setting back the cause of climate action by over 10 years.

They oppose housing project after housing project. Even in the member for Richmond's remarks just now she was citing and objecting to the state government's activity centre plans to fast-track more housing in the inner-city communities. As the mayor she opposed housing projects in her own City of Yarra as well, but, disgracefully in my community, they have continued to oppose even the very projects she claims to support on Sydney Road in Coburg. It was the Greens council that continued to delay and oppose that very housing project she now claims to support. It is absolutely shameful.

The Harvest Square housing project in Brunswick West is an amazing project that we have done as a state government through our Big Housing Build in partnership with Women's Housing Ltd, which has delivered in the order of 190 new homes in the heart of Brunswick West. 120-odd of those are social, community and affordable homes at a minimum. It is an amazing project to support women in need with families and children, particularly those fleeing situations and instances of family violence. It was the Greens political party that opposed it and the Greens councillors, including the current Greens candidate that is opposing me at the moment, who voted against this project. The current Greens candidate for Brunswick voted against the Harvest Square project. It is disgraceful. On the one hand they claim to be on the side of those wanting a home, but when there is a proposal on the table they vote against it, and they did that at Harvest Square. We will make sure the whole community knows about this indeed.

The voters are having their say about the Greens, and they have started to wake up to the Greens – very much so. Let us not forget the recent federal election result. They lost their national party leader in the seat of Melbourne Adam Bandt – gone, voted out. Max Chandler-Mather up in Brisbane – gone, voted out. He was supposed to be the heir apparent – gone. They turfed him out. But they also lost another leader, their Victorian leader, who left the Victorian Parliament to run for Wills, Samantha Ratnam. She lost. The voters of Wills rejected her and supported a hardworking Labor member, Peter Khalil. This is because the Greens say one thing and do another thing out in the community. They stand for nothing and claim to be able to deliver everything when they deliver absolutely nothing.

The Liberals are no better of course too, because all they have is a plan for cuts, sackings and sell-offs. Forty billion dollars they are proposing to cut from the state budget – one in seven public servant jobs are to be sacked. That will have a devastating impact not just on backroom public service operations but more importantly on frontline operations as well.

One Nation are no better. This is the party that has always continued to vote against the interests of working people. We have seen every time there is a chance to vote for workers or big business One Nation vote with big business. They voted against making industrial manslaughter a crime. They voted against protecting tradies from silica dust, the deadly dust that has been harming generations of young stonemasons. They voted against same job, same pay every single time. You will not see One Nation standing with workers, you will see them standing with Gina Rinehart, Clive Palmer and the other billionaires.

With the time I have left I also just want to touch on the absolutely appalling speech earlier today at the National Press Club by One Nation leader Pauline Hanson, who said some absolutely remarkable things in 2026. She said:

Undeniably immigration or immigration policy has our country in a state of crisis. At the centre of this crisis is the utterly flawed policy of multiculturalism. We cannot be a multicultural society. We are a multiracial society, but we must be monocultural. Australians must live under the one cultural umbrella.

This is what she said. I can go on and on here, and I will touch on this at a later time. I want to touch on the point where she said in her remarks criticising multiculturalism that she will abolish SBS. She will get rid of SBS. 'The SBS will be gone,' she said, in her words. I want to say it is multiculturalism and SBS that we are all celebrating right now with the FIFA World Cup, which is bringing this country and this state together, as it always does every four years in unprecedented ways. Over 5 million people have tuned into SBS, who are proudly broadcasting free to air this World Cup, as it should be. Live sites are going off across the entire state – Federation Square and all other parts of Victoria. But I want to say as well that it is multiculturalism and migration which not just make this country but also make us proud, seeing the Socceroos on the world stage. Nestory Irankunda was born in a refugee camp in Tanzania in 2006 to parents of Burundian heritage. Mohamed Touré was born in 2004 in a refugee camp in Guinea. His parents fled from Liberia. Awer Mabil was born in a refugee camp in Kenya. His parents fled from South Sudan. More than half of the Socceroos representing us right now on the world stage, doing us so proud against Türkiye – they will do us even more proud against the United States this coming Saturday morning and even prouder again against Paraguay and beyond as we go deep into the tournament – are migrants. It is migrants that have built this country and are building and making us so proud when it comes to the Socceroos, as has the SBS over so many years. It has connected, promoted and supported multicultural communities of all backgrounds and all faiths, and we proudly will continue to support the work of SBS and all of our multicultural communities as well.

In that regard, with 10 seconds remaining, I just commend this matter – because it is only a Labor government in Victoria and federally that will remain on the side of working people, working families and those aspiring to a better future.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (17:42): I am pleased to rise in support of this matter of public importance. I would like to say at the outset that I know Pauline Hanson better than anybody in this chamber right now. I have known her for it must be 30 years, because Pauline Hanson's fish and chip shop was on the same street as my parents' newsagency. Since the 1990s we have been around the same streets of the same town, so I know better than anyone that One Nation and their running mates, the Victorian Liberals, target the vulnerable. They target the vulnerable with their cuts. I want to share a little bit about my family's story and what the types of decisions we see from those opposite and from One Nation mean for families like mine.

At my parents' newsagency, they would be helped by my brother Mark, who has an intellectual disability. He is 10 years older than me. He developed an intellectual disability through difficulties during the birth process and a lack of oxygen. He was adopted by my parents as a baby. Mark would hang out at the shop, and he would help Mum and Dad to stock the fridge, he would talk to the customers and he would hassle Mum and Dad for more money so he could get more videos – more VHS, as it was in the day – because he had a big obsession with collecting videos, and his bedroom was lined with them. What did my member of Parliament Pauline Hanson – she represented me in federal Parliament – do in her first and subsequent terms for people like my brother? She argued for reductions in the disability support payment. She acted like people were bludgers, and she supported Tony Abbott's move to have people on the disability support pension have mandatory assessments, I think it was, every two years. I remember that really well, because I remember my mum was furious. I had to take Mark to the doctor to prove he still had an intellectual disability that he had had from the moment he was born. So when they talk about battlers, they are not talking about battlers like my brother Mark.

And treating people like they are bludgers – my brother would have loved to have had a job. I think he would have been a lawnmower repairer. He tried to fix Dad's lawnmower once, and when he failed, he dug a very big hole and buried it, so I think that might have been his passion. But for other kids with disability or developmental issues – and I think now about ADHD – have a listen to what Pauline Hanson just a couple of years ago had to say about ADHD when talking about the NDIS. She said:

I was never told it would be used to fund kids with ADHD, which, let's face it, is sometimes a convenient diagnosis excusing poor parenting.

That is their view on ADHD. So we know that they – I am talking about One Nation and their Liberal running mates – will cut the developmental screenings that we have been talking about this week, which will be prior to the start of kinder and prior to the start of school. We know they will cut ADHD training for GPs to be able to diagnose and support people, which is going to make a big difference for families. They will cut the grants that we are giving to speechies and OTs for regional placements and getting them out into the regions to support families. The Liberals in fact have already announced a cut, with their voucher system up against our massive \$5 billion funding for kids in schools.

But back to my brother Mark. One day when Mum was cooking dinner, she asked him to go down to the shop to get some pet food. So he went down, but he could not stop himself from going into the video shop next to the grocery store. The video shop owner actually got Mark to come into the back room and he raped him. He raped my brother. I think about Pauline Hanson and her voting against the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability in 2019. So I tell you, they do not care about the vulnerable. They are not fighting for the vulnerable; they are not fighting for them. As you can imagine, Mark's mental health deteriorated after that, and he has had to have a lot of support. I think about those opposite and the fact that they defunded 25 community and mental health services when they were in government, that they cut the 24-hour mental health line – they cut the only one that was in existence; they got rid of it – and that they voted against the mental health levy. Those services are so vital for people like my brother and for my family. My father has said he is worried that my brother will die – I do not know a way to say this – because he is so unwell on the street that he will be stopped by police. Services like this that are in place to support people like my brother have chased him down the street. They have chased him down the street to get help for him, before others tried to stop him. When we think about the cuts that those opposite are making, again, I say that it is to the vulnerable – they do not support the vulnerable.

I think about the mental health hub that we have opened in South Morang, how that makes mental health so much more accessible for families and what it means for people in crisis or in times of despair that they have got somebody that they can turn to for help, and I think that it is fantastic. When we think about the vulnerable, I also think about Mark's support workers. Mark moved out of home at 50 into his own supported independent living, with support from NDIS, and he is supported there around the clock by amazing workers that come from all sorts of backgrounds. There is a particular support worker there with him who is a refugee from Iran, who has become a family friend to us, who cares for our brother deeply and who has his best interests at heart. Pauline Hanson, One Nation and the Victorian Liberal running mates are not arguing for wage rises for the likes of them – no, they do not support the vulnerable – and in fact I argue that their cuts will go after the vulnerable first, because they are less able to raise up their voice and they are less able to fight back when those opposite get out those cuts.

For families who are looking for answers about what is going on with their child's development, how they can get help for their child who needs extra support in the classroom or at home, for the services that wrap around them and mean that they can take part in society, that they can access work, they can make friends, they can go bowling or they can go have a barbecue at the park and for the protections that governments like ours support in wrapping around people with disability to ensure that they are not exploited, that they are not abused, all of these things are at risk when we think about a One Nation and Victorian Liberal running mate coalition here in Victoria.

When I think about my brother Mark and my mum and dad and the accident of them having their newsagency on the same street as Pauline Hanson's fish and chip shop, I think it was for a reason, and I think that reason is so I know how hard we have to fight to keep One Nation off these benches and out of our state, because the wellbeing and the future of the most vulnerable Victorians relies on us winning in November, and that is what we intend to do.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before I call the member for South-West Coast, I would like to acknowledge in the gallery former Premier Daniel Andrews. Welcome back.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (17:52): I rise to speak on this matter of public importance, and I have to say I find it extraordinary that this government would bring forward a matter of public importance attempting to accuse the Liberal Party of cuts. It takes an extraordinary level of arrogance for the Allan Labor government to bring this matter before the Parliament. After more than a decade in office, after presiding over every budget, every major spending decision and every funding priority in this state, Labor now wants Victorians to believe that somebody else is responsible for the cuts to education, the cuts to health and the cuts to the public service. It is so detached from reality that it deserves to be called out for exactly what it is: a desperate attempt to distract from Labor's own record of failure.

Because this government is under financial pressure after years of waste, debt and cost blowouts, it reaches for a sneaky solution: cut services, cut projects and cut outcomes and blame everyone else. Victorians have watched this government preside over record debt and record spending and yet somehow receive less in return. Never before have Victorians paid so much and received so little. The government talks about billions of dollars being spent. It likes to talk about announcements and press releases.

If we are going to talk about education, let us talk honestly about education. This is a government that has cut billions from the education budget while simultaneously claiming to be the greatest supporter of public education Victoria has ever seen. Teachers across the state are under enormous pressure. They are working tirelessly to deliver the best outcomes possible for students, yet they continue to face increasing workloads, workforce shortages and growing levels of burnout. Despite the glossy announcements and carefully staged photo opportunities, the learning outcomes remain a significant concern, and many schools are struggling to obtain the support they need. The truth is that this government has cut \$2.4 billion from the education budget here in Victoria, and in a recent parliamentary inquiry into public school funding the government actually admitted it. The recommendation from this inquiry was for the government to compensate schools in Victoria appropriately, in some way, to make up –

Steve Dimopoulos: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member has to be at least slightly factual, and she is absolutely not.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: All members are understood to be factual at all times.

Roma BRITNELL: Just yesterday we saw the government's plans to close 21 schools in Victoria, which demonstrates just how desperately this arrogant Labor government is trying to cut more and more services taxpayers should be able to actually rely upon. For Labor to stand in this chamber and accuse others of cutting education is a remarkable exercise in hypocrisy.

John Lister: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I do also call to attention the need for members to be factual. It is not true –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Werribee will resume his seat. There is no point of order. The member for South-West Coast, unassisted.

Roma BRITNELL: The same can be said for health. Labor says the health system is working well; it is not. You cannot have 64,000 people on an elective surgery waitlist in a health system that is funded properly. COVID can no longer be used as an excuse, because it was five years ago now. In south-

west Victoria the most obvious example of Labor's sneaky cuts to health is the Warrnambool Base Hospital redevelopment. Our community was promised a hospital fit for the future. Faced with increased costs, the scope was cut. Pathology redevelopment was cut. A new kitchen was cut. The redevelopment of the morgue – gone. The promised basement car park disappeared – cut. Medical records redevelopment – completely gone. The government can call it a redesign or a reprioritisation, but when a government refuses to fund the original scope of a project and delivers less than promised, that is simply a cut. It may be an inconvenient truth for Labor, but it is a truth nonetheless. The promised PET scanner, another example – cut, not to be seen but promised before an election. The Portland helipad provides another example. Local people spent years campaigning for this helipad because they understand that minutes save lives, but it has been closed with no explanation to the community. It is simply gone – another Labor cut.

If there is one example that perfectly captures this incompetent Labor government's cuts, it is the Commonwealth Games debacle. Regional Victoria was promised a transformational investment. Communities were told they would receive sporting infrastructure, economic opportunities, tourism benefits and long-term facilities. Not only were they promised the project, they got what Labor have been doing all over again: they cut the whole project. Not only did we have a cut, but we are paying hundreds of millions of dollars for the privilege of cancelling an event that Labor promised to deliver.

When you look at it, all of these cuts were inevitable. They were not unavoidable but rather a direct result of years of financial mismanagement and misplaced priorities, because if you spend \$15 billion worth of taxpayers money on corrupt pay-offs to bikies and organised crime, you cannot spend it on services. The Allan Labor government made a political choice to curry favour with the unions, bikies and organised crime in exchange for political support – a choice that inevitably comes at the expense of hospitals, schools, roads and frontline services that ordinary Victorians rely on every single day. Never before have Victorians paid so much and received so little, and eventually that money does run out. Every dollar that is paid to bikies and organised crime is a dollar that cannot go into emergency departments struggling with ramping, cannot repair crumbling regional roads, cannot support overstretched police and cannot relieve cost-of-living pressure on services. Now we are seeing the consequences play out in real time: cuts are being justified as efficiencies, reprioritisations or necessary adjustments, but the public can see through it. The matter of public importance speaks about public services, yet this is perhaps the most extraordinary claim of all in this matter for public importance: the Premier herself acknowledged that thousands of public service positions will be cut – not dozens, not hundreds, but thousands. The Premier's own admissions – words from the Premier's mouth. These are not opposition claims; these are the government's own admissions. After years of expanding bureaucracy, Labor now concedes that the system it built has become financially unsustainable. How can this government seriously ask Victorians to believe that somebody else is responsible for cuts to the public service when it is actively implementing these cuts themselves?

When you commit billions without discipline or accountability or even a business plan, you eventually hit the wall. It is the same pattern evident on our roads. Our regional Victorian roads are witnessing a consequence of years of inadequate road maintenance. We have had cuts to road maintenance. They are boasting about money going into the roads, but it is for filling potholes – that does not get our roads fixed. That just puts money into potholes and fails to rebuild roads.

It can be seen as a story across agriculture, where the experienced staff have been cut – again put under a restructure claim, but the reality is people have been cut. Cuts from fisheries, cuts from the creative arts industry – this is where the cuts are. They are Labor cuts, and they have been going on secretly and silently, but they are there. The glossy press releases and the claims by this Labor government that they are caring for Victorians – even blind Freddy can see that is not the case. The reality is that the cuts Victoria is experiencing today are Labor cuts. They are the inevitable consequences of years of waste, mismanagement and financial recklessness. No amount of political theatre in this chamber can change that fact. It is time for a fresh start, Victoria.

*Members***Member for Pakenham***Valedictory statement*

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (18:02): Tonight I am using my communication technology to deliver my speech. Although it is incredible technology and I have had a lot of help from my speech pathologist, it is not perfect, so please excuse unintentional pauses and incorrect pronunciations. And my hands do not work.

Firstly, I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which this Parliament stands: the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation. For tens of thousands of years, First Peoples have gathered on this land to make decisions, resolve differences, tell stories and care for community. It is a privilege to be here today and pay my respects to elders past and present.

There are moments in life when you know you are closing a chapter. This is one of those moments. When I stood in this chamber to deliver my inaugural speech to the 60th Parliament of Victoria, I spoke about community, resilience, family and service. I spoke about growing up around people who believed politics could be a force for good. I spoke about my own journey as a mum, as a worker, as a volunteer and as someone who had already faced significant health challenges before entering this place. Tonight, as I deliver my valedictory speech as the member for Pakenham, I do so with enormous gratitude, immense pride and, if I am honest, a heavy heart. Representing the people of the Pakenham district has been the honour of my life. To every resident who welcomed me into their homes, trusted me with their stories, raised concerns, shared ideas or simply stopped me at the supermarket to have a chat: thank you. Whether you voted for me or not, I have always tried to be a strong voice for our growing and diverse community.

When I first ran for Parliament many people said Pakenham would be one of the closest seats in the state, and they were right. It was hard-fought, emotional and at times exhausting. But what that campaign taught me was that our community wanted someone local, someone authentic and someone prepared to fight every single day for better roads, better schools, better health care and better opportunities for local families. Working for members of Parliament like Alan Griffin, Daniel Andrews, Gavin Jennings and Julian Hill showed me both how hard you have to work but also how important it is to have Labor governments to improve the lives of everyday people.

I want to thank the Premiers I have served under, Daniel Andrews and Jacinta Allan, for their leadership, friendship and support. It has been an honour to be part of a team that has delivered so much for Victorians. I am incredibly proud of what the Allan and Andrews Labor governments have delivered for Pakenham and surrounding communities over these past years.

I am proud that our children are learning in brand new schools like Kurrum Primary School, Kurmile Primary School and Kuyim Primary School, and next year we have the opening of Brunt Road specialist school. I am proud of the upgrades delivered at Pakenham Secondary College, Lakeside College and Officer Specialist School. In one of the fastest growing regions in Victoria, these investments matter. They are not luxuries; they are necessities for families who simply want their children to have the best start in life. I am proud that our government backed free kinder, a reform that eases cost-of-living pressure while giving children access to quality early education. I am proud of the new kindergartens, community facilities and family centres that are helping shape connected neighbourhoods in Officer, Pakenham and beyond.

I am proud of the massive transport investments transforming our region – the level crossing removals, the two brand new train stations, the road upgrades and the improved connectivity that our growing communities desperately needed. And I am especially proud that we never forgot that infrastructure is about people. It is about a parent getting home to their children sooner. It is about a tradie spending less time stuck in traffic. It is about safer roads and better access to work, education and health care.

I am proud of our investments into local sporting clubs, parks, playgrounds and community spaces, because communities are built not just with concrete and steel but with belonging. I think of the volunteers at our CFA brigades, our SES units, the committee members at local sporting clubs, the parents serving sausage sizzles on weekends, the multicultural organisations creating welcoming spaces for new arrivals and the charities quietly supporting people doing it tough. These are the people who make the Pakenham district extraordinary.

I want to acknowledge the incredible growth and diversity of our electorate. Pakenham is one of the great success stories of modern Victoria. Families from every background are building lives there. Young couples are buying their first homes. Migrant communities are putting down roots. It has been a privilege to advocate for them all in this Parliament.

When I delivered my inaugural speech, I also spoke about surviving a stroke at the age of 36. At the time, I thought that experience had taught me everything I needed to know about resilience. Then life handed me another challenge. My diagnosis with motor neurone disease changed my world and changed the way I experience this Parliament. But it also sharpened my perspective about what truly matters. It reminded me that time matters. Compassion matters. Dignity matters. And people deserve to have their voices heard, particularly when they are vulnerable.

Since my diagnosis, I have been overwhelmed by the kindness shown to me by my colleagues, parliamentary staff, constituents and complete strangers. People across Victoria reached out with messages of encouragement, support and love. I will never forget that generosity. I have met families facing impossible circumstances with courage and humour, I have met carers carrying enormous burdens quietly and selflessly every day and I have learned that awareness matters because research matters – hope matters. I want future generations to live in a world where an MND diagnosis is not accompanied by fear and inevitability.

My diagnosis also strengthened my determination to use whatever platform I have to raise awareness of MND and to support the incredible work being done to fund research and support families living with this devastating disease. I have been proud to support fundraising efforts for FightMND, MND Victoria and other state MND associations. My diagnosis also led me to meet and admire some extraordinary people who dedicate their lives to make a difference: Neale Daniher and the extended Daniher family, Matt Tilley and the team at FightMND, Mary-Jane Stolp, Jo Whitehouse and of course the magnificent Jade Spence from MND Victoria. I would also like to acknowledge the hard work and passion from the team at the Florey and other researchers that I have come to know: Professor Brad Turner, Dr Thanuja Dharmadasa, Dr Bec Sheean and Professor Van Wijngaarden, to name just a few.

One of the moments I am proudest of in this Parliament was contributing to reforms to Victoria's voluntary assisted dying laws. Victoria led the nation when it introduced voluntary assisted dying, but no law should ever be considered beyond improvement. The reforms passed by this Parliament were about compassion, fairness and removing unnecessary barriers for people already enduring immense suffering. I know this issue is deeply personal for many Victorians. It certainly became deeply personal for me. I was proud to stand on the side of dignity, patient choice and humane care. I was proud to help ensure that terminally ill Victorians and their families are treated with compassion and respect. Jane Morris, with her team at Dying with Dignity Victoria, and Andrew Denton and Dr Linda Swan at Go Gentle Australia worked diligently and tirelessly to inform MPs and the broader community why these reforms were needed, sharing countless stories from people who had struggled with barriers accessing VAD. I thank each one of them sincerely.

I was also proud to support legislation ensuring that the Frankston serial killer, who I will not name, remains behind bars. As a girl who grew up in Frankston during the early 1990s, the fear was real for the whole community. For decades the families of his victims have carried unimaginable pain and trauma. The women he murdered were denied futures, and their loved ones have lived with that grief every single day. This Parliament had an obligation to put community safety first and to ensure those

families were not forced to relive that trauma through repeated parole processes. Supporting that legislation was about justice, accountability and standing with victims.

No member reaches this place alone. Politics can sometimes create the illusion that achievements belong to individuals. They do not. Every MP stands on the shoulders of family, friends, volunteers, staff and supporters who sacrifice alongside them.

First and foremost, to my children Sienna and Sage, thank you. You have shared your mum with an entire electorate. You have tolerated late nights, missed dinners, endless phone calls and weekends filled with community events. You have also walked beside me through health battles that no child should ever have to witness. But your compassion, humour and strength have carried me through my darkest moments. You are the reason I fight so hard.

To my partner Matt, thank you for your patience, your encouragement and your unwavering support. I love you. To my mum, who inspired my interest in public service and showed me what hard work and compassion look like every single day, thank you. The values you taught me shaped everything I have tried to do in this role. There is not a day that goes past that I do not miss my dad. He had a huge smile for my inaugural speech, and I just wish he could have been here for this one. To my big sister Ceridwen, my nephews Kelsey, Cy, Taeus, Navah and TK, thank you all for supporting me, our family and for the love you show. To Dragan, thank you for being a wonderful father to our children and a support to the family and for your unwavering friendship and carpentry skills that you give to Matt, me and Maisie.

To my carers Leah and Fiona, you are my angels and I could no longer do life without your support. Also, a big thanks to my healthcare team of doctors and allied health professionals led by my MND coordinator Jade.

To my office staff past and present – Pat, Marg, Kerry, Alexia, Kim, Lachy, Matt and Jack – thank you for not only supporting me but also supporting our community with empathy and professionalism each and every day. To my friends, especially those who knew me long before politics, thank you for keeping me grounded and reminding me who I am outside this building.

To the Labor family – branch members, volunteers, campaigners, union members and supporters – thank you for believing in me. In particular I want to give a big shout-out to Kelly Arnett Somerville for her support and dedication. Campaigning in Pakenham was not always easy. There were long days letterboxing in the heat, cold mornings at train stations and countless conversations at shopping centres and community events. But there was also friendship, purpose and a shared belief that government can improve people's lives. I want to once again thank for their support the huge team of volunteers who most certainly helped win the seat of Pakenham.

I particularly want to acknowledge my parliamentary colleagues across both houses and all parties. While politics can be robust, and rightly so, there is also kindness in this place that the public does not always see. A special mention to my dear friend Harriet Shing – my family and I are so grateful for your friendship and cooking skills. To the parliamentary staff, electorate officers, security staff, attendants, cleaners, caterers and everyone who keeps this Parliament functioning, thank you. Following my diagnosis, many people within Parliament worked hard to improve accessibility in this historic building. Those changes were not just for me; they were for future parliamentarians and visitors with disabilities. I hope those changes send a message that our democracy belongs to everyone.

Pakenham's future is bright. It is a community full of young families, ambition, diversity and opportunity. It deserves strong representation and continued investment. I want to wish the next Labor candidate for Pakenham Alessandra Soliven every success in the upcoming state election. Representing this community is both a tremendous responsibility and an extraordinary privilege. I know you will fight hard in this campaign, and hopefully you will be fighting hard for the people of the Pakenham district for the next four years. Never underestimate the difference a local member can make in someone's life.

As I conclude, I reflect on the fact that politics is ultimately about people. It is about the elderly resident who needs help navigating the health system, the young apprentice looking for opportunity, the parent worried about rising costs, the volunteer firefighter serving their community, the student chasing a dream, the family facing illness or grief and hoping someone will listen. If I have achieved anything in this place, I hope it is that people felt heard. I hope the people of the Pakenham district know that every day I walked into this Parliament I carried their stories with me. Serving this community has changed me forever.

To the people of the Pakenham district, thank you for placing your trust in me. Thank you for your kindness. Thank you for allowing a local mum to represent you in the Parliament of Victoria. It has been the greatest honour of my life. Thank you.

Members applauded.

Member for Nepean

Inaugural speech

Anthony MARSH (Nepean) (18:26): It is a profound honour to rise in this place for the first time as the member for Nepean. I begin by thanking the people of Nepean for the trust they have placed in me. To represent a community that has shaped much of my life is both a privilege and a responsibility I do not take lightly. I also acknowledge my predecessors, the Honourable Martin Dixon and Sam Groth, who each served our community with distinction.

My connection to Nepean began long before I ever imagined I might get to represent it in this place. As a young boy I spent countless weekends holidaying with my family in Rye and Blairgowrie. I remember jumping off piers, climbing sand dunes, riding my bike along the dirt roads and spending long summer days at the beach. Like so many Victorians, some of my happiest childhood memories were made on the peninsula. Those childhood holidays eventually became something more, and as a teenager my family moved permanently to the Mornington Peninsula and I attended Dromana Secondary College. It was here that I spent my formative years, started my first local business and developed a deep connection to the community that would shape so much of my life. While life has taken me in many different directions through study, work and service, my compass has always returned me here.

Nepean is a remarkable part of Victoria. It is a place of extraordinary natural beauty, but what makes it truly special is not its coastline or its landscapes, it is its people. Ours is a community built on connection. It is found in the volunteers who quietly give their time to others. It is found in the sporting clubs, service organisations and community groups that bring people together. It is found in the small businesses, farmers, tradies, hospitality operators and community leaders who contribute so much to the character of our region. Nepean is a wonderful place to start a life, raise a family and retire. It is a place people dream of visiting and, if they are fortunate enough, a place they get to call home.

It is also a community that faces important challenges. As one of Victoria's most desirable places to live, we must ensure that people at every stage of life continue to live, work and thrive on the peninsula. At the same time, we must protect the unique character of our region while ensuring future generations have the opportunity to call it home. Balancing growth, opportunity and preservation will be one of the defining challenges of our time. The peninsula has shaped my values, my sense of community, my family and my understanding of service. But as important as the place itself are the people who shaped the person I am today.

Among the many people who shaped me most were my grandparents, Noreen and Ronald Duprey, who we always simply knew as Mumma and Pop. As a child I was fortunate enough to grow up surrounded by their love, encouragement and example. My grandfather Ron rose from humble beginnings to be a senior executive, but that was never how I knew of him. To me he was simply Pop. He was a gentle, curious and deeply caring man who had a remarkable ability to make you feel like

the most important person in the room. No matter what was happening in his own life, he was always genuinely interested in yours. My grandmother Noreen was the heart of our extended family. Family was at the centre of everything she did. Together Mumma and Pop showed me what a successful life looked like. It demonstrated that success and family are not competing priorities and that achievement means very little if it comes at the expense of the people you love. They showed me that success is not measured by titles, wealth or status but by the strength of your character, the love for your family and the positive impact you have on those around you. Although neither of them are here today, their values continue to shape how I approach life, family, business and service. I know they would be proud to see me standing here today, but not because I have been elected to this Parliament. I believe they would be proud because of the life I have been fortunate enough to build: a loving family, meaningful work, close relationships and a continued commitment to serving others.

Those same values were reinforced every day by my parents Sue and Paul, who gave my sister Jess and me a childhood filled with love, encouragement and opportunity. My parents never imposed a ceiling on what I could become. They encouraged me to pursue my interests, take calculated risks and follow opportunities wherever they led. My mum has always been one of the most creative and entrepreneurial people I know. Growing up, she was constantly creating, whether through arts, crafts, paintings or countless projects. She was also the person who first introduced me to computers, long before they became part of everyday life. Looking back, I have no doubt that her example played a significant role in shaping my own entrepreneurial and can-do spirit. When I registered my first business at 14 years old, it was Mum who encouraged me to take the leap and spent countless hours helping me along the way. My father brought a different but equally important influence to my life. Dad is one of the kindest, most optimistic and decent people I know. Through countless camping trips, days on the water and family adventures, he instilled in me a love for the outdoors, a sense of curiosity and an appreciation for the simple things that make life meaningful. One piece of advice he gave me as a young kid has stayed with me: if you find work you love, you will never truly work a day in your life.

Looking back, I realise how fortunate I was. I grew up in a family where love was unconditional, encouragement was abundant and support was never dependent on success or failure. Those lessons would shape every chapter of the life that followed. From a very young age I was obsessed with aviation. I loved aircraft, I loved flying and I loved the idea of building things. As I got older, those interests naturally came together when I finished school and pursued a degree in aerospace engineering. When I graduated, I had opportunities to pursue a traditional engineering career, but instead I found myself drawn towards the Royal Australian Air Force and the opportunity to combine engineering, aviation and service to my country. My time in the RAAF reinforced the values of service, responsibility and contributing to something larger than yourself. Yet after several years I found myself missing something. I missed the freedom to build things, I missed the challenge of creating something from scratch and I missed the excitement that comes from taking risk, backing yourself and seeing an idea become reality.

A bit over a decade ago, with the support of my family, I made the leap from the RAAF to build a drone-mapping business. It was a leap into the unknown but one that reflected my growing desire to build something of my own. It was a risky move leaving a great career in defence, but what followed was one of the most exciting and rewarding periods of my professional life. I took risks, I built things and I earned a good living. Yet after a time I found myself yearning for something more. I wanted to contribute to something bigger. While building businesses gave me enormous satisfaction, serving the community gave me a deeper sense of connection and purpose. Looking back now, that pattern seems obvious. Throughout my life I have been drawn between two passions: building things and serving people. And whenever I focused on one, I found myself missing the other. It took me many years to realise that the opportunities I found most fulfilling were those that allowed me to do both. The realisation eventually led me towards volunteering, local government and, ultimately, this place.

My journey into local government began in 2020. At the time I was involved in helping a local club navigate a significant challenge, and throughout that experience I was encouraged to stand for local council. To be honest, politics was not something that I had much interest in or had paid much attention to. You could even say I was blissfully ignorant at the time, but what I did care about was my community. I cared about the place where I lived, the people who lived there and the challenges facing our local area. After attending a few meetings and learning more about local government, I felt there was an opportunity to contribute to something different. As a young parent, small business owner and entrepreneur, I felt I brought a perspective that was not always well represented and could make a positive difference in the community that I loved. I was re-elected for a second term and during my time on council had the great privilege of serving the Mornington Peninsula shire as mayor on three occasions.

Local government taught me that our community is strongest when decisions are made close to the people and that trust is earned through listening, showing up and doing the work. As rewarding as local government was, those years also taught me an important lesson: many of the biggest challenges facing our community could not be solved by local government alone. When the unexpected opportunity arose to run for this place, I viewed it through that lens. It was not a decision I took lightly given the impact it would have on my life, my family and my business, but it offered something unique. For much of my life, as I said, I had been drawn between building things and serving people, and here was an opportunity to do both: continue serving the community I love while helping build a better Victoria.

Of all the things I am most proud of in my life, none of them are more important than my own family. I am fortunate to share my life with my beautiful wife Natalia. We are very different people in many ways, yet somehow perfectly suited to each other. She keeps me grounded, makes me laugh, keeps me honest and has supported me through every opportunity and challenge life has presented. Natalia is my home, and together we have built a wonderful family. We are blessed with our three remarkable children, who bring joy, perspective and meaning to life – more joy, perspective and meaning to life than I could ever have imagined. Becoming a dad changed me. It gave me a greater appreciation of responsibility, a deeper understanding of sacrifice and a profound sense of purpose. When I think about the example set by Mumma and Pop and by my own parents, I realise how fortunate I was. My hope is that Natalia and I can pass the same gift onto our children.

Becoming a father also changed the way I think about the future. I want my children to inherit a Victoria that is safe, connected and full of opportunity; a Victoria where people are encouraged to dream big, take risks, build things and pursue their ambitions; a Victoria where innovation is embraced, where entrepreneurs and businesses are supported to create, invest and grow and where ideas are welcomed because they have the power to improve lives; a Victoria that remains a great place to raise a family, start a business and build a career but also to contribute to a community; and a Victoria that equips the next generation not only to adapt to change but to help lead it.

Throughout my life I have been fortunate enough to experience firsthand the opportunities that emerge when people are given the freedom and the confidence to pursue an idea, solve a problem or create something new. Those opportunities should not be reserved for the fortunate few. They should be available to every Victorian willing to work hard, contribute and take responsibility for their own future. At the same time, economic success alone is not enough. The strength of our communities, the quality of our relationships and the willingness we show to care for one another are equally important. The Victoria I hope to leave behind is one that combines both of these things: a Victoria that is prosperous and compassionate, innovative and connected, ambitious and grounded. Most importantly, I hope it remains a place where our children and grandchildren will thrive.

There are many people I would like to acknowledge: first and foremost my wife Natalia, our children, my mum and dad, my sister Jess and Nat's parents Ivan and Eva. Public life is never undertaken by one person alone. It asks a great deal of those closest to us, and none of this would have been possible without their love and support. I also acknowledge Lisa and Ken for their friendship and support over

many years. I would also like to acknowledge Thomas, who I met on the tennis court. He sparked my initial interest in local government and has become a dear friend. I thank the Leader of the Opposition Jess Wilson for the confidence she placed in me and for her friendship and support throughout the campaign. She was a constant presence in Nepean, leading from the front, and I am proud to be part of the team she leads. I also thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition David Southwick and my parliamentary colleagues for their support during the campaign and the warm welcome I have received ever since stepping foot in this place. I would also like to acknowledge my upper house colleague Dr Renee Heath, who went above and beyond throughout the entire campaign. Before I ever became a candidate several people encouraged me to take on this challenge and backed me when it was little more than an idea. I would like to thank Amanda, Bulent, Emily, Simone, Mitch, Matt, Roger, Peter, Phil, Gael, Anton, Robb, Cathrine, Holly and Geoff for their encouragement and support.

Campaigns are never won by individuals, though; they are won by teams. I particularly acknowledge Will, who served as my campaign manager, and Geordie, who played a central role throughout the campaign. Will brought hard work, exceptional skill and relentless dedication, while Geordie brought energy, good humour and an incredible ground game. I also thank Ben, Robbie, Daniel, Liam and everyone else at headquarters who supported our efforts, led by the formidable Alyson. I thank the hundreds of volunteers who contributed in ways large and small, whether doorknocking, making calls, manning booths, putting up signs or simply spreading the word. It is impossible to name everyone, but I would particularly like to acknowledge Martin, Bree, Caitlyn, Rob, Norma, Germaine, Nathan, Marg, Peter, Ben, Zahra, Giulia, Scott and Sam. I thank my SEC, led by Phil, and our local branch members for their support and encouragement. I also want to acknowledge my new team: Barry, Julia, Edward and Marshall. We have hit the ground running, and I know I am in very capable hands.

I would like to acknowledge my peninsula colleagues Zoe McKenzie, the federal member for Flinders; Chris Crewther, the member for Mornington; and Paul Mercurio, the member for Hastings. I am grateful for their friendship and support over the many years. I would particularly like to acknowledge Lisa Dixon, who served as my deputy mayor last term with grace and humility, and Paul Pingiaro, who served as my deputy mayor, trusted confidant and loyal wingman until my transition into this place. It was a privilege to serve alongside them. I also acknowledge several of my former council colleagues, Andrea, Bruce and Cam, who have been wonderful colleagues and great friends. I also acknowledge Mark Stoermer, the shire CEO, for his integrity and leadership during a period of significant change.

Finally, there are many people who have played an important role in my journey who I have not been able to name today. I am deeply grateful for their support and advice and friendship along the way. This speech bears my name, but it reflects the contributions of many people. I am grateful to all of those who have helped me reach this place.

Throughout my life my compass has always returned me to the Mornington Peninsula. It is the place where I grew up, built businesses, served community and chose to raise my own family. Now that I have the extraordinary privilege of representing that great community in this Parliament, I do so with gratitude, humility and a deep sense of responsibility. The opportunities I have enjoyed in life were not created by me alone; they were made possible by family, community and those that came before me. As the member for Nepean I am deeply honoured by the trust placed in me, and I will do my very best to repay that trust and contribute to a Victoria that is innovative, compassionate, prosperous and full of opportunity, a Victoria that our children and grandchildren will be proud to call home. I thank the house for its indulgence.

Members applauded.

*Bills***Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026***Second reading***Debate resumed.**

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (18:46): I appreciate with great sincerity that my contribution on the Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026 probably is not going to be as profound as what the chamber has been through for the last 45 minutes, and I accept that. Sometimes you have got to know your place, and I accept that. But I will do my best to give you a bit of entertainment on the racing bill as much as I can – tears and entertainment. I do want to speak on the racing bill, not that I am a massive punter. I thought the member for Essendon actually had a very interesting speech. I very rarely say this and I think I am probably going to take a lot of people by surprise, but there is a first for a few things. I thought his speech was very entertaining and very worthwhile. I was hoping he would do the last 3 minutes of it because it was quite interesting, but he made a very good point. People say horseracing is the sport of kings; it is actually the sport for everyone. I have been to a few courses. I am not a massive punter. I admit to having a couple of apps on my phone, TAB and Sportsbet, mainly because my father-in-law gives me bad tips – although he thinks they are good tips. They never turn out very well, but that is him. There are people from all backgrounds and all walks of life all enjoying the races.

Like a lot of members, I was taken aback – well, not surprised, I guess – at the Greens' position on horseracing and what they think of the horseracing industry and how they feel it adds no value. I could not disagree more. Horseracing is a massive industry, and I might add, as the member for Ovens Valley said, the care and animal welfare that is displayed to horses in that industry by those trainers, strappers and everyone involved in the industry is first class. We have regulations on that front, and more to the point, the owners and those involved have every reason to ensure that those horses are in tip-top condition and looked after as well as they can be. You see it when you only go past a number of those horseracing studs, the condition which they are in – they are not run down, they are in very good order. They want to make sure those animals are in very good health, and they are. I thought the member for Ovens Valley in particular had some very good words around how important the animal welfare issues are in this industry and how the industry is doing a very good job.

But more to the point, as the member for Essendon had said, the economic benefits of racing to our state – and of course for me, being a metropolitan MP, to Melbourne – are so important. I do not want to just talk about the Melbourne Cup – everyone will just talk about the Melbourne Cup or say things about the Melbourne Cup – but it is a driver of economic activity and a buzz that it gives our city, even if you are not a punter. It is fascinating during the Spring Racing Carnival to see so many people actually getting into watching, listening or even taking a punt, maybe just that once a year or twice a year as it might be, and getting involved in the racing industry.

That economic activity just cannot be overestimated. It certainly could not be replaced. When you think of accommodation, restaurants, cafes, transport, retail, shopping, entertainment and all the tourist attractions getting business from people who come from interstate to our state and particularly to Melbourne when they are coming down for the Spring Racing Carnival in particular, it adds a huge buzz to our city and to our economy.

Not to be overlooked, I imagine a number of regional and rural MPs will say the same thing happens for their country races. And I note the member for Gippsland East's tips are not too bad; he is probably the best punter in the building. There was a Nationals member, Mr Damian Drum, who was a terrible tipper, but he was a good bloke. But having said that, the member for Gippsland East will tell you that the buzz country races give to those small regional towns and to those economies is first class. Whether it might be the Bendigo Cup or the Mildura Cup, Bairnsdale, Sale, Warrnambool –

A member interjected.

Matthew GUY: Dederang – that is right. Yes, absolutely. Up near Wodonga. What you have is such a great buzz and such a great investment in local economies that horseracing and the racing industry bring. That should not be overlooked, and it is I think very important and very worthwhile. Whatever the issues we might have around this bill and some of the ways it got here and some of the work behind it, it is important that the racing industry, I believe, know that they have bipartisan support in this state, and they can operate with that certainty into the future, because it does bring so much opportunity and economic activity to regional Victoria. Can you think of all the economic activity, whether it is accommodation or restaurants, in small regional towns, such as the ones I have just mentioned, that some of those race days and race meets bring? It is enormous.

When I was the Minister for Planning, I had the opportunity to – actually I think I intervened and approved what is now the new Pakenham racecourse, actually located in Tynong. The plans at the time were visionary. They were quite substantial. The racecourse was moving out of what was then central Pakenham, a location that was probably not fitting for a major activities area, as it was, and a developing activities area, and the club had found a new location some kilometres down the highway along the railway out in Tynong, which is a perfect example of how racing can adapt and how it can continue to provide massive economic benefit to not just regional but outer urban locations like Pakenham. When you see a race day down at that Tynong location at Pakenham races, it is massive, and it brings huge activity to some of the towns around it – to Bunyip, to the Garfield pub, to Drouin and to these areas in West Gippsland which normally would not get that level of interest or activity. The race meets bring that into town and actually bring that level of activity into West Gippsland that normally would not be there. I think that was a great example.

I was very honoured to be able to, in many ways, intervene and approve that racecourse. Now when I go back there – it is one of those things, if you have the privilege to be able to be in a ministerial position and never waste a minute you have got, and I do not believe I did, good, bad or indifferent. Driving past on the old highway, as I do, because my family is from Gippsland still, I usually take the old highway road and I drive past that racecourse and look at it and think with pride what a great opportunity that has brought for so many people. And it is not just economic. There are jobs associated for all the young men and women involved in the racing industry who now have that new facility, which is such a great opportunity for those in racing.

I do not want to go past this bill. I know there is some mention of motorsports and the grand prix in the bill, and I just want to make a small reference to it, if I can, because I think this is another part of our economy which cannot be overrated. One thing I want to mention – and it is probably never really talked about – is drag racing. I know for some, drag –

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

Matthew GUY: Well, I do too, I say to the member for Frankston, the minister at the table. You know, there is such opportunity for us in Victoria, and maybe both of us can consider this, whoever wins the election – hopefully we do – after the next election, because there is still that missing piece of infrastructure in Victoria around another drag facility. I made commitments, I think in 2018, at the election, around this, because again the economic opportunity – you see people driving up to Canberra. Who would have thought – Canberra. It is called the Summernats in Canberra.

This is an opportunity for Melbourne. We have got a bigger population, and in a number of demographics this is a big deal and people are keen on it. I used to own V8s until I went on to an electric car, which really surprised my school friends.

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

Matthew GUY: I was a Holden V8 driver. Two VFs, if you want to know, a series 1 and a series 2. Then I went on to an electric car, which really left them stunned, but I was not going to be paying that much for fuel, and that was five years ago. That is a piece of the puzzle that is missing, and I just urge all of us to keep that in mind for those who are keen on the drag racing industry and drag racing as an

interest. I know there is Calder Park and there have been other facilities, but we do have now a piece that is missing in that, and I think we should all be looking at that for the future.

As I said, we do not oppose this bill, and there have been a number of good speeches beforehand that I thought have been very interesting. In particular the member for Ovens Valley presented very well, and the member for Essendon – give him credit. But I make these brief comments and commend the bill from a not-opposed position.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (18:56): I think I will bring us home with some comments on the Racing Legislation Amendment (Entity Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2026. This bill does speak to both motorsport and racing. I will confine my remarks, given the time, to the racing dimensions. There have been some fine speeches, as the member for Bulleen said, that have really emphasised the economic importance of the racing sector across tourism in regional Victoria and also Melbourne itself. The Spring Racing Carnival is totemic, really, on the world stage, placing Melbourne within the international glare at that period of time in the year, bringing in not only many, many people but also the economic activity that flows from that. That international recognition is really important. The thoroughbred industry alone generates \$3.2 billion of economic activity and \$500 million in tax revenue to the state government. It also employs well over 30,000 people.

I am concerned when I hear the nihilistic, destructive comments of some political parties in this place, specifically the Greens, who would seek to throw that all away. They profoundly misunderstand the way in which equine welfare is at the heart of the racing industry in this state. They also I think have no conception of what the counterfactual would be. This is a highly regulated sector where the market participants take their obligations very seriously and where the counterfactual is not an abstract one. We can see in the context of tobacco and in the context of spiritous liquor that changes to regulation have not had the effect of curtailing activity; they have forced it onto the black market. I think the Greens political party should be very careful what they wish for in seeking to undermine the highly regulated legal racing sector in this state, which not only creates jobs but creates taxation revenue for the coffers of this place. Activity will not disappear; it will go online onto the grey, unregulated crypto casinos of the world. I think it is incredibly important that we refute the comments of the Greens leader in this place and emphasise the importance of the racing industry as a regulated sector that takes its obligations seriously.

I want to talk about the work that people like Andrew Clarke in my electorate at Living Legends play in sustaining the social licence of racing. Andrew was awarded the Order of Australia Medal last week for his leadership at Living Legends, which is the home, as members may know, to retired champion racehorses, including Prince of Penzance, who members will remember winning the Melbourne Cup with Michelle Payne aboard her in 2015, Efficient, Twilight Payment, Almandin, Brew and of course Chautauqua. Andrew and his team recognise the importance of equine welfare at every step in the industry. He is also a former professor of veterinary medicine at the University of Melbourne and did so much in the Wyndham facility that the member for Tarneit spoke about previously. I just think it is important to call out that the participants in this industry take those obligations seriously. The social licence is incredibly important, and I commend this bill to the house.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Wild dog control

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (19:00): (1709) I have a matter for the Minister for Environment, and the action I seek is for the minister to urgently strengthen wild dog control efforts in the Alexandra zone, Gembrook, Noojee and Erica zone and the Mansfield wild dog predation management zone and

provide immediate support to livestock producers facing devastating attacks. The wild dog attacks across my electorate continue to be an issue and have devastating consequences for so many farmers in the area. I have been contacted so many times by those right across the electorate. I have 10,000 or so square kilometres, and it is just about in every corner now.

The other day I was contacted by a Glenburn sheep producer after she had suffered horrific losses during lambing. They are losing between 20 and 40 lambs every night. This is wiping out the next generation. They are losing their businesses. Ewes have been mauled and lambs killed and left where they fell. In a matter of weeks they have lost around 40 per cent of their lambs, and this is no isolated incident. It has been going on for years, and not enough has been done. In fact the current regulations greatly limit the effectiveness of the doggers. Landholders really appreciate the work that is done locally by Dave Klippel and Dwayne Needham in different areas, and they know how they are stretched. If you are trying to cover from the Yarra Ranges to Orbost, it is particularly difficult – and the same from Murrindindi virtually up into the Murray River. From Merrijig to Yarra Valley, Hoddles Creek and Dixons Creek, Lima South, Buxton, Taggerty and Toolangi towards Chum Creek and Goughs Bay, the reports are endless. Melbourne really needs to look out, because it is only a matter of time before they use those wildlife corridors to be in your backyard.

So many times I have spoken to ministers for agriculture and ministers for environment about this issue, and it certainly is not going away. So much more needs to be done, because it is not just livestock producers that are suffering here; it is also having an impact on people's lives. I heard not long ago actually that in Big Pats Creek a pack of wild dogs was sighted 120 metres from the home of an elderly resident. One dog was destroyed, but several escaped into nearby bushland. This is close to popular tourist and recreation areas. It is becoming easier to interact as bushwalkers with wild dogs, and that is not safe. On so many levels this needs to have greater resources and greater efforts put into the management of the wild dog situation to really support our farmers and those who enjoy the bush.

Glen Waverley electorate roads

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (19:03): (1710) My matter is directed to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is that the minister provides an update on what benefits and improvements residents of my electorate of Glen Waverley can expect to see from the Victorian government's \$1.04 billion roads blitz, announced in the 2026–27 state budget for road maintenance, resurfacing and safety upgrades. Residents regularly speak to me about the importance of maintaining high-quality roads and ensuring our transport networks remain safe and reliable.

Glen Waverley is home to some of Melbourne's busiest arterial roads, including Springvale Road, Burwood Highway, Ferntree Gully Road, Jells Road, Waverley Road, High Street Road, Boronia Road, Canterbury Road, Blackburn Road and Highbury Road. These roads play a vital role in connecting local residents to work, education services and recreation, making their ongoing maintenance essential. I welcome this significant investment in Victoria's road network and the improvements it will deliver to road users across the state. I look forward to hearing how the residents of the Glen Waverley district will benefit from the record investment in local roads.

Economic policy

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (19:04): (1711) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Premier, and the action that I seek is for the Premier to explain to businesses in my electorate why they are being used as cash cows in a futile attempt to pay down the Allan Labor government debt. Victoria is an economic basket case. Labor is obsessed with recklessly spending money it does not have on blowout projects in Melbourne while the regions are neglected. We know the state has been robbed of \$15 billion because Labor looked the other way when confronted with evidence of widespread corruption on the Big Build sites, and overwhelmingly it is businesses who are paying the price.

ASIC's insolvency data shows that 4242 Victorian companies collapsed or had a financial controller appointed in the 2024–25 financial year, a staggering 48 per cent increase compared to the 2023–24

year. Why? Because the Allan Labor government has made it impossible to do business in Victoria. Victoria's payroll tax system is one of the most punishing in the country, at a rate of 6.85 per cent, and we have one of the lowest tax-free thresholds nationally. Victoria's WorkCover premiums are soaring to unsustainable prices, and many small businesses, particularly the trades, face a choice between paying the cover – the cover their employees need and deserve – or just shutting the doors. Several business owners have shared land tax assessment notices with me that show site values or taxable values for a parcel of land have somehow, according to the valuer-general, doubled in the space of a year. In one case a small business in Morwell received a notice where the value of land was alleged to be \$1.25 million, double what it was the year before. This business has now moved its operations interstate, and the owners place the blame squarely at the feet of the Allan Labor government and its land tax scheme.

Victoria's emergency services tax is another impost that many businesses cannot afford to wear. Contrary to what Labor says, the money is not going towards bolstering emergency services. Only the Nationals and Liberals in government will scrap the emergency services tax, lift the thresholds for land tax, increase the payroll tax threshold for businesses and revitalise Victoria's economy. Small and medium-size businesses are the backbone of our economy, and they deserve better than Labor.

Women's health

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (19:06): (1712) My adjournment is for the Minister for Health, and I seek an update on the establishment of a women's health clinic in the Royal Children's Hospital dedicated to supporting adolescents and girls. Throughout the inquiry into women's pain, as Parliamentary Secretary for Women's Health I heard powerful and often heartbreaking stories from women whose pain began in childhood or adolescence but who were dismissed, ignored or told that severe pain was simply a normal part of being a girl. For many this led to years of unnecessary suffering, delayed diagnosis and poorer health outcomes. For a teenager, unmanaged pelvic pain is about far more than physical discomfort. It can mean missing classes, falling behind at school, withdrawing from sport, cancelling social activities and feeling isolated from friends. At a critical stage of development, chronic pain can shape a young person's confidence, their mental health and their opportunities.

The inquiry made it clear that early intervention matters. We know that identifying and treating pelvic pain early can have a profound impact on a person's health, wellbeing and quality of life across their lifetime. That is why I am proud that the Allan Labor government is delivering the most significant investment in women's health in Victoria's history. As part of the establishment of 20 women's health clinics across Victoria, we are delivering a dedicated clinic for Victorian adolescents and girls under 18 at the Royal Children's Hospital, ensuring that young Victorians can access specialist care tailored to their needs. Importantly, this work is not occurring in isolation. We are also delivering pelvic pain and menstrual health education in schools, helping girls and boys understand that pain which prevents them from attending school, participating in sport or living their lives is not something they should simply have to accept.

Young people deserve to know when to seek help and where to get help. Equally, clinicians deserve the tools and expertise to provide that help. Early intervention is not only about improving access to care today, it is also about building the evidence and expertise that will improve care into the future. That is why we are funding critical research through our women's health catalyst grants, and that includes research focused on better managing pelvic pain through early intervention. The dedicated clinic at the Royal Children's Hospital is an important opportunity to improve access to specialist care, build clinical expertise across Victoria and ensure that girls and young women receive the support they need before pain becomes a lifelong burden.

This is reform that only a Labor government will focus on and deliver for Victorians. Only Labor will increase women's rights to health care, not roll back their rights as One Nation and certainly the

Liberals will do. I look forward to seeing the progress of this new clinic and the role it will play in improving care for Victorian girls and young women experiencing pelvic pain.

Waste and recycling management

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (19:09): (1713) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is for the minister to direct the Department of Transport and Planning to undertake the works necessary to permanently address the unacceptable accumulation of rubbish, litter and graffiti around the entrances and exits of the Monash Freeway in the electorate of Hawthorn. This is something of a perennial problem that my office is contacted about regularly, and one that appears to be getting worse with each passing month. The Monash Freeway is one of Melbourne's busiest and most important transport corridors. Thousands of motorists travel through Hawthorn every day, yet whether entering or exiting the freeway at Toorak Road, Burke Road or nearby interchanges, motorists are increasingly met by embankments and verges littered with hard rubbish and covered in graffiti. What should be a major gateway to our city instead presents as neglected and poorly maintained. Constituents regularly report plastics, food packaging, bottles, cans, cardboard and other waste scattered along roadsides and embankments. During a recent inspection my office observed everything from general litter to dumped hard rubbish, including a discarded couch. Quite how a couch ended up halfway up a freeway embankment remains a mystery, but it illustrates the extent of the problem. Beyond being an eyesore, loose debris can be blown onto traffic lanes, creating hazards for motorists. Accumulated rubbish can obstruct drains, damage roadside infrastructure and increase maintenance costs over time.

It is also an environmental concern. The freeway corridor runs alongside Gardiners Creek, which ultimately flows into the Yarra River. For every bottle, plastic wrapper or piece of packaging visible from the roadside, there is every chance another has already found its way into our waterways. Such large quantities of litter should not be allowed to accumulate beside one of Melbourne's most important urban creek systems. My constituents are fed up. They take pride in their neighbourhoods and expect basic standards of maintenance on one of Melbourne's busiest transport corridors. This is not simply a matter of amenity. It is a matter of road safety, environmental stewardship and civic pride. Accordingly, I ask the minister to direct her department to undertake an immediate clean-up of affected sites and implement a permanent maintenance regime that prevents the continual accumulation of rubbish and graffiti along the Monash Freeway corridor in Hawthorn. I look forward to the minister's response.

Waste and recycling management

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (19:12): (1714) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide the latest update on the deterrents at the truck parking bay on Westall Road, in Clayton South, to prevent the illegal dumping taking place there. Unfortunately, there has been a serious issue with illegal dumping at this location in my electorate. It is extremely disappointing. Household rubbish, commercial rubbish – all kinds of junk is being dumped here alongside this major arterial road, in full view of traffic coming past this site. I have been contacted by several constituents expressing their disappointment and calling for action. This site has been cleared several times now, and as soon as the junk has been cleared, it returns, and the community is calling for strong deterrents.

I echo the calls to hold illegal dumpers accountable for the mess they leave behind in our community. There are serious consequences for this kind of behaviour. Rubbish dumping and littering on public land are illegal, with a maximum penalty of close to \$4 million for businesses and \$800,000 for individuals or five years imprisonment, or both. The Allan Labor government has been cracking down on illegal dumping across Victoria. Together with the Minister for Environment we announced \$21.5 million in October last year to bolster the illegal dumping taskforce and deliver extra financial support for councils and public land managers to clear up and clean up illegally dumped waste. There is no excuse for illegal dumping, and we should be able to enjoy our shared public space and our roads

free from dumped waste. I thank the minister for her assistance in getting this site cleared, and I am looking forward to her response.

Data centres

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (19:14): (1715) My matter is for the Premier, and the action I seek is a moratorium on new data centres. Labor is rolling out the red carpet for uncontrolled data centres across Victoria, lining the pockets of techno-fascist billionaires at the expense of the environment, of the community and of jobs. Unregulated data AI centres harm the environment, and they keep us reliant on dirty fossil fuels.

Electricity and water usage from data centres in Victoria is expected to more than triple by 2030, pushing up Victoria's energy prices by 23 per cent by 2035. One data centre bigger than the Melbourne CBD is being proposed in Melbourne's west, and it is expected to consume more power than the state's largest remaining coal plant produces. These mega data centres also enable tech companies like Palantir and OpenAI to profit from mass surveillance and autonomous weapons of war. They are guzzling drinking water, energy and hectares of valuable land for centres that will provide hardly any jobs once they are built and will threaten privacy, peace and the jobs of workers across industries.

The rapid expansion of unregulated AI is putting our arts community under threat. Artists already face such insecure work and funding instability, and AI puts the livelihood of artists, authors, musicians and journalists as well as so many other workers at even greater risk. Unregulated AI takes jobs and steals content and butchers it. Despite all of these concerns, though, the Premier is bragging and cosying up to big tech and fast-tracking approvals of these mega data centres, completely bypassing community consultation and any necessary checks and balances. You have got to wonder: what are they getting in return?

Data centre expansion is far from essential or inevitable. AI can help us in so many different ways, but unregulated, it can exploit, extract and threaten so much. We need guardrails. That is why I am calling on the Premier for a moratorium on new AI data centres until we have a comprehensive strategy to protect workers; strict environmental, water and energy standards; protection of First Nations cultural heritage; protection of privacy and creative rights; and a guarantee that AI will not be used for harm. It is time to protect workers and communities from the unfettered expansion of AI, to make sure that Labor's data centre fast track is not just another ploy to line the pockets of billionaires and big business while the rest of us pay the price.

Future Footscray

Katie HALL (Footscray) (19:17): (1716) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts, Minister Symes in the other place, and the action I seek is for the minister to attend a meeting with me and the Future Footscray forum to discuss the work underway to revitalise the Footscray CBD precinct, which of course also includes the old Footscray Hospital. Community consultation opened today on this important new precinct in Footscray. In 2023 I established the Future Footscray forum for residents, businesses and local organisations to inform discussion and strategic planning for the future of Footscray's CBD. Future Footscray is now being managed by the City of Maribyrnong.

The chair of Future Footscray Steve Sully is a local resident and an accomplished urban planner. For many years he has been involved with the Mainstreet Australia organisation, which was founded in Melbourne. I am a huge fan of the work of Mainstreet. They are dedicated to creating thriving local economies and vibrant communities. Mainstreet just celebrated 30 years of their work across the country, and whilst I was unable to attend their celebratory event, I wanted to mention the work of Mainstreet in influencing the Future Footscray forum here to mark the occasion.

It is because of the Allan Labor government's generational investments into Footscray that we have an opportunity to capitalise on Footscray's super diversity, creating opportunities for a sustainable,

inclusive and vibrant precinct. Future Footscray is a long-term project guiding short-, medium- and long-term investments for this amazing part of Melbourne for a bright future for residents and businesses in Footscray's CBD. I look forward to welcoming the Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts to my electorate and continuing the collaboration between my community and the Allan Labor government.

Renewable energy

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (19:19): (1717) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Planning, and the action I seek is for the minister to outline how the planning system assesses the cumulative impacts of large-scale solar and battery developments within renewable energy zones and surrounding regions. Regional Victoria needs detail as to what binding standards apply to fire risk, prime agricultural land, decommissioning, land devaluation and end-of-life rehabilitation.

The Allan Labor government's own admission that until now developers did not even have to demonstrate how they engaged with affected communities tells you absolutely everything. For years there has been no rule book. The standards now coming through VicGrid are retrospective, are limited to engagement and benefits and do nothing to address the cumulative impact to fire risk, the loss of prime agricultural land, decommissioning and rehabilitation. It has become the Wild West for renewable companies in our regions, dividing communities and degrading our environment project by project with no-one assessing the whole. Massive international companies have come to our communities. They have devalued their land and degraded our environment, all while the planning system waves them through one project at a time.

Look at the expansion of Glenrowan, with thousands of acres under solar panels and batteries. At Goorambat an initial solar proposal has tripled in size, a battery factory is now planned and a community fund has shrunk from 175 grand to \$75,000 with no explanation. At Colbinabbin the Cooba solar farm – I should say solar factory – was fast-tracked over the objections of Campaspe council and residents; 700,000 panels covering prime agricultural land with no right of appeal. The Nationals believe in urban solar parks. Build where the rooftops are, the transmission lines are and the demand already is. But if we are to host this extraordinary amount of development, we should do so with a safety net, one that protects community voice, gives people a say in their own future and sets a clear standard for the internationals who come here to profit and permit hunt. Across my electorate there are more than 10 renewable companies, projects and factories already built and triple that in the planning phase. This is industrialisation of our own beautiful environment and prime agricultural land right in front of our eyes.

My community is concerned about the planning system that assesses projects individually while ignoring the cumulative impact. The question is not whether one solar farm is appropriate, but what happens when several are approved side by side changing the character, productivity and future of our region. There should be clear legislated minimum standards. These projects must be assessed through a whole-of-life lens. Regional communities are not the enemy of transition. They are being asked to carry it. They at least deserve a rule book.

Education system

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (19:22): (1718) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for him to consider the results of the P-9 school model survey that we are currently undertaking. The survey is to understand the community sentiment around whether P-9s are the right model for metropolitan Melbourne and particularly Point Cook, the community that I represent. The survey is in its early days, but we have had almost 1000 responses, including 13 per cent of those responses from teachers. Here is some of the feedback we have had. One mother said:

For kids who go to P-6 schools they have to transition twice – I feel this is very overwhelming for them.

Others cite the challenges of campuses being too large because there are 10 year levels on the campus, not seven. One parent and also a teacher said:

School size too large, kids attend p-9 but I work in a p-6 and p-6 has a much more community cohesive feel.

Secondary teachers cite that they cannot teach to the peak of their VCE profession, and many cite that they look at the non-government schools in the area because the P-9 model does not work for them. One mother said:

My daughter is in grade 8 ... Now she has to move somewhere else. It is always better if everyone can finish high school from same place. I don't really understand why this P 9 model was implemented in the first place. And we don't have enough options ... in southwest other than going to private school which is not affordable for everyone.

One father said:

My children have finished school. I had twins that went to separate schools in year seven. I found the development opportunities for the child that went to 7-12 school helped to excel them academically compared to the one that stayed at the p-9 ... We subsequently changed the other twin to a private school ...

Secondary teachers are talking about whether they can teach to the peak of their profession, something that is important to me and to them.

Thank you to the community for the rich feedback that we have received so far. For a growing community that is building many more schools, now is the right time to get the model right. Our question is not: is your school great? We have great schools in the community I represent – great leaders, great teachers, great education assistants – but it is whether the model is right. So it is over to the community. Once we have those results we will pass them on to the department. They will deeply engage with our school communities in what will probably be a decade-long process if accepted by government. We welcome the community's responses because we will listen and act.

Responses

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Cost of Living, Minister for Renters, Minister for Men and Boys) (19:25): The member for Eildon raised an issue for the Minister for Environment on wild dogs. The member for Glen Waverley raised an issue for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety on roads maintenance. The member for Morwell raised an issue for the Premier about the economy. The member for Northcote raised a matter regarding health, and that was for women's health clinics in the Royal Children's Hospital. The member for Hawthorn raised a matter of roads and road safety and roads maintenance along the Monash. The member for Clarinda raised a matter to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, which was an update on illegal dumping. The member for Richmond had a matter for the Premier regarding a moratorium on data centres. The member for Footscray had a matter focused on the Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts, and that was regarding revitalisation of her amazing electorate, which I believe she is leading. The member for Euroa had a matter for the Minister for Planning, which was regarding renewable energy in her electorate. The member for Point Cook raised a very important matter for the Minister for Education regarding a P-9 school model survey, which has gone out to members of his electorate and has received more than 1000 responses. May I say, as a former teacher, a 13 per cent teacher uptake is wild. It shows people are actually interested in this. This is obviously a big vision, but it is community consultation at grassroots and at its finest, and I commend the member for that. With that, I will refer on all these matters to the relevant ministers.

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

House adjourned 7:27 pm.