Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Wednesday 26 August 2026

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

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)

Jacinta Allan (to 27 September 2023)

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

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 26 August 2026

The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 9:32 am, read the prayer and made an Acknowledgement of Country.

Announcements

Victoria Police deaths

The SPEAKER (09:33): Under the resolution of the house of 25 August 2026, I invite members to stand for a minute's silence, if they are able, to honour the service and sacrifice of Detective Leading Senior Constable Neal Thompson and Senior Constable Vadim de Waart-Hottart, who were tragically killed in the line of duty at Porepunkah on Tuesday 26 August 2025.

Members stood in their places.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Education, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Women and Gender Equality) (09:34): *(By leave)* Police officers put themselves in danger every day to keep the Victorian community safe, and the tragic events in Porepunkah last year are a grim reminder to all of us of the risks they face. One year ago today Detective Leading Senior Constable Neal Thompson and Senior Constable Vadim de Waart-Hottart lost their lives serving the Victorian community. Their loss leaves a painful void in the lives of their families, their friends and their communities, and our hearts continue to go out to those affected by this senseless crime. I want to thank all current and former police officers for their dedication, their commitment and their selflessness in the service of our community. Their work is appreciated and it is valued. We thank them for their service today and every day.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (09:35): *(By leave)* Today our thoughts are with the families, friends and colleagues of Detective Leading Senior Constable Neal Thompson 26182 and Senior Constable Vadim de Waart-Hottart 44954, the two Victoria Police officers who were tragically killed in the line of duty in Porepunkah one year ago. Our thoughts are also with the third officer who was injured that day, with the other first responders on scene and with everyone who has carried the weight of this tragedy in the months since. These officers went to work to protect their community, and they did not come home. That loss has been felt not only by their loved ones but by every member of Victoria Police, by police in other jurisdictions and by the people of the High Country and Victoria-wide as we have grieved alongside them.

I also want to acknowledge the tireless and determined work of Victoria Police. Victoria Police demonstrated remarkable resolve and professionalism through a long and difficult search for justice. Their persistence ultimately brought the manhunt to an end and hopefully brings some measure of peace to the families, friends and colleagues of Neal and Vadim, who have lost so very much. To Neal's and Vadim's families, we cannot ease your pain, but we can promise that their service and their sacrifice will not be forgotten. We stand with you today and always. Hasten the dawn.

Business of the house

Notices of motion and orders of the day

The SPEAKER (09:37): General business, notices of motion 1, 2, 54 and 55 and order of the day 3, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2 pm today.

Documents

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Auditor-General – Delivering the Suburban Rail Loop – Ordered to be published

Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978 – Register of Interests – Returns submitted by Members of the Legislative Assembly – Ordinary Returns 1 February 2026 to 30 June 2026 (two volumes) – Ordered to be published

Planning and Environment Act 1987 – Notice of approval of an amendment to the Surf Coast Planning Scheme – C146.

Bills

Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2026

Council's agreement

The SPEAKER (09:38): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2026 without amendment.

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

Council's amendments

The SPEAKER (09:38): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026 with amendments.

Ordered that amendments be taken into consideration later this day.

Motions

Motions by leave

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (09:38): I move, by leave:

That this house notes that taxpayer money is being used to pay a former Labor MP $130,000 for a part-time role –

Leave refused.

Business of the house

Standing and sessional orders

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Artificial Intelligence and the Digital Economy, Minister for Major Events, Minister for Medical Research, Minister for Racing, Minister for Economic Development) (09:39): I move, by leave:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended today to allow the members for Ringwood, Macedon and Bayswater to make valedictory speeches for a maximum of 15 minutes each at the conclusion of the matter of public importance.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

Kew future leaders speech competition

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (09:40): Next month, right here in this very chamber, I will be excited to welcome the finalists of the Kew first speech competition. Students from 16 primary schools and seven secondary schools entered the competition, where they were asked to

deliver a speech on an issue that matters most to them, much like a first speech here in the Parliament. I am very grateful to my colleagues in the other place David Davis and Georgie Crozier as well as the member for Hawthorn for helping judge the competition and choose the finalists, who will deliver their speeches here next month. I am looking forward to hearing from Ollie from Balwyn Primary, who spoke about Victoria's debt; Kaylee from Fintona, who will be speaking about the importance of mental health; and Jarvis from St Anne's and Ariya from St Bede's, who will raise their concerns about crime in this state and feeling safe in their own communities. We will also hear from Ellie from Carey about housing affordability, Aathana from Camberwell Girls about the cost of living and Gabriel from Xavier about civics education. It is truly one of the best parts of my job – and I think I can say that for many people in this place – to hear from the next generation about what matters to them. I cannot wait to hear from and listen to these bright young students on what they have to say about the future of our state.

Run4Ben

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (09:41): I would like to take this opportunity to thank the volunteers who organised Run4Ben on Sunday morning. I was really pleased to join hundreds in my electorate for a 10-kilometre fun run around Woodlands Historic Park in memory of Ben, a young man who collapsed tragically at football training in Greenvale last year and subsequently passed away but who before doing so was able to pass on the gift of life to many other people through organ donation. I thank his family and the volunteers who organised Run4Ben on the weekend, on a beautiful Sunday morning at Woodlands, raising money for the Royal Children's Hospital and awareness of the importance of organ donation and its capacity to give life to others.

Mawlid

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (09:42): I would like to thank the organisers of the Multicultural Mawlid concert – Darulfatwa, the Islamic Charity Projects Association and the Hararian Organization – which I was very pleased to attend on the weekend and which I attend every year. It was another wonderful bringing together of so many from across our community and particularly those of the Islamic faith, who I was very pleased to join in Altona North.

Onam festival

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (09:42): Thank you as well to Ente Keralam for organising a fantastic Onam celebration, which brought together so many from across our community at Kolbe Catholic College a couple of weeks ago.

Hume City Football Club

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (09:42): I also want to congratulate Hume City Football Club for their achievement of the highest position in the Victorian top flight, with a 3–2 win over Caroline Springs on Saturday. It was fantastic to be there.

Antonine College

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (09:43): Thank you to Antonine College for welcoming me and the member for Broadmeadows to mass last Tuesday.

Felicitations

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (09:43): With the winding down of the 60th Parliament, it is important to say a few thankyous. To all the voters of the old Swan Hill electorate and to all the voters of the now Murray Plains electorate: thank you very much for giving me the privilege of being the local member for you over the last 24 years. To all the staff in my electorate office, to all the staff in my minister's office when I was a minister and to all the staff that were in my leader's office when I was leader of the party: thank you very much for everything you have done to help me. Thank you for helping me fulfil the mission that I set out to do when I came into Parliament: to help people and try

and make Victoria a better place. To Bridget Noonan, the now Clerk; to Ray Purdey, the former Clerk; and to all the staff of the Parliament: thank you for what you do to keep us on track and, more importantly, to save us from ourselves sometimes when we want to do things here in Parliament. You are the protectors of our parliamentary system, and it has been an absolute privilege to work with you all. To you, Speaker, and to all the speakers before you: again, thank you for what you do in keeping all us schoolchildren in control. It has been a very important thing that you have all carried out. And lastly, thank you to the ministers on the other side when we have been in opposition, when you have helped us or your office has helped us in our electorate office to help people, because that is what we all come here for – to make sure the world is a better place. Thank you.

St Mary's Armenian Apostolic Church

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (09:44): It is a bit hard to follow that. I had the honour of attending the St Mary's Armenian Apostolic Church 50th anniversary gala ball recently, a wonderful celebration of our Armenian community. I wish to thank the parish priest Reverend Father Khacher Harutyunyan and the wider church community. St Mary's church serves a large Armenian community that calls Mulgrave home, and the spirit and celebration of my community was on full display that night.

Chinese Family Support Network Victoria

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (09:45): I recently attended the launch of the Chinese Family Support Network Victoria community education program launch. For migrant families building a life in a new country can be challenging. It is more than just finding a home and a job; it is about understanding how to navigate our systems and our services, knowing their rights and responsibilities and having the confidence to participate fully in community. This program aims to fill the gap that exists for our growing Chinese community in my area. I congratulate Junxi Su, the chairperson of the Chinese Family Support Network Victoria, the volunteers and all involved in delivering the 2026 Chinese community education program.

Waverley Meadows Primary School

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (09:45): I also had the wonderful privilege of visiting Waverley Meadows Primary School last week to celebrate National Science Week with them. School captains Isla Joseph and Shael Dcunha took me around to explore all the different projects.

Brighton Beach Bowls Club

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:46): Bayside strongly supports an upgrade to the facilities at Brighton Beach Oval. Sadly, the state Labor government refuses to invest in our community. Our community has spoken out strongly against the plan by Bayside council to bulldoze the 120-year-old Brighton Beach Bowls Club because it is cheaper to build a new sports pavilion on the bowls site. Thank you to club president Jon Martin.

Hampton RSL

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:46): Hampton RSL is a cornerstone in Bayside, having grown to 800 members. We recently hosted Major General Jason Blain and Victoria Cross recipient Daniel Keighran for a Long Tan–Derapet service dinner. Daniel spoke openly about drawing fire on 24 August. It was also special to meet Tanya, his fiancée, and hear about their November wedding plans. They deserve a wonderful life together.

Little Brighton Reserve community garden

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:46): Following community advocacy in 2022, the Little Brighton Reserve community garden was established in Union Street, Brighton East. Led by Helen Gries, the garden has bloomed from a bud of an idea Helen first shared with me in her kitchen. We recently met to plant our plant, and Helen shared wonderful stories, like meeting her husband after her car broke down in front of his business.

1st/14th Brighton Sea Scouts

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:47): The 1st/14th Brighton Sea Scouts annual master chef night is as fun as the name suggests. With Bayside mayor Debbie Taylor-Haynes and Brighton North Rotary president Ross Rice, we had the difficult task of awarding winning Cub cooks. It was even more challenging for me as a vegetarian when the signature dish was meatballs. Thank you to the Cub cooks and group leader Janet Cardell.

Victoria Street mall, Coburg

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (09:47): On 16 July I was delighted to welcome the Minister for Small Business, Minister Suleyman, to central Coburg to inspect the progress on our $153,000 investment towards revitalising Victoria Street mall. The first of the upgrades which have now been delivered via new outdoor umbrellas are now being followed up with more improvements for 10 shopfronts, new lighting, refreshed awnings, safer paving, a new performance space and a summer program of live entertainment. Thank you to the Central Coburg Business Association, Merri-bek council and local businesses, including the magnificent Half Moon falafel cafe and others, for making us welcome, including Cr Helen Politis and lifetime local fixture of Victoria Street mall, who loves his coffee there day in, day out, Angelo Koutouleas.

RMIT Brunswick campus

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (09:48): On 18 August I had the pleasure to visit RMIT's Brunswick campus to appreciate their nation-leading learning approaches to the evolving fashion, textile, design and technology industries. Thank you to those who led the tour, including Tom Bentley, Jenny Underwood, Rumbidzai Zizhou, Alice Payne, Cath Davis, Kit van Maanen and Samuel Coombs. Strategically situated in the heart of Melbourne's creative inner north and built on the foundations of our community's rich fashion, millinery and textiles industries, I genuinely look forward to working with RMIT to leverage the economic, employment, skills and cultural opportunities of the Brunswick Design District.

Outer Urban Projects

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (09:48): On 14 August I visited the Outer Urban Projects in the northern suburbs to announce our $400,000 investment via the creative enterprise program to support their ongoing work over the next four years. Outer Urban Projects is a truly creative powerhouse for our northern suburbs, giving all people of all ages the chance to shine in theatres, spoken word, music, dance and so much more. Based out of the Oxygen youth hub, they do incredible work across the north.

Wesburn Primary School

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (09:49): Wesburn Primary School got a little bit more than they bargained for when they did their tour of Parliament last week. The grades 5 and 6 students were given a slightly unorthodox tour and spent an hour with me as I guided them through the building, including the annexe and some of the bowels. We had a lot of laughs, but I hope they learned a lot on the way.

Wesburn Junior Football Club

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (09:49): Congratulations to Wesburn Junior Football Club on their celebration of 70 years of football. This is a big deal, and it is not always easy. The club has only juniors, but it has a great culture, evidenced by the parents who bring their kids back time after time to the club they grew up with. With four girls, five boys and two mixed teams, I am sure the founders would never have expected the club to be where it is now. On the night we heard from players Milla and Gracie, who excelled speaking to the adult crowd. Congratulations to Luke and Josh, who are at the helm now.

Eildon electorate women's football

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (09:50): There was certainly something to cheer about in Yea on the weekend. The Yea Tigers women's football team are the 2026 division 2 premiers, defeating Officer to take out the flag. This was an exceptional effort as they were undefeated all year. Congratulations to Healesville under-16 girls, who took out the grand final, coming from behind against Mount Evelyn; great job, girls. The Warburton-Millgrove women's team missed out on the flag, being runners-up to Mount Evelyn in the division 1 league.

Kym Estcourt-Barclay

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (09:50): Some personal achievements: not only did Kym Estcourt-Barclay reach a milestone of 200 games, but she broke the record for the most goals scored at the Healesville Football Netball Club: 2446. Kym is a ripper. Great job.

Annette Death

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon) (09:50): Riddells Creek local, mum of two and two-time Macedon Ranges mayor Annette Death will be Labor's fantastic candidate for the state seat of Macedon at the election later this year. Annette understands our community so well, and she will be an incredible advocate for the people of Macedon. It has been wonderful to have her join me for some terrific events in her home town that demonstrate Labor's ongoing commitment to investing in our regional communities, from celebrating investments at Treetops Scout camp that are delivering more shelter as well as archery and frisbee-golf facilities – investments that underscore our government's commitment to helping families raise healthy, active kids; a big shout-out to Riddells Creek local and Scouting leader Andrew Smyth – to meeting the team behind the Riddells Creek town centre activation plan that has been supported by a Tiny Towns grant. This funding will support bud lighting in the main street and waterway beautification. Big thanks to Riddells Creek locals Graham Stewart, Narelle McGellin and Melanie Kinsey. Your passion for your community shines as bright as the bud lights will.

Finally, Annette joined me for the sod turn for the brand new CFA station which will serve our CFA volunteers and the community of Riddells Creek well into the future, with three drive-through vehicle bays, more storage, better operational areas and a multipurpose space as well as modern amenities for the women and men who volunteer at Riddells Creek. Congratulations to Captain Gill Metz AFSM and all the dedicated volunteers at Riddells Creek. It was great to see Rod Sinclair there; Rod was there when we turned the sod back in the 1980s. I can assure the people of Riddell that Annette Death will ensure their community continues to be supported by a Carroll Labor government.

Youth crime

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (09:52): Yesterday on the steps of Parliament we had the brave families and supporters of Charli and Lucy, two 11-year-old girls that were brutally bashed, after stepping off their school bus, by a group of teenage girls. The footage was sickening to watch. The physical serious act of violence has left the victims traumatised, the families distressed and many members of the community deeply concerned about the safety of their children. Tammy, the mother of Charli, said, 'Our daughter got up. The next child or person may not.'

No-one should have to go through what these families are going through. The families and the community are calling for change and highlighting the desperate need to address rising youth crime, weak laws and the weak youth justice system. They want to see prevention and accountability. They want mandated programs when young people do offend to get them back on a pathway away from a future of crime and reoffending, and yesterday I tabled a petition in support.

I want to acknowledge the strength and courage of these families as they have shared their experiences and their desperate want for change. The tipping point and the slogan 'Enough is enough' brought together over 1000 people who walked together at the Shepparton lake following the hideous attack,

calling for change, and many gathered again here to have their voices heard. Enough is enough, and we cannot continue up this path of increasing youth crime.

Dental services

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (09:53): Northcote has been celebrating. On Monday I joined the Premier at Alphington Primary School where students talked about the Smile Squad, a Labor initiative giving free dental care to kids. The Smile Squad has visited over 1000 public schools since it launched and treated more than 175,000 students. Now Labor is going even further. A re-elected Labor government will open 10 free public dental clinics across Victoria, making dental care free for every Victorian. What an extraordinary policy that is. Preventative health, cost of living – this will make a tangible difference to so many lives in my community.

Northcote festival

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (09:54): We are also still buzzing from the music and dancing at Sunday's spectacular Northcote festival at the Holy Monastery of Axion Estin, where I was proud to announce that a re-elected Labor government will provide $200,000 over four years to support this multicultural celebration. It was beautiful. Greek and Cypriot traditions came together with Syrian, Romanian and Albanian music and dance – people sharing joy through faith, culture and community. My thanks to His Eminence Archbishop Makarios, His Grace Bishop Evmenios of Chora and Father Phillip for their leadership and warm hospitality and to all the volunteers, performers and community members who made the festival so special. Labor stands with our multicultural and multifaith communities not with words but with action.

Fitzroy Stars Football & Netball Club

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (09:54): Finally, what a win for the Fitzroy Stars women's football team, making history with their first-ever premiership. Congratulations to every player, coach, volunteer and supporter behind this incredible achievement. This is Northcote at its best.

Malvern City Football Club

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (09:55): I would like to place on record my congratulations to Malvern City Football Club in my electorate, who have seen their senior men promoted to Victorian Premier League 1 even before the end of the season. This comes off the back of a promotion to VPL 2 this year, so it is a double promotion. It is a stunning result and a testament to the huge efforts of the players, the coaches, the supporters and the club itself. Best wishes for the rest of the season and congratulations on your promotion to VPL 1 next year.

AFL finals

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (09:55): I have to acknowledge that there is a split in my family, because I follow the mighty Blues and my brother Conor is a Dees tragic, so Saturday night is going to be interesting. I should say that likewise my nephew Thomas and my niece Charlotte are committed Dees. Post politics I do hope to be able to counsel them back to the light, but I might have to convince their father first. So while I will be attending the My Room ball on Saturday night, raising money for children's cancer research, which is a fantastic cause, the MCG is set to host an absolutely magnificent spectacle. May the best team win, and may that team be Carlton.

Protective services officers

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (09:56): What do you think happens when you take PSOs off train stations at night? Surprise, surprise, crime goes up. Labor has taken the PSOs off Armadale – crime up; Darling – crime up; East Malvern – crime up; Glen Iris – crime up; Kooyong – crime up; and Tooronga – crime up. Only a Wilson Liberal–Nationals government will put the PSOs back on our train stations and keep commuters safe at night.

Clarinda electorate

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (09:56): Thank you to all my constituents who have opened their doors for a chat over the last few months or attended my mobile office or coffee catch-up. I try hard to reach out directly to as many of you as possible, and I have really appreciated your time and your feedback. Almost every home in the Clarinda district has been doorknocked or has received a flyer for a mobile office or coffee catch-up this year. It has been great to hear about our priorities – community safety, roads, education and health – and what you want to see from the Carroll Labor government. Also, thank you to all my volunteers who have helped in preparing material, letterboxing and doorknocking. Your passion for our local community is amazing, and I very much appreciate all of your help.

Premier's Multicultural Gala Dinner

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (09:57): Finally, it was a pleasure to join the Premier at the multicultural gala dinner last week together with many friends and community members, leaders and faith leaders. As the member for Clarinda district, I am incredibly proud to represent one of the most diverse and vibrant multicultural communities in Victoria, a place where people from many cultures, languages and backgrounds live, work and thrive together. We are a multicultural success story, and last week was another great opportunity to celebrate this and to reflect on the amazing contribution of our multicultural, multifaith community in Victoria.

Music Victoria

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (09:57): Whether you are watching a gig from the iconic beer-soaked carpet at the Tote or underneath the ornate statues of the Forum, audiences in Victoria get to experience the joy and connection that our brilliant music industry brings. But this Labor government has failed to back our musicians and artists in return. Instead of investing in our creative industries, Labor has consistently cut funding from the arts. Key funding is down 35 per cent in real terms over the last five years. It is becoming harder for artists to make work, let alone a living, and organisations and venues are facing closure amid absolutely untenable pressure.

That is why I am backing Music Victoria's election asks: establishing a Victorian music trust, a permanent fund for Victorian music that is funded by a 1 per cent levy on ticket sales from major live music events; backing Victorian artists and the music that they make by expanding investment in Victorian music by at least $9 million a year – that is not very much; building careers, skills and audiences across Victoria at every stage, from the classroom to touring; and protecting and growing the places where music happens by investing in and protecting live music venues and precincts and simplifying regulation. I call on the minister to join me in backing Music Victoria's election asks.

Community safety

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (09:59): Community safety is a priority of mine, and I am pleased to see recent announcements made by our government that are going to make our community in Melbourne's west safer for everyone. We are expanding the community connectors program to Sunshine station, which is a huge win for our community. We know that this program has been really successful at other stations, like Footscray and Dandenong, providing direct support and connecting folks to local services, whether it is emergency relief, housing and homelessness services or mental health supports and so much more. When folks are mentally distressed or intoxicated, these connectors will be an immense help to them. Even better, this program will be up and running in Sunshine by October.

But that is not all we are doing to improve community safety. We are funding $10 million in grants for community safety upgrades for local councils, for things like CCTV and additional lighting. I know that my community in Brimbank will be very, very interested in what this grant funding could be used for. There is funding for more drug and alcohol support, which focuses on communities like Brimbank and Maribyrnong. Our Premier has also announced that we are hiring an additional 150 PSOs to patrol

our local streets and our train stations and an additional 200 police reservists to staff our local police stations, thus enabling more police to be out on the beat. Whether it is more police and PSOs, more security upgrades or stronger support services for locals who need them, our government is focused on addressing antisocial behaviour and ensuring that communities like mine are kept safe.

Flinders Pier

Anthony MARSH (Nepean) (10:00): I was proud to stand with the Flinders community at their rally to save Flinders Pier. Labor promised to restore this heritage-listed landmark yet walked away after demolishing the inner section and completing only 13 piles. I commend the Save Flinders Pier campaign. When we are elected to government in November, we will finish the job.

Rye skate park

Anthony MARSH (Nepean) (10:01): It was terrific to join the community for the opening of the upgraded Rye skate park, a facility for young people and families across the peninsula. I acknowledge Rye local and Skateboarding Victoria president Tim Preston, whose persistence helped bring the project to life, and Mornington Peninsula shire for delivering a facility the community can be proud of. The energy on the day was incredible, and I look forward to seeing the park used for many years to come.

Capel Sound Community Hub

Anthony MARSH (Nepean) (10:01): The Capel Sound Community Hub represents community at its best. Home to early learning, a food pantry, a community library and support organisations, it provides help and connection across generations. Thank you to Heather Barton and the team for welcoming me and showing me the important work being done there. I was pleased to be able to assist them with the shire permit to begin works on their new garden project.

Rosebud and Districts Men's Shed

Anthony MARSH (Nepean) (10:01): I had a wonderful time visiting the Rosebud and Districts Men's Shed. From woodworking and metalwork to technology and training, the shed gives men a place to share skills and support one another, build friendships and contribute to the community. My thanks to the members for their warm welcome and for everything they do to give back to our community.

Country Fire Authority Epping brigade

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (10:02): The Epping fire brigade awards night and dinner was held on Saturday, and it was an honour to attend to celebrate and recognise the service and achievements of the many volunteers who give so much to keep us safe, whether it is fighting fires, their life-saving work on our roads or vital community education. Thank you for your commitment and service, and thanks as well to your families, who support you and make it possible for you to serve. Also, congratulations to new captain Liam Gallagher for your dedication and commitment, and good luck in the new position.

I would now like to congratulate members of the brigade who received some of the awards: James Tonkin, who received the peer award; Dom Castagna, who received the Peter Hewitt community safety award; Liam Gallagher, the Cliff Smith award; Lisa Compton-Robins, the Captain and Officers award; and Dom Castagna, the Firefighter of the Year award. The recipients of the National Medal first clasp were Andrew Dalla Via and Rohan Stevens. Brigade life members were Michael Maher and Terry Major, and National Medals were awarded to Michael Cawthan, Phil Creek, Matthew Pollard and James Tonkin. Then there were the service awards. While I cannot go through all of them, at the very least I want to acknowledge the 55-year medal and CFA life membership awarded to Chris Bahen AFSM and the 40-year service medal awarded to Frank Ciechomski.

Maribyrnong Park Football Club

Danny PEARSON (Essendon) (10:03): A big shout-out to the mighty Marby Army, in particular the Maribyrnong Park under-12s for their stunning premiership win against Dallas. Maribyrnong Park 7, 3, 45 defeated Dallas 4, 1, 25. This team has had a wonderful season under coach Glen Agresta, assistant coaches Matt Kent, Mel Santonoceto and Rocket, as well as team manager Josephine Agresta. To the boys Louie, 1; Brooklyn, 2; Jude, 3; Michael, 4; Jordan, 5; Nate, 6; Sammy, 7; Ebben, 8; Adrian, 9; Julian, 10; Jacob, 11; Will, 13; Jed, 14; Finn, 22; Jack, 23; Noah, 25; Levi, 31; Isaac, 32; Xavier, 35; Juddy, 37; Gus, 38; Braxton, 41; Omar, 44; and Thomas, 49, congratulations on your fantastic season.

The team was the only junior boys team to deliver a flag for the Marby Army this season, which was an absolutely incredible achievement. Thanks to Jose for all her work in making sure every game in the season went off without a hitch. And to Glen, Matt, Mel and Rocket: thank you so very much for what you have taught the boys this year. You have taught the boys to play the game with dignity, with respect and with so much integrity. Thank you so very much for everything you have done, the training sessions and the games themselves. What these boys have learned is immeasurable. Go Marby!

Glen Waverley electorate sports facilities

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (10:05): It was a great pleasure to attend the official opening of the new Vermont reserve pavilion, an outstanding home for local sport and the wider Vermont community. I acknowledge the Vermont Eagles football and netball club president Danny Ross, Vermont Cricket Club president Trent Touhy and Vermont Sports Club president Don Parsons and the committees, together with many volunteers whose hard work keeps these proud clubs thriving. I also acknowledge Whitehorse City Council for delivering this important project. The new pavilion reflects the Victorian government's fair access policy, helping to ensure women and girls and people of all backgrounds and abilities have equal access to high-quality, welcoming and inclusive sporting facilities. The $750,000 Victorian government investment has helped upgrade the oval, install new LED lighting and complete this magnificent new pavilion.

On another matter, I was also delighted to attend the official opening of the new Brandon Park Reserve pavilion and upgraded car park. This is another fantastic investment in community sport, with a $500,000 contribution from the Victorian government providing modern facilities for the Mazenod Football – that is soccer – Club and the Mulgrave Wheelers Hill Cricket Club. I also acknowledge everyone from both clubs who helped make this project possible. I would like to thank the committees, the volunteers, president Dilan Liyanage from the Mulgrave Wheelers Hill Cricket Club and also acknowledge the City of Monash and mayor Stuart James for their partnership and commitment in this project. Both projects demonstrate what can be achieved when governments, councils and community clubs work together and when the Victorian government's fair access policy is put into practice.

Felicitations

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (10:06): Like the member for Murray Plains, as my time in Parliament is coming to an end I want to acknowledge the many people who work behind the scenes to keep this place running. To the clerks, the table office, members services, the committee secretariats and the parliamentary library, thank you for your professionalism, patience and support. I particularly acknowledge the secretariat of the 59th Parliament's Integrity and Oversight Committee, which I was privileged to chair. To the catering and hospitality teams in the members dining room and Sessions, I hope the bar staff will miss me because I will certainly miss them.

I also thank our PSOs and security staff, the visitor and tours teams, the events and audiovisual crews and the cleaning, maintenance, gardening and other back-of-house staff. You make this precinct welcoming, safe and functional for members, staff and every Victorian who visits here. To Hansard

and the broadcast team, thank you for capturing every word and nuance and for taking such care with the spelling of names and places even when Melton has presented the occasional challenge.

I want to thank the Speaker especially for her guidance of this at times chaotic chamber; she has such a job and manages it well. Thanks as well to the Deputy Speaker, and all acting speakers for keeping this chamber running. I thank Tom Bennett, the adviser to the Speaker, and acknowledge those who perform these same vital roles in the other place. During my time as Cabinet Secretary to Premiers Andrews and Allan I was supported by many dedicated drivers, and I thank them sincerely. No names, but we did have some fun on the way through. Without all the contributions of these people, this Parliament would not function.

Robert 'Bob' Cross

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (10:08): I would like to begin by acknowledging the sad passing of Robert 'Bob' Cross, who played a very significant role in the Darebin community through his leadership of Preston RSL and its successor the Darebin RSL. Bob joined what was then Preston RSL in 1975 as a service member following his own service and then took on leadership roles for almost half a century, guiding the club through a number of significant challenges, including the mergers that led to the Darebin RSL that we know today. He made a huge personal contribution to the support of our local veterans, service members, affiliate members and the broader community. Our thoughts are with his wife Shirley, his family and everyone across the Darebin community who will miss his presence and leadership.

Refugees and asylum seekers

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (10:08): On a different note, I would like to encourage anyone who has not seen it to catch the wonderful *Australian Story* episode about Naima Ali Farah and her son Feisal, refugees who came from Somalia to Preston and received support through local residents Nicole Schlesinger, her son Louie Cina and their friends Karen Silberberg, Lyn Benson, Danielle Clayman, Jennifer Balint and Dave Clark. Part of that story is a wonderful story about the way that people of different faiths, of Jewish and Muslim faiths, came together, but it is also very much about the community refugee integration and settlement program, and it is certainly a program we would encourage people to look at. We thank federal minister Andrew Giles for his leadership in setting up that particular program that has helped Naima, Feisal and many others in our local community.

Felicitations

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (10:09): Finally, I would like to thank the member for Melton and the member for Murray Plains for their contributions to this place.

Hastings electorate bus services

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (10:09): I thought I would jump up very quickly to thank my community for the support that they have shown me of late in catching the route 886 bus, which I got up and running in July. I am very happy to say that people have stopped me in the street to thank me for getting that done as they appreciate it. But even more so, they are getting over to Mornington, and people in Mornington are getting over to Hastings, and spending money in the community, supporting businesses in the community. I wish to say thank you for that.

Statements on parliamentary committee reports

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Report on the 2025–26 Budget Estimates

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (10:10): I rise to speak on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee report on the 2025–26 budget estimates, chapter 6 specifically. In subsection 1 I draw the house's attention to the Department of Transport and Planning's capital spend budget. On this subsection I want to raise, as I have many times in this place, the funding that has been secured from

the federal government for the dangerous intersection of Tortice Drive and Ringwood-Warrandyte Road in North Ringwood. This is an intersection that local families have raised with me ad nauseam. They have raised it with me time and again. Local families have told me that as they travel through it every single day they simply do not feel safe using it. One local mum recently told me that after 7:45 in the morning, because it is so congested there and so unsafe, instead of taking her kids directly to school she has to make a detour in order to get her children to school. It is that dangerous. When parents are changing their daily routines because they are frightened to use an intersection on a suburban road, the government needs to listen. There was a crash at this intersection only a few weeks ago. It is the access route to get to the Maroondah Toy Library, which I frequent with my toddler. It is also where the local dog park is. It is where the local men's shed is. It us where the local community hub is and where the community house is. It is a thoroughfare for people to gain access to those important community assets, yet there is such danger at this intersection.

It was a former coalition government that secured $4.7 million to fix the Warrandyte Road and Tortice Drive intersection, with VicRoads identifying traffic lights as the preferred solution. Regrettably, the federal Labor government then decided to pull this funding despite having put traffic lights at the other end of Tortice Drive. The funding was secured, the solution was identified, and the community is well and truly ready for action as it has been, as I said, raised endlessly with me. My job as the local MP is to fight for our community, to stand up for the people of Ringwood North, Park Orchards, Warrandyte and surrounds that use this intersection and these roads. Therefore I call on the government to fix this intersection – protect the funding, work with the federal government and get on with fixing this dangerous intersection. The community should not have to wait for another crash before they act. I will keep fighting until Tortice Drive is fixed.

Continuing on with chapter 6, subsection 1, regarding the Department of Transport and Planning capital spend budget specifically, I want to mention the government's $1.2 billion road blitz in this chapter. Again I want to raise an issue that I have raised time and again endlessly in the house. I think this is the 19th time that I have raised the Five Ways intersection in Warrandyte South. Locally it is the Ringwood-Warrandyte Road, Croydon Road, Husseys Lane and Brumbys Road intersection – or as locals will know, it is the intersection outside Shell. That is the one I refer to.

It is three years today since I was elected, so I am celebrating three years in office today. In my very first speech to Parliament, my maiden speech, I raised fixing the Five Ways intersection. Ever since I have been a vocal local advocate for this amongst many other vocal advocates, whether it be the *Warrandyte Diary*, the *Manningham & Nillumbik Bulletin* or other local advocates or the CFA brigades and others who have called for the fixing of this intersection. In addition to that, I have submitted more than 43 separate questions on notice. I have campaigned and advocated to all levels of government for action and was very proud to see secured $25 million of both state and federal funding for this crucial, crucial project in my electorate. I was really heartened to see when I picked up the budget papers that year that $25 million secured in the budget papers, funding that I have fought for since my very first day standing in this chamber. Despite the community support for this project, we have had no update on its construction since the close of the community feedback survey the government conducted late last year. The funding has been secured for over a year, yet our community is still waiting. I ask the minister directly: when will construction begin? The funding is there. The community support is overwhelming. The safety need is undeniable. What is the hold-up? I will keep fighting day in, day out until we see this problem fixed.

Legal and Social Issues Committee

Inquiry into the Recruitment Methods and Impacts of Cults and Organised Fringe Groups

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (10:15): I am pleased to rise to contribute on the Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee inquiry into the recruitment methods and impacts of

cults and organised fringe groups report *Crossing the Line: Coercion and Harm in High Control Groups*. I quote from submission 205:

> They taught us what to say if the authorities ever came. Over and over, we rehearsed what to say, how to smile, how to protect our abusers. Safety wasn't just absent, it was inverted. The people who hurt us claimed they were saving us. The people who could help us were framed as the enemy!

This is just one of the lived experiences quoted in the report. I want to acknowledge the bravery and strength of survivors who shared their experiences in high-control groups through submissions, surveys and public hearings.

I want to put on record that the referral of this inquiry came about because a group of people with lived experience recognised the need for significant change to protect, support and assist people who wanted to leave or who had already left a high-control group. They wanted the harm to stop. This was led by Ryan and Catherine Carey, with support from journalist Richard Baker and others. That group should be very proud. Their advocacy mattered. The lived experience which they shared provided the platform needed to create a pathway for change. Their courage to step up and share their lived experience with the Attorney-General created this world-leading inquiry. Throughout the inquiry the committee heard from many more people with lived experience. The strong level of engagement proved how significant this inquiry was.

I want to acknowledge the incredible work undertaken by the Legal and Social Issues Committee secretariat, headed up by Jess and her team. I also thank and acknowledge the commitment and significant work undertaken by the committee. I am extremely proud of the work we have done, led by the chair, the member for Lara; the deputy chair, the member for Euroa; the member for Werribee; the member for Eildon; the member for Clarinda; the member for Bayswater and the member for Prahran.

The committee received 291 submissions and 317 responses to the online questionnaire, held eight days of hearings and met with a number of key stakeholders. The contributions from so many people with lived experience of coercive high-control groups gave the committee the essential insights into how these groups operate, how harms develop and where current systems fail to respond effectively. Submission 258 states:

> I am 31, but I have missed some developmental milestones in terms of learning to set appropriate boundaries, learning how to express myself and how to even determine what I want … I don't really know how to make friends in "the world" as it is something that I have practiced not doing my whole life.

I do not have time to cover all of the 39 recommendations in this report. However, I want to focus on recommendations 1, 2 and 3, which play a critical role in the implementation of all of the recommendations. Recommendation 1 is that:

> The Victorian Government establish a formal lived experience advisory body, including professional expertise, to co-design, inform and evaluate legislative, policy and service reforms addressing the impacts of coercive high-control groups, including for the purposes of progressing the implementation of the recommendations in this Report.

Of course lived experience in this report matters. Recommendation 2 is that:

> The Victorian Government ask the Victorian Law Reform Commission to review legislative options to criminalise group-based coercion, with the Commission to report by July 2028 to support the introduction of legislation by February 2029.

This recommendation outlines the details of the referral. It has been an absolute privilege to be a member of the Legal and Social Issues Committee undertaking this inquiry. I am not going to have time to continue on many of the recommendations, but I do want to again say what a privilege it was to work with those people with lived experience, to work with such an incredible secretariat and of course to work with members of the committee, who were so committed to this inquiry. It has been such an experience and probably one of the most challenging that I have been involved with in all the

years that I have been involved in committee work, to have those brave people sit in front of us and tell their story. I commend this report to the house.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Report on the 2023–24 Budget Estimates

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (10:20): I want to make a contribution today on a couple of different elements of the PAEC report on the 2023–24 budget estimates. The first area I want to cover off on is page 195 and the reference to roadside weeds and pests. We do not think it has been so bad in East Gippsland as what we see now. When you drive our roads in East Gippsland we have blackberries just out of control, there is African lovegrass everywhere harbouring pests and feral species and there are rabbits everywhere and foxes, and talking to the member for Mildura on the other side of the state – you could not get any further away from East Gippsland – it is no different up there as well. The roadsides are just out of control.

There are a couple of issues that I would like to raise on that. The first one is: how have we got ourselves into such a ridiculous scenario that when we have a road reserve full of blackberries, African lovegrass and pest plant and animal species and we want to widen the road, we have got to pay millions of dollars in offsets on a road reserve? That prevents those roads from being developed for community safety. And then we have a scenario in summertime when they are unmaintained and they create fire wicks. We saw that in the 2019–20 fires in areas up around Buchan and Gelantipy where the overgrown roadsides acted as wicks, which assisted the spread of the fire. There was no grass in the paddocks because we were at the end of a drought, but the fire travelled from one area of vegetation to another along the unmaintained roadsides, so the government needs to do more in that space. When you contact VicRoads they say, 'We only do a metre behind the white post, and then it's not us,' and then you contact the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and they say, 'Oh, we don't really have the resources to maintain it.' It is just not good enough.

I want to make reference also to page 145, and it is relative – it is fire management practices. Here we just have not had the required levels of burning done in our rural and regional areas that we need to have done to provide a level of community safety. We had a royal commission, nonetheless, that said, 'You've got to do 5 per cent annual burning.' This government came in and threw out the findings of the royal commission – 'That's a bit hard; that's a bit costly. We'll have our own inquiry that recommends a lot less.' With the greatest of respect to the inspector-general for emergency management, I think I will go with the royal commission that had the pre-eminent bushfire experts in the world. We are getting nowhere near our 5 per cent, and what it does is it makes our communities vulnerable. We will have another horrible fire season, if not this year coming then in the coming years, and those on the other side will be shocked. They will be outraged when we have another situation like the 400 homes in my area that we lost. They will say, 'This was a disaster. This was global warming – this was that.' If we do not maintain reduction of fuel loads, we are going to have a megafire. There is no other outcome. We have not learned the lessons of 2019–20, and we need to. So for goodness sake, let us not blame global warming, let us not be surprised, let us not be shocked. If you do not do the fuel reduction burning to keep communities safe, then you are going to have a situation like this. Fuel loads equal a megafire. They must be controlled.

Before I finish I want to touch on page 97 and finding 56, and it says this:

> The 2023–24 Budget allocates $2.3 billion in output and asset funding over ten years –

10 years –

> to the *Road maintenance and renewal* initiative.

It is clearly nowhere near enough. It goes on to say:

> It is unclear what proportion of funding for the initiative is allocated to roadworks in inner metropolitan Melbourne, outer suburban Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Who on earth would think that that amount is going to meet the needs of maintaining our roads in Victoria? And here we are, with the advent of time, seeing the outcome of that. Our roads have never been worse, hence the commitment to spend $5 billion over the next four years from those on this side of the house. That is what is required. Not only do we have to catch up, but we also have to maintain. We have allowed our roads in this state to get into a deplorable state through lack of input, lack of funding and lack of attention, and it needs to be fixed.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Report on the 2026–27 Budget Estimates

Danny PEARSON (Essendon) (10:25): What a joy it is to be able to break the spine of a new PAEC report. I have got to say this is riveting reading, and I would say to anyone who is a candidate in the upcoming election and finds themselves in this place: if you get the chance, come on, do yourselves a favour and get on PAEC. It is just a ride. It is so much fun. But I have got to say life is about progression and advancement, and I have got to congratulate the member for Laverton. She has done an excellent job as chair – far better than me. I refer the house's attention to, for example, page 101 of this report. One of the great challenges, I think, when you are a member of the legislative branch as opposed to the executive branch is tracking and mapping machinery of government changes. What the member for Laverton has done –

Steve Dimopoulos: You were the best chair of PAEC.

Danny PEARSON: I yield to the minister at the table. And I yield to the member for Laverton when it comes to looking at the way in which a departmental structure is broken down. If you look at the way in which she has got total output funding, funding by output, there is a discussion about the capital program and then it talks about the output initiatives. Why is this important? This harks back to Jan Tschichold, who was the doyen of typographical modernism. Not only did Jan create the modern typeface Sabon – and, like me, he would have loathed Times New Roman – but he was an artist and he was trained in calligraphy. If you think about it, you pick up some of the older books, some of those antiquarian books, and they are not particularly aesthetically pleasing. They are somewhat musty. They do embrace Times New Roman –

John Mullahy interjected.

Danny PEARSON: I just think from the point of view of educating members of the legislative branch of the importance of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's work, the fact that the lessons of Jan Tschichold have been brought to bear so eloquently by the member for Laverton in relation to the way in which the budget is dissected and used to educate our members is an outstanding contribution by the current PAEC team and a vast improvement on the endeavours of the 57th Parliament, of which I was a member.

Page 36 talks about the Silver review. I do want to place on the record my heartfelt thanks to Helen Silver. Helen is an outstanding public servant. She was given the task of trying to work out what is the right and appropriate way in which you structure the public service. How do you try to make sure that you rightsize the public service and ensure that you have got the ability for the public service to be fit and equipped for modern times, particularly in a time post COVID, because as members would recall, we had a significant increase in relation to the size of the public service? Partly that was health related, and partly that was to try and be a bit of a shock absorber for the state's economy when we were dealing with the greatest economic hit to the state's economy since the Great Depression. What Helen has done is provide a pathway forward on how you try to rightsize the public service. I think that the quality of her work will be shown in future budgets and will be demonstrated by how we more efficiently and how we more effectively look at structuring the public service.

I also want to acknowledge that page 107 talks about the fact that the government released the AI mission statement in January 2026, something that I drafted and wrote in a very analogue way. I was

in a car on a 3-hour car trip, and I used my laptop to write out on a piece of paper that action plan. It is something I worked on very closely for a number of months before it was released. The reality is that I think that what the mission statement will do is find ways in which we can use AI to play to our competitive strengths. We are very good when it comes to food and fibre, med tech and pharmaceuticals and indeed transnational education, and the way in which we can embrace AI in a thoughtful and considered way to play to our competitive advantages I think will play a really important role in underpinning the prosperity of this state in the decades to come.

Again, as always, I have an abiding affection for the work of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I do want to thank the committee for the way in which it has gone about helpfully demonstrating to members of the Parliament the way in which you can eloquently and appropriately dissect what can be quite heavy and dense reading. Finally, I have got to say: budget paper 5 – do yourselves a favour and get on it. It is a ripper.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

The Independent Performance Audits of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and Integrity Oversight Victoria

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (10:30): I rise to speak on the report into the independent performance audits of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and Integrity Oversight Victoria. These audits provide an important, independent assessment of whether, during the relevant two-year period, IBAC and IOV achieved their objectives effectively, economically, efficiently and in accordance with their governing legislation. But it is hard for our integrity agencies to do their job when the government refuses to give them the resources that they need. As the Ombudsman, IBAC Commissioner and Auditor-General wrote in a joint paper in February this year:

> … ensuring integrity agencies are transparently and … appropriately funded is essential to maintaining public confidence in the system.

The Labor government is failing to do that. Since 2019 Victoria's investment in integrity functions has fallen below Transparency International's recommended minimum of 0.5 per cent of total government sector expenditure. Not only does the government need to fund our integrity agencies more, but it also needs to make sure that this funding is actually independent. The bodies that investigate public sector corruption should not have their funding decided by the very politicians they are trying to hold to account. Victorians deserve to know that these agencies are funded on the basis of what they need to do their work and not on what the government they are investigating is prepared to give them.

The Greens have had some major integrity wins just this term in Parliament, and I commend my colleague Tim Read on his role as the chair of the Integrity and Oversight Committee that presented this report and on all of his work to hold the government to account on integrity. The Greens have got ministerial diaries published to allow Victorians to see who is influencing government and how they are doing it. We have pushed the government to commit to follow-the-money powers for IBAC so IBAC can track how taxpayer money flows through subcontractors and labour hire firms on major government projects. Now, I know it is a sore point for Labor ministers and MPs when the Greens, from our seats back here, actually get major wins in Parliament. You can tell it is an election year when Labor start to pull the ideas that the Greens have put on the table and start to enact them because they are desperate to get those votes, and that means picking up Greens ideas and running with them. The problem is they only ever do them half-arsed and they do not actually follow through, because all they want is to get your votes and just go back to business as usual.

Recently the Greens have also secured a commitment from the government to expand its definition of 'corrupt conduct', which is something the Greens have been pushing for for years and years so that IBAC can actually investigate grey corruption. This is absolutely essential, because what is the point of follow-the-money powers if you can see where the money has gone but you actually have no power

to investigate conduct that would make Victorians lose faith in government because that threshold is far too high. With these expanded powers, funding for integrity agencies is more critical than ever. If the government are going to brag about giving new powers to IBAC, they also need to give the funding that IBAC needs to actually use these powers.

The Greens also secured in legislation that the parliamentary Integrity and Oversight Committee has a non-government chair and a non-government majority so that it can effectively scrutinise and hold the government of the day to account. When it comes to scandal and corruption, governments should not be able to investigate themselves, and this change made an important step in fixing this hole in Victoria's integrity and oversight system. But there are still major integrity reforms that we desperately need. Labor, Liberals and One Nation still take millions in donations from big corporations, including fossil fuel companies, the gambling lobby and property developers. While they are busy getting their election campaigns funded by vested interests, they are leaving their communities behind.

We cannot have real integrity in this state without getting rid of the undue influence that corporate donors have on Labor, the Liberals and One Nation. We need a complete ban on political donations from property developers, from gambling companies, from fossil fuel companies and from weapons and other industries with significant financial interests before government. Other states have already banned donations from property developers, but the Victorian Labor government has refused to do so. This new Premier has claimed that integrity is non-negotiable. If that is the case, at the very least he should follow New South Wales and the ACT by banning political donations from property developers and gambling corporations before the election.

Economy and Infrastructure Committee

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

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (10:35): I rise to make a contribution on the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee's report on the inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users. I want to talk to recommendation 6, that the flexibility of speed-zoning guidelines be reviewed with the aim of decreasing suburban rat-running and reducing speeds around schools and arterial roads within and around activity centres.

Further to my constituency question of 30 October 2024 and my community's ongoing advocacy, I am very pleased to have recently received confirmation from the Minister for Roads and Road Safety that the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) has now finalised its detailed development and planning work for new, safer speeds along Melville Road through Brunswick West, Coburg West and Pascoe Vale South. The speed limit on Melville Road will be reduced from 60 kilometres down to 50 kilometres from Bell Street to the north down to Dawson Street to the south. Accompanying this speed change will be the introduction of a new, and the first, 40-kilometre school speed zone on Melville Road, between McGregor Avenue and Mattingly Crescent to the north, around where the Campbell Turnbull Library is, and Dawson Street and Fitzgibbon Avenue to the south, just after that really sharp bend. This is a crucial step towards improving road safety for families attending St Joseph's primary school on the corner of Hope Street and Brunswick North West Primary School, who have been advocating strongly for these changes and who I have been supporting.

These safer speeds will also be welcome for many others along the corridor, including St Fidelis primary school, Coburg West Primary School, West Coburg football–cricket club at Shore Reserve, Pascoe Vale South Primary School, Doris Blackburn kinder, Strathmore Secondary College and many, many others, including the traders along the corridor such as Miinot Gelato. Implementation of the safer speed zones changes are expected to be completed by DTP from early 2027.

A pedestrian crossing near Dawson Street has also been developed and will be delivered by Merri-bek City Council, for which I previously secured $214,000 via the Victorian Labor government to help deliver. This is a significant win for our local community and builds on the work I have been proud to progress with my colleagues in this place through the parliamentary inquiry on road safety, which

specifically called for safer speeds and traffic-calming measures along key state arterials such as Melville Road to better protect public tram commuters, pedestrians, cyclists, families, elderly residents and many other vulnerable road users.

In this respect, further to my adjournment of 11 August, I again draw the minister's attention to the need for ongoing improvements along Bell Street through Pascoe Vale South and Coburg. In that regard, recommendation 26 is that:

> The Department of Transport and Planning review intersections commonly used by vulnerable road users and assess if treatments such as timed pedestrian protection would benefit.

Recommendation 27 is around reviewing the location of pedestrian crossings on arterial roads to ensure there are regular crossings linked to public transport stops, activity centres and schools.

Whilst we have continued to make improvements through and adjacent to the Bell Street corridor, including successfully advocating for the installation of new speed humps to calm vehicle traffic along York Street in Pascoe Vale South, following the opening of the wonderful new park on the corner of York Street and Westgate Street, far more needs to be done to make Bell Street safe, including at the Reynolds Parade–York Street intersection but particularly at the Cumberland Road intersection, where we have experienced a number of increasingly dangerous and concerning incidents. On 2 December 2024 a heavy freight vehicle carrying waste had its load catch fire. On 18 November 2024 during the morning peak, a heavy freight truck rolled on its side as it was turning out of Cumberland Road westwards, heading down towards the Bell Street–Tullamarine Freeway entrance, and it was a miracle that no-one was killed or injured.

However, the closest call arguably came, as I said, a couple of weeks ago on 21 July, when a local couple narrowly avoided serious injury or worse after a car crashed through their bedroom wall just after 6 am. Naresh and Divya would welcome DTP conducting a holistic safety review of the intersection, which should consider and make provision for a range of measures, including a review of the light sequencing and timing of the Bell Street–Cumberland Road intersection; the need for extended road safety bollards and fencing for the properties on the south side of Bell Street, including Naresh and Divya's home; and new road safety signage, lighting and calming measures for vehicles as they approach and commute through this intersection.

But it is also back further east along the corridors that I have previously raised that further action needs to be taken. On 24 July I was contacted by a local parent, John Griffiths, who shared his family's concern with me:

> I am writing to express my serious concern about the safety of a pedestrian crossing at Bell St, between Vincent and Alice St (south side), near the Coburg Aquarium.
>
> We and other families use the crossing … daily to get to school –

mainly families of Coburg North Primary School –

> … yet current conditions create significant risks for pedestrians.
>
> Drivers frequently approach the crossing at speed, run the red light even when children are waiting to cross and the man has gone green.
>
> If safety is not addressed and policing not improved at this intersection, I fear that the worst could happen. I shudder to imagine what a car travelling at 60km/h+ would do to my 7 year old.
>
> I respectfully request that the crossing be reviewed as a priority and that measures such as reduced speed limits, a red light camera or supervised crossing facilities be considered …
>
> … Where possible, please ensure that Victoria Police investigate and charge the drivers breaking the law and endangering pedestrians …

He sent me a lot of videos to demonstrate that. This report is all about making our local roads safer.

Bills

Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

Council's amendments

Message from Council relating to following amendments considered:

1. Clause 1, page 3, after line 18 insert –

   "(iii) in relation to proxy voting; and".

2. Clause 1, page 4, after line 28 insert –

   "(iv) to make technical amendments in relation to off-the-plan contracts; and".

3. Clause 1, page 6, after line 3 insert –

   "(kaa) to amend the **Building Act 1993** in relation to developer bonds; and".

4. Clause 1, before line 4 insert –

   "(kab) to amend the **Building Act 1993** in relation to prefabrication work and prefabrication builders and to make consequential amendments to the **Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026**; and".

5. Clause 1, before line 4 insert –

   "(kac) to amend the **Building Act 1993** in relation to complex plumbing work and to make consequential amendments to the **Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026**; and".

6. Clause 1, before line 4 insert –

   "(kad) to amend the **Building Act 1993** and the **Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026** in relation to minor matters; and".

7. Clause 1, page 6, line 7, omit "**1989**." and insert "**1989**; and".

8. Clause 1, page 6, after line 7 insert –

   "(la) to amend the **Domestic Building Contracts Amendment Act 2025** to delay its forced commencement date.".

9. Clause 2, line 11, omit "Parts 8, 10 and 11" and insert "Part 8, Part 10 and Part 11".

10. Clause 2, line 11, after "Part 8," insert "Division 2 of Part 9,".

11. Clause 2, line 11, before "come into operation" insert "and Division 3 of Part 12A".

12. Clause 2, line 11, before "come into operation" insert "and Division 4 of Part 12A".

13. Clause 2, line 11, before "come into operation" insert "and Division 5 of Part 12A (other than sections 178ZF and 178ZJ)".

14. Clause 2, line 11, before "come into operation" insert "and Part 12B".

15. Clause 2, line 16, omit "(5)" and insert "(5), (5A)".

16. Clause 2, line 24, omit "7" and insert "7, sections 106, 107 and 108".

17. Clause 2, line 25, after "Part 12" insert "and sections 178ZF and 178ZJ".

18. Clause 2, line 25, after "Part 12" insert "and Division 2 of Part 12A".

19. Clause 2, line 25, after "Part 12" insert "and Division 1 of Part 12A".

20. Clause 2, after line 26 insert –

   "(5A) If sections 106, 107 and 108 do not come into operation before 1 July 2027, those sections come into operation on that day.".

21. Clause 2, line 28, omit "and Part 12" and insert ", Part 12".

22. Clause 2, line 28, before "does not come" insert "or Division 1 of Part 12A".

23. Clause 2, line 28, before "does not come" insert "or Division 2 of Part 12A".

24. Clause 2, line 28, before "does not come" insert "or section 178ZF or section 178ZJ".

25. Clause 32, after line 11 insert –

'(1A) For section 18(2) of the **Owners Corporations Act 2006 substitute** –

"(2) If a matter may be resolved by an order of a court or tribunal for payment of an amount or relief that is no more than twice the total amount of the current annual fees set by an owners corporation under section 23, and the owners corporation is authorised to do so by ordinary resolution, the owners corporation may commence any proceeding in a court or tribunal that has jurisdiction to make an order of that nature.".'.

26. Clause 32, line 19, omit "any of the following courts or" and insert 'a court or tribunal that has jurisdiction to make an order of that nature.".'.

27. Clause 32, lines 20 to 30, omit all words and expressions on these lines.

28. Insert the following New Clause to follow clause 43 –

'**43A Restriction on number of lot owners on behalf of whom a proxy may vote on a resolution**

For section 89D(1) of the **Owners Corporations Act 2006 substitute** –

"(1) A person must not vote as a proxy on a resolution at a meeting of the owners corporation on behalf of more than one lot owner.".'.

29. Clause 61, page 74, lines 3 and 4, omit all words and expressions on those lines.

30. Clause 61, page 74, line 12, omit all words and expressions on that line.

31. Clause 62, page 75, after line 15 insert –

'"(5A) A rent increase in contravention of this section is invalid.'.

32. Clause 62, page 75, line 16 omit '"(6)' and insert "(6)".

33. Clause 63, page 76, lines 8 to 12, omit all words and expressions on those lines.

34. Clause 63, page 76, after line 30 insert –

"(ab) state that the site owner intends to apply to the Tribunal at least 14 days after the day on which the notice is given for an order requiring payment of the special rent increase specified in the notice by the site tenants given the notice; and".

35. Clause 63, page 77, lines 13 to 31, page 78, lines 1 to 32 and page 79, lines 1 to 22, omit all words and expressions on those lines.

36. Clause 63, page 79, lines 28 to 30, omit "notice if, within the proposal period, there is a circumstance specified in subsection (2)." and insert "notice.".

37. Clause 63, page 80, lines 1 to 15, omit all words and expressions on those lines and insert –

"(2) An application under subsection (1) must not be made until at least 14 days after the proposal notice is given to each site tenant proposed to be subject to the special rent increase in accordance with section 206SD.".

38. Clause 63, page 80, line 32, omit "(1)" and insert "(1)(a)".

39. Clause 63, page 80, after line 34 insert –

"(2A) An order under subsection (1)(a) may be subject to one or more of the following conditions specified in the order –

(a) payment of the amount of special rent increase is for a period specified in the order;

(b) a site tenant is required to pay a reduced amount of rent specified in the order beginning on the day after the period of special rent increase.".

40. Clause 63, page 81, line 1, omit "(1)" and insert "(1)(a)".

41. Clause 63, page 81, after line 24 insert –

"(ca) any reason for a reduced amount of rent to be payable by a site tenant after a period of special rent increase, including the completion of a repair or improvement to a facility or service available within the Part 4A park; and".

42. Clause 65, page 83, line 32, omit 'corporate.".' and insert "corporate.".

43. Clause 65, page 83, after line 32 insert –

'(3) A site owner must not require a site tenant to pay a deferred management charge that is more than the lesser of the following amounts –

(a) 20% of the purchase price paid by the site tenant for the Part 4A dwelling on the Part 4A site under the site agreement;

(b) a prescribed percentage (if any) of the purchase price paid by the site tenant for that Part 4A dwelling.

Penalty: 60 penalty units for a natural person;

300 penalty units for a body corporate.".'.

44. Insert the following New Clause to follow clause 65 –

'**65A Section 206ZV amended**

(1) In the heading to section 206ZV of the **Residential Tenancies Act 1997**, after "**clean**" **insert** "**, safe and in good repair**".

(2) In section 206ZV(1) of the **Residential Tenancies Act 1997**, for "clean and in a safe condition." **substitute** –

"in a condition that meets each of the following standards –

(a) clean;

(b) safe;

(c) in good repair.".'.

45. Clause 73, line 17, omit "206SB" and insert '206SB";'.

46. Clause 73, line 18, omit –

'78B Section 206SF";'.

47. Clause 73, line 21, omit '206ZCA(2)";' and insert "206ZCA(2)".

48. Clause 73, after line 21 insert –

'85C Section 206ACA(3)";'.

49. Clause 74, line 21, omit "206SE, 206SF, 206SG,".

50. Clause 105, line 3, omit all words and expressions on this line and insert –

"**Division 1 – Contracts for sale of land**

105 Definitions".

51. Clause 107, line 20, omit "**commission**" and insert "**amounts from deposit**".

52. Clause 107, line 22, before "If" insert "(1)".

53. Clause 107, line 24, omit "under" and insert "in accordance with".

54. Clause 107, line 31, omit 'entitled.".' and insert "entitled.".

55. Clause 107, after line 31 insert –

'(2) Subsection (1) does not prevent an estate agent from receiving an amount of money from the vendor for any of the following before settlement or rescission of the contract –

(a) the commission;

(b) any auction expense or other amount to which the estate agent is or will become entitled.".'.

56. Clause 109, lines 19 to 24, omit all words and expressions on those lines and insert –

'(a) if the land is publicly advertised for sale other than by auction or a fixed-date sale – the day that is 14 days after the land is first publicly advertised for sale; or

(b) if the land is publicly advertised for sale by auction or a fixed-date sale – the day that is 14 days before the first auction date or first fixed date; or

(c) if the land –

(i) is not publicly advertised for sale – before the purchaser signs the contract for the sale of land; or

(ii) is to be sold –

(A) within 14 days after the land is first publicly advertised for sale – before the purchaser signs the contract for the sale of land; or

(B) on a day that is more than 14 days before a first auction date or a first fixed date – before the purchaser signs the contract for the sale of land;".'.

57. Clause 113, line 7, after "amended by" insert "Division 1 of".

58. Clause 113, line 19, after "on which" insert "Division 1 of".

59. Insert the following new Division to follow clause 113 –

'**Division 2 – Off-the-plan contracts and developer bonds**

113A Rescission of off-the-plan contract – residential apartment buildings

After section 9AEA(2) of the **Sale of Land Act 1962 insert** –

"(3) Subsection (1) does not apply to a purchaser if the developer of the residential apartment building is excepted from the requirement under section 137ZP(1) of the **Building Act 1993** to arrange for the issue or execution of a developer bond.".'.

60. Insert the following new Part heading to follow clause 178 –

"**Part 12A – Amendment of Building Act 1993**".

61. Insert the following new Division before Part 13 –

'**Division 1 – Prefabrication work**

178A Purposes

After section 1(e) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(ea) to regulate prefabrication work; and".

178B Definitions

(1) In section 3(1) of the **Building Act 1993**, in the definition of ***building practitioner*** –

(a) in paragraph (f), after "builder" (where second occurring) **insert** "(other than a prefabrication builder)";

(b) after paragraph (f) **insert** –

"(fa) a prefabrication builder; or".

(2) In section 3(4) of the **Building Act 1993**, for "building work or plumbing work" (where twice occurring) **substitute** "building work, plumbing work or prefabrication work".

178C New section 3AA inserted

After section 3 of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"**3AA Use of prefabricated building systems**

In this Act, unless the contrary intention appears –

(a) a reference to the construction of a building includes a reference to the use of a prefabricated building system (within the meaning of Part 2A) in the construction of the building; and

(b) a reference to a building product or a building material (however described) includes a reference to a prefabricated building system (within the meaning of Part 2A).".

178D Building regulations

(1) After section 7(1)(a) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(ab) prefabrication work;".

(2) In section 7(2)(b) of the **Building Act 1993**, for "(b) or (c)" **substitute** "(ab), (b) or (c)".

178E Accreditation of building products

After section 14(5) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(6) Part 2A does not apply in respect of a building product accredited under this section.".

178F Building surveyor must not refuse to approve building work on certain grounds

At the end of section 15 of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(2) Part 2A does not apply in respect of a building system, construction method, design, component or system of a kind referred to in this section.".

178G New Part 2A inserted

After Part 2 of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"**Part 2A – Prefabrication work**

15C Definitions

In this Part –

building component means a thing that –

(a) when used in the construction of a building is, or forms part of, a building element; and

(b) when used in the construction of a building cannot be inspected without –

(i) opening the component and causing damage to it in the process; or

Example

Cutting a wall lining to expose the wall frame.

(ii) carrying out testing that is likely to destroy the component or part of the component;

building element, in relation to a building, means –

(a) an internal or external load-bearing component that is essential to the stability of the building or a part of the building; or

(b) the building enclosure, being any part of the building that separates its interior from the external environment; or

(c) waterproofing; or

(d) a fire safety system within the meaning of the National Construction Code; or

(e) any aspect of the following required for compliance with the National Construction Code –

(i) mechanical services; or

(ii) plumbing services; or

(iii) electrical services; or

(iv) vertical transportation; or

(f) a prescribed building element or a building element belonging to a prescribed class of building element;

module means a three-dimensional structure that, when used in the construction of a building, includes at least one building component;

prefabricated building system means –

(a) a module; or

(b) a building component;

prefabrication work means –

(a) making or manufacturing (by use of any method) a prefabricated building system on land that is not the land on which the system will be used in the construction of a building; or

(b) assembling 2 or more prefabricated building systems on land that is not the land on which the systems will be used in the construction of a building.

15D Offences relating to prefabrication work

(1) A person must not make, manufacture or assemble a prescribed prefabricated building system or prefabricated building system belonging to a prescribed class of prefabricated building system for use in the construction of a building if that use will not comply with –

(a) this Act and the building regulations; and

(b) the plumbing laws; and

(c) any binding determination that applies to the prefabrication work; and

(d) the **Electricity Safety Act 1998**, the regulations made under that Act and any Order made under section 4 of that Act.

Penalty: 500 penalty units, in the case of a natural person;

2500 penalty units, in the case of a body corporate.

Note

Section 314 of the **Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026** applies in respect of an offence against this subsection.

(2) A person must not make or manufacture (by use of a prescribed method) a prefabricated building system for use in the construction of a building if that use will not comply with –

(a) this Act and the building regulations; and

(b) the plumbing laws; and

(c) any binding determination that applies to the prefabrication work; and

(d) the **Electricity Safety Act 1998**, the regulations made under that Act and any Order made under section 4 of that Act.

Penalty: 500 penalty units, in the case of a natural person;

2500 penalty units, in the case of a body corporate.

Note

Section 314 of the **Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026** applies in respect of an offence against this subsection.

(3) A person must not carry out prescribed prefabrication work or prefabrication work belonging to a prescribed class of prefabrication work –

(a) if electrical installation work within the meaning of the **Electricity Safety Act 1998** is carried out in conjunction with the prefabrication work – if the electrical installation work does not comply with the **Electricity Safety Act 1998**, the regulations made under that Act and any Order made under section 4 of that Act; and

(b) if plumbing work within the meaning of Part 12A is carried out in conjunction with the prefabrication work – if the plumbing work does not comply with Part 12A and the plumbing laws.

Penalty: 500 penalty units, in the case of a natural person;

2500 penalty units, in the case of a body corporate.

Note

Section 314 of the **Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026** applies in respect of an offence against this subsection.

(4) Subsections (1), (2) and (3) are civil penalty provisions for the purposes of Part 6.7 of the **Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026**.

(5) For the purposes of subsections (1) and (2), use of a prescribed prefabricated building system or a prefabricated building system in the construction of a building means use of the system in accordance with any instructions provided by the person who made, manufactured or assembled it.

Note

See also section 169D(1).

15E Offence relating to prefabricated building systems

(1) A registered prefabrication builder must not supply a specified prefabricated building system, for use in the construction of a building, if the specified prefabricated building system is not accompanied by –

(a) written information about –

(i) the use for which the system is intended; and

(ii) any limitation on that use or condition to which that use is subject; and

(iii) any prescribed matters; and

(b) written certification from the registered prefabrication builder that, having regard to the matters referred to in paragraph (a), the system (when used in the construction of a building) complies with the building regulations; and

(c) if the specified prefabricated building system includes electrical work in respect of which the **Electricity Safety Act 1998** requires the issue of a certificate of compliance – the certificate of compliance in respect of the electrical installation work; and

(d) if the specified prefabricated building system includes plumbing work in respect of which Part 12A requires the issue of a compliance certificate – the compliance certificate in respect of the work; and

(e) written instructions for the safe transport and handling of the system; and

(f) written instructions for the use of the system.

Penalty: 120 penalty units, in the case of a natural person;

600 penalty units, in the case of a body corporate.

Note

Section 314 of the **Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026** applies in respect of an offence against this subsection.

(2) Subsection (1) is a civil penalty provision for the purposes of Part 6.7 of the **Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026**.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (1), use of a specified prefabricated building system means use of the system in accordance with any instructions provided by the registered prefabrication builder who made, manufactured or assembled it.

(4) In this section –

specified prefabricated building system means –

(a) a prescribed prefabricated building system or prefabricated building system belonging to a prescribed class of prefabricated building system; or

(b) a prefabricated building system that is made or manufactured by use of a prescribed method.".

178H Refusal of building permit

(1) After section 24(1) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(1A) The relevant building surveyor must not issue a building permit for the carrying out of building work that includes the use of an affected prefabricated building system unless the relevant building surveyor is satisfied that the application includes information sufficient to demonstrate that the person that is named as the builder in the building permit will be provided with the following documents by the following persons, in respect of the affected prefabricated building system –

(a) the documents referred to in section 15E(1)(a) to (f) – by the registered prefabrication builder; and

(b) any prescribed document – by a prescribed person or a person belonging to a prescribed class of person.".

(2) After section 24(8) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(9) In this section –

affected prefabricated building system means a prefabricated building system or prefabricated building system belonging to a prescribed class of prefabricated building system that is prescribed as an affected prefabricated building system but does not include a prefabricated building system that is exempted by the regulations from the operation of subsection (1A);

prefabricated building system has the same meaning as in Part 2A.".

178I Inspection of building work – general powers

At the end of section 35 of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(2) In addition, if the building work includes the use of an affected prefabricated building system within the meaning of section 24(9), the relevant building surveyor may inspect any document referred to in section 24(1A) that relates to the affected prefabricated building system.".

178J Refusal of occupancy permit

Before section 44(1)(c) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(bb) if the building work includes the use of an affected prefabricated building system within the meaning of section 24(9), unless the relevant building surveyor has seen the documents referred to in section 24(1A) in respect of the system; and".

178K Application of Act to the Crown and public authorities

In section 217(1) of the **Building Act 1993**, after "Parts 2," **insert** "2A,".

178L Building surveyor may rely on certificate by other registered building practitioner or endorsed building engineer

(1) After section 238(1)(a) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(ab) that an affected prefabricated building system within the meaning of section 24(9) to be used in the proposed building work complies with the requirements of this Act and the building regulations; or".

(2) After section 238(2) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(2A) A municipal building surveyor or a private building surveyor, in carrying out a function under this Act or the regulations, may rely on –

(a) in the case of prefabrication work that includes electrical installation work – a certificate under section 44 of the **Electricity Safety Act 1998**; or

(b) in the case of prefabrication work that includes plumbing work – a certificate issued by a licensed plumber under Part 12A.".

(3) After section 238(3) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(4) In this section –

licensed plumber has the same meaning as in Part 12A.".

178M General regulation-making powers

(1) Before section 261(1)(b) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(ac) the issuing, production and keeping of certificates, other documents and information required by this Act, the building regulations or the plumbing regulations in relation to the carrying out of prefabrication work or the making, manufacturing or assembling of a prefabricated building system;

(ad) the keeping of records of inspections of the carrying out of prefabrication work;".

(2) After section 261(1)(c) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(ca) requiring a person or class of person (the ***first person***) to give to another person or class of person any information relating to the carrying out of prefabrication work by the first person;

(cb) requiring a person or class of person (the ***first person***) to give to another person or class of person any document or class of document setting out any information relating to a

prefabricated building system made, manufactured or assembled by the first person including –

(i) technical specifications; and

(ii) instructions for the use of the system; and

(iii) handling and transportation requirements;".

(3) After section 261(1)(ha) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(hab) without limiting paragraph (ha), specifying the kind of work that a category or class of registered prefabrication builder is authorised to carry out by that registration including by reference to –

(i) a prescribed prefabricated building system or class of prescribed prefabricated building system; or

(ii) a prefabricated building system or class of prefabricated building system that is made or manufactured by use of a prescribed method;".

178N New section 289B inserted

At the end of Part 14 of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"**289B Regulations dealing with transitional matters**

(1) The Governor in Council may make regulations containing provisions of a transitional nature, including matters of an application or savings nature, arising as a result of the enactment of this Act (including the repeals and amendments made by this Act).

(2) Regulations made under this section may –

(a) have a retrospective effect to the day on which section 178N of the **Consumer Legislation Amendment Act 2026** comes into operation; and

(b) be of limited or general application; and

(c) leave any matter or thing to be decided by a specified person or class of person; and

(d) provide for the exemption of persons or things or a class of person or thing from any of the regulations made under this section.

(3) Regulations made under this section have effect despite anything to the contrary in any Act (other than the **Consumer Legislation Amendment Act 2026** or the **Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006**) or in any subordinate instrument.

(4) This section is **repealed** on the second anniversary of the day on which it comes into operation.".

178O Schedule 1 – Building regulations

In Schedule 1 to the **Building Act 1993**, after item 31 **insert** –

"31A. The provision of certificates under any other Act.".

178P Consequential amendment of Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026

(1) Before section 260 of the **Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026 insert** –

"**259A Prefabricated building systems**

In this Part, unless the contrary intention appears –

(a) a reference to the construction of a building includes a reference to the use of a prefabricated building system (within the meaning of Part 2A of the **Building Act 1993**) in the construction of the building; and

(b) a reference to a building product or a building material (however described) includes a reference to a prefabricated building system within the meaning of Part 2A of the **Building Act 1993**.".

(2) After section 314(2)(b) of the **Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026 insert** –

"(ba) section 15D(1), (2) or (3) or 15E(1) of the **Building Act 1993**;".

(3) Before section 316(2)(a) of the **Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026 insert** –

"(aa) section 15D(1), (2) or (3) or 15E(1) of the **Building Act 1993**;".

(4) After section 356(8) of the **Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026 insert** –

"(9) In this section, a reference to a building product or a building material (however described) includes a reference to a prefabricated building system within the meaning of Part 2A of the **Building Act 1993**.".'.

62. Insert the following new Division before Part 13 –

'**Division 2 – Complex plumbing work**

178Q Definitions applying to Part 12A

In section 221B of the **Building Act 1993 insert** the following definitions –

"***complex plumbing work*** means plumbing work that is prescribed as complex plumbing work;

designer of complex plumbing means a prescribed person who prepares a design of complex plumbing work;

exempt complex plumbing work means complex plumbing work that is prescribed as exempt complex plumbing work;

start work notice (design) has the meaning given by section 221BA;".

178R New section 221BA inserted

After section 221B of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"**221BA Meaning of *start work notice (design)***

A ***start work notice (design)*** is a written notice relating to complex plumbing work that sets out the following in respect of the complex plumbing work –

(a) a description of the complex plumbing work to be carried out;

(b) the address, or description of the location, of the premises at which the complex plumbing work is to be carried out;

(c) the proposed commencement date or dates of the complex plumbing work to be carried out;

(d) the name and address of the designer of complex plumbing;

(e) the class of building in which the complex plumbing work is to be carried out;

(f) any prescribed information.".

178S New sections 221ZPB to 221ZPJ inserted

After section 221ZPA of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"**221ZPB Designer of complex plumbing must give start work notice (design) to Commission**

(1) A designer of complex plumbing must give a start work notice (design) to the Commission within the prescribed time after the designer is engaged to prepare the design of complex plumbing work to which the notice relates.

Penalty: 120 penalty units, in the case of a natural person;

600 penalty units, in the case of a body corporate.

(2) A designer of complex plumbing does not commit an offence against subsection (1) if the complex plumbing work is exempt complex plumbing work.

221ZPC Designer of complex plumbing must give start work notice (design) to person who engaged them to prepare design

(1) A designer of complex plumbing must give the person who engaged the designer to prepare a design of complex plumbing work, as soon as practicable after the designer gives the start work notice (design) for that complex plumbing work to the Commission –

(a) a copy of the start work notice (design) for that complex plumbing work; and

(b) written confirmation that the designer has given the start work notice (design) to the Commission.

(2) Subsection (1) applies despite anything to the contrary in any agreement.

(3) A designer of complex plumbing is not required to comply with subsection (1) if the complex plumbing work is exempt complex plumbing work.

221ZPD Person who has engaged designer of complex plumbing must give start work notice (design) to licensed plumber

(1) This section applies to a person who has –

(a) engaged a designer of complex plumbing to prepare a design of complex plumbing work (other than exempt complex plumbing work); and

(b) received from the designer of complex plumbing –

(i) a copy of a start work notice (design) for that plumbing work; and

(ii) a written confirmation that the designer of complex plumbing has given the start work notice (design) to the Commission.

(2) If the person engages a licensed plumber to carry out the complex plumbing work to which the start work notice (design) relates, the person must give a copy of the start work notice (design) and a copy of the written confirmation to the plumber as soon as practicable after receiving –

(a) the start work notice (design); and

(b) the written confirmation.

221ZPE Offences relating to designers and complex plumbing work designs

(1) A person must not prepare a design of complex plumbing work (other than in the circumstances specified in subsection (2)) for use in the carrying out of complex plumbing work if the person does not –

(a) hold the prescribed qualifications or have the prescribed experience that a person who prepares designs of complex plumbing work must hold or have; and

(b) meet the prescribed requirements that a person must meet in order to prepare designs of complex plumbing work.

Penalty: 500 penalty units, in the case of a natural person;

2500 penalty units, in the case of a body corporate.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), a person may prepare a design of complex plumbing work if –

(a) the regulations state that the design may be prepared by a person who does not –

(i) hold the prescribed qualifications or have the prescribed experience that a person who prepares designs of complex plumbing work must hold or have; and

(ii) meet the prescribed requirements that a person must meet in order to prepare designs of complex plumbing work; or

(b) the person does so in the circumstances specified in the regulations as the circumstances in which the design may be prepared by a person who does not –

(i) hold the prescribed qualifications or have the prescribed experience that a person who prepares designs of complex plumbing work must hold or have; and

(ii) meet the prescribed requirements that a person must meet in order to prepare designs of complex plumbing work.

(3) A designer of complex plumbing who is engaged to prepare a design of complex plumbing work must ensure that the design of the complex plumbing work meets the prescribed requirements.

Penalty: 120 penalty units, in the case of a natural person;

600 penalty units, in the case of a body corporate.

221ZPF Designer of complex plumbing must give certified complex plumbing work design to Commission

(1) A designer of complex plumbing who is engaged to prepare a design of complex plumbing work must give the Commission, within the prescribed time –

(a) the design of the complex plumbing work; and

(b) a written statement certifying whether the design of the complex plumbing work meets the prescribed requirements.

Penalty: 120 penalty units, in the case of a natural person;

600 penalty units, in the case of a body corporate.

(2) A designer of complex plumbing does not commit an offence against subsection (1) if the complex plumbing work is exempt complex plumbing work.

221ZPG Designer of complex plumbing must give certified complex plumbing work design and related documents to person who engaged them to prepare design

(1) This section applies if a designer of complex plumbing engaged to prepare a design of complex plumbing work (other than exempt complex plumbing work) has given the Commission –

(a) the design of the complex plumbing work; and

(b) a written statement certifying whether the design of the complex plumbing work meets the prescribed requirements.

(2) The designer of complex plumbing must, as soon as practicable after giving the Commission the design of the complex plumbing work and written statement, give the person who engaged the designer –

(a) the design; and

(b) the written statement; and

(c) written confirmation that the designer has given to the Commission the documents referred to under paragraphs (a) and (b).

221ZPH Certified complex plumbing work designs and related documents to be given to licensed plumber

(1) This section applies to a person who has –

(a) engaged a designer of complex plumbing to prepare a design of complex plumbing work (other than exempt complex plumbing work); and

(b) received from the designer –

(i) the design of the complex plumbing work; and

(ii) a written statement certifying whether the design of the complex plumbing work meets the prescribed requirements; and

(iii) written confirmation that the designer has given to the Commission the documents referred to under subparagraphs (i) and (ii).

(2) If the person engages a licensed plumber to carry out the complex plumbing work to which the design of complex plumbing work relates, the person must give a copy of the design of the complex plumbing work, a copy of the written statement and a copy of the written confirmation to the plumber as soon as practicable after receiving –

(a) the design of the complex plumbing work; and

(b) the written statement; and

(c) the written confirmation.

221ZPI Commission may request further information or material in relation to complex plumbing work

(1) This section applies if the Commission has received from a designer of complex plumbing work –

(a) a start work notice (design) under section 221ZPB; or

(b) a design of complex plumbing under section 221ZPF.

(2) The Commission, by written notice given to the designer of complex plumbing work, may request further information or material in relation to –

(a) the complex plumbing work to which a start work notice (design) relates; or

(b) the design.

(3) A notice under subsection (2) must specify –

(a) the information or material that is to be given to the Commission; and

(b) the date by which the information or material must be given to the Commission.

(4) On receiving a notice under subsection (2), a designer of complex plumbing work may request, in accordance with any prescribed requirements, the Commission to change the date specified in the notice to a later date.

(5) If the Commission agrees to the request, the Commission must issue another notice under subsection (2) with a new date by which the information or material must be given to the Commission (a ***reissued notice***).

(6) A designer of complex plumbing given a notice, or reissued notice, under subsection (2), must comply with the notice or reissued notice unless the designer has a lawful excuse.

Penalty: 120 penalty units, in the case of a natural person;

600 penalty units, in the case of a body corporate.

221ZPJ Complex plumbing work prohibited before receipt of certain documents

(1) A person must not carry out complex plumbing work unless the person has obtained the following –

(a) the design of the complex plumbing work; and

(b) a written statement from the designer of the complex plumbing who prepared the design certifying whether the design of the complex plumbing work meets the prescribed requirements; and

(c) written confirmation that the designer has given the Commission –

(i) the design of the complex plumbing work; and

(ii) a written statement certifying whether the design of the complex plumbing work meets the prescribed requirements.

Penalty: 500 penalty units, in the case of a natural person;

2500 penalty units, in the case of a body corporate.

(2) A person does not commit an offence against subsection (1) if the complex plumbing work is exempt complex plumbing work.".

178T Regulations

In section 221ZZZV(1) of the **Building Act 1993** –

(a) for paragraph (b) **substitute** –

"(b) fees for the purposes of this Part, including –

(i) fees for examinations or assessments conducted by, or on behalf of, the Commission; or

(ii) fees for the assessment of start work notices (design) and designs of complex plumbing work by, or on behalf of, the Commission;";

(b) after paragraph (c) **insert** –

"(ca) prescribing what constitutes complex plumbing work;";

(c) before paragraph (h) **insert** –

"(ge) qualifications or experience that a person who prepares designs of complex plumbing work must hold or have or requirements that a person must meet in order to prepare designs of complex plumbing work;

(gf) the preparation or amendment of designs of complex plumbing work, including –

(i) requirements that a design of complex plumbing work or an amendment of a design of complex plumbing work must meet; or

(ii) procedures to amend a design of complex plumbing work and matters to be considered, applied or complied with to amend, or when amending, a design of complex plumbing work; or

(iii) the certification of a design of complex plumbing work or an amended design of complex plumbing work and documents to accompany or form part of the certification; or

(iv) the giving of amended designs of complex plumbing work to persons;

(gg) notifications to be given to the Commission before or during the carrying out of complex plumbing work or at specified stages of carrying out complex plumbing work, and the content of the notifications;

(gh) compliance certificates to be provided by persons who –

(i) prepare designs of complex plumbing; or

(ii) carry out complex plumbing work;

(gi) information or documents to be provided with compliance certificates by persons who –

(i) prepare designs of complex plumbing; or

(ii) carry out complex plumbing work;

(gj) inspections of complex plumbing work and inspection reports for complex plumbing work;".

178U Consequential amendment of Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026

After section 38(1)(k) of the **Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026 insert** –

"(ka) to administer the provisions of the **Building Act 1993** relating to the design and carrying out of complex plumbing work;".

178V New sections 289C and 289D inserted

At the end of Part 14 of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"**289C Transitional provision relating to the Consumer Legislation Amendment Act 2026**

(1) The amendments made by Division 2 of Part 12A of the **Consumer Legislation Amendment Act 2026** do not apply to –

(a) a designer of complex plumbing, in relation to preparing a design of complex plumbing work, if the designer is engaged before the commencement day to prepare the design; or

(b) a person carrying out complex plumbing work, if the designer of the complex plumbing work is engaged before the commencement day to prepare the design.

(2) In this section –

commencement day means the day on which Division 2 of Part 12A of the **Consumer Legislation Amendment Act 2026** comes into operation.

289D Transitional regulations relating to the Consumer Legislation Amendment Act 2026

(1) The Governor in Council may make regulations containing provisions of a transitional nature, including matters of an application or savings nature, arising as a result of the enactment of this Act (including the repeals and amendments made by this Act).

(2) Regulations made under this section may –

(a) have a retrospective effect to the day on which section 178V of the **Consumer Legislation Amendment Act 2026** comes into operation; and

(b) be of limited or general application; and

(c) leave any matter or thing to be decided by a specified person or class of person; and

(d) provide for the exemption of persons or things or a class of person or thing from any of the regulations made under this section.

(3) Regulations made under this section have effect despite anything to the contrary in any Act (other than the **Consumer Legislation Amendment Act 2026** or the **Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006**) or in any subordinate instrument.

(4) This section is **repealed** on the second anniversary of the day on which it comes into operation.".'.

63. Insert the following new Division before Part 13 –

'**Division 3 – Developer bonds**

178W Definitions

In section 137ZM of the **Building Act 1993 insert** the following definition –

"***developer bond requirement*** means the requirement under section 137ZP(1) for the developer of a residential apartment building to arrange for the issue or execution of a developer bond;".

178X Offence to apply for occupancy permit if no developer bond issued

After section 137ZR(1) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(1AB) Subsection (1) does not apply to a person if the developer of the residential apartment building is excepted from the developer bond requirement.".

178Y Developer must nominate assessor

After section 137ZT(3) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(4) Subsection (1) does not apply to a developer who is excepted from the developer bond requirement.".

178Z Approval of nomination

After section 137ZV(5) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(6) This section does not apply if the developer of the residential apartment building is excepted from the developer bond requirement.".

178ZA Developer must appoint assessor

(1) In section 137ZX(1) of the **Building Act 1993**, for "subsections (2) and (3)" **substitute** "subsections (2), (3) and (6)".

(2) After section 137ZX(5) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(6) Subsection (1) does not apply to a developer who is excepted from the developer bond requirement.".

178ZB Authority may appoint building assessor

After section 137ZY(2) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(3) This section does not apply if the developer of the residential apartment building is excepted from the developer bond requirement.".

178ZC Arrangements for final inspection

After section 137ZZE(5) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(6) Subsection (1) does not apply to a developer who is excepted from the developer bond requirement.".

178ZD Appointment of building assessor for final inspection

After section 137ZZF(3) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(4) This section does not apply if the developer of the residential apartment building is excepted from the developer bond requirement.".'.

64. Insert the following new Division before Part 13 –

'**Division 4 – Miscellaneous amendments**

178ZE Refusal of occupancy permit

After section 44(1)(b) of the **Building Act 1993 insert** –

"(ba) if electrical work, in respect of which the **Electricity Safety Act 1998** required the issue of a certificate under Division 3 of Part 3 of that Act, was carried out in conjunction with the building work on the building or part of the building in respect of which the permit is sought, unless the relevant building surveyor has seen a copy of the certificate; and".'.

65. Insert the following new Division before Part 13 –

'**Division 5 – Minor technical amendments**

178ZF Definitions and interpretation

In section 3(1) of the **Building Act 1993** –

(a) in the definition of ***approved prescribed qualification***, for "171AA(1)(b)" **substitute** "171AA(1)(a)(ii)";

(b) in paragraphs (a) and (b) of the definition of ***relevant building surveyor***, for "or permit," **substitute** "or a permit,".

178ZG Statute law revision

(1) In section 24(1)(e) of the **Building Act 1993**, for "(2A)" **substitute** "(2E)".

(2) In section 137Q(5) of the **Building Act 1993**, for "the method by which the premiums are to be calculated" **substitute** "order".

178ZH Notice of intention to apply for occupancy permit

(1) In section 40A(1) of the **Building Act 1993**, after "The developer" **insert** "(within the meaning of Part 9B)".

(2) In section 40A(3) of the **Building Act 1993**, after "A developer" **insert** "(within the meaning of Part 9B)".

(3) In section 40A(5) of the **Building Act 1993**, in paragraphs (a) and (b) of the definition of ***applicable period***, after "occupancy permit application date" (where first occurring) **insert** "(within the meaning of Part 9B)".

178ZI Refusal of occupancy permit

In section 44(2) of the **Building Act 1993** –

(a) in paragraph (c) –

(i) after "developer" (where first occurring) **insert** "(within the meaning of Part 9B)";

(ii) after "building" **insert** "in accordance with Part 9B";

(b) in paragraph (e), after "developer" **insert** "(within the meaning of Part 9B)".

178ZJ Approved person

In section 171AAB of the **Building Act 1993** –

(a) in subsection (1)(b), for "171AA(1)(b)" **substitute** "171AA(1)(a)(ii)";

(b) in subsection (1)(c), for "171AA(1)(c)" **substitute** "171AA(1)(b)".

178ZK Refusal of building permit

In section 542(2) of the **Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026**, for "205G(1). (2) and (2A)" **substitute** "205G(1), (2) and (2E)".'.

66. Insert the following new Part before Part 13 –

'**Part 12B – Amendment of Domestic Building Contracts Amendment Act 2025**

178ZL Commencement

In section 2(3) of the **Domestic Building Contracts Amendment Act 2025**, for "1 December 2026" **substitute** "31 March 2027".

178ZM Repeal of this Act

In section 82 of the **Domestic Building Contracts Amendment Act 2025**, for "1 December 2027" **substitute** "31 March 2028".'.

67. Long title, omit "plans and proceedings," and insert "plans, proceedings and proxy voting,".

68. Long title, after "deposit moneys" insert "and off-the-plan contracts".

69. Long title, after "used motor cars," insert "the **Building Act 1993** in relation to developer bonds,".

70. Long title, before "certain other Acts" insert "the **Building Act 1993** in relation to prefabrication work and prefabrication builders,".

71. Long title, before "certain other Acts" insert "the **Building Act 1993** in relation to complex plumbing work,".

72. Long title, before "certain other Acts" insert "the **Building Act 1993** and the **Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026** in relation to minor matters,".

73. Long title, before "certain other Acts" insert "the **Domestic Building Contracts Amendment Act 2025** in relation to its commencement,".

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc – Minister for Local Government, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Renters) (10:40): I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

I am happy to rise and speak on the Council's amendments to the Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. This bill takes a handful of things that are needlessly harder for Victorians and makes them simpler. We know that the changes being made through the bill will make life easier for Victorian consumers, renters, homebuyers, used car buyers and the broader community. We also heard from Victorians that there were ways we could make these reforms better. To address this we agreed to a number of amendments in the other place. I want to acknowledge the work that was done in the other place – it is an interesting process in the Legislative Council to get things through – to get to this point. Strengthening some of these amendments has been important.

In relation to part 4A residential parks and lifestyle villages, we are implementing a cap on deferred management charges of 20 per cent of the property's purchase price. This makes sure residents have certainty on what they will need to pay when they leave and when they purchase the property. We are also making sure that when a fixed rent increase is charged at a residential park it is calculated correctly using the methods outlined in the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. Otherwise it is invalid. We are making sure that special rent increases are dealt with fairly and impartially through VCAT rather than through the park operators, which can cause conflict and frustration at the process. We are making sure residential parks are kept clean, safe and in proper condition by fixing up the definition within the Residential Tenancies Act. These are important changes that will make life easier and more affordable for those living in residential parks. I want to acknowledge the advocacy around these changes over the course of time and the stakeholders that engaged so well in this process. I thank them for their advocacy.

We are also making sure property market reforms are more transparent. Through the bill we have made changes to section 32 statements to make sure they are available to potential buyers 14 days before the auction. Our house amendment makes some small changes to allow that 14-day timeframe to be shorter in cases where properties are being sold privately and where there is agreement between the buyer and the seller to waive that two-week period. We have also clarified that a real estate agent is still permitted to receive their commission before settlement or rescission of the contract if the vendor agrees to the payment, following our decision to repeal section 27 of the Sale of Land Act 1962. Some amendments to the management of owners corporations also passed. We have made proxy voting that much harder by removing the ability for a single lot owner to vote on behalf of 5 per cent of lot owners on large sites, which will make things fairer for Victorians.

Finally, our house amendments also bring in more regulation in the housing and building space. The reforms to the Building Act 1993 will improve regulatory oversight of complex plumbing work and

provide a clear foundation for the regulation of prefabricated building processes. We are making sure that building regulation is keeping pace with modern building practices and that the industry can deliver safe and quality buildings for consumers.

Those opposite have consistently opposed and talked down Labor's rental reforms. I give a shout-out to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, who does some stellar work.

Jade Benham interjected.

Tim RICHARDSON: Which one? The member for Mildura is a good sparring partner and does a power of work, but she has said on the record that rental protections have gone too far, and I could not disagree more. They have also talked down the rental reforms in this bill and through our house amendments. To that I say to Victorians: you know who is on the side of renters and communities, of the more than 2 million people who rent in our state, who is on the side of consumers and who is on the side of working families. It is the Carroll Labor government. I commend the amendments to the house.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (10:44): These house amendments that did come through the Council we will not be opposing, but there are a couple of things first. I think I heard the minister mention just then the two-week waiting period in section 27. That is section 32, isn't it, Minister?

Tim Richardson: Yes.

Jade BENHAM: Yes. I just wanted to clarify that. I am not saying that the new Minister for Consumer Affairs is not taking a wonderful –

Tim Richardson interjected.

Jade BENHAM: Section 32, when you were talking about section 27. We need to clarify some things. I had to school the last minister while I was doing this exact thing. The last Minister for Consumer Affairs did not quite understand.

A member: I am giving him the notes.

Jade BENHAM: Thanks. That would be great. Thank you very much.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Could the member for Mildura do that through the Chair, please.

Jade BENHAM: Sorry, Deputy Speaker. But I will say that the last Minister for Consumer Affairs who was sitting there did not quite understand what part 4A parks were, so I had to give him a little lesson in what they actually were. The current Minister for Consumer Affairs, it is painful to say, does a wonderful job and he is a good sparring partner. We will agree to disagree on most things, but I will disagree on section 32. I swear you were talking about section 27. In any case, we are not opposed to these.

We have had to make some concessions with some of them with regard to property market reforms and transparency. That is one of those concessions. I do not agree. I want it on the record – and I have said that I will die on this hill – that these reforms with regard to auctions and the publishing of reserve rates, in terms of consumer protections, I think will take the transparency away from the buying and selling process, particularly for homebuyers. I suspect that now real estate agents will go to an expression-of-interest sale rather than an auction, where you have physical oversight of your competition. Now it will go to an expression of interest, where the real estate agent can tell you that there are as many parties as they like who are interested in the house, and they can keep telling you, 'Oh, add another 10 grand. Go another 10 grand. There are three other families interested in this property.' You do not know, because you cannot see them on a Saturday morning at an auction. As long as that is on the record, we will wait and see. But we are not opposed to these house amendments.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (10:47): I rise to speak on the amendments to the Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. I am pleased to speak on these amendments that were successfully

moved by my Greens colleague Aiv Puglielli in the upper house. These two amendments will have significant benefits for people who live in apartments. They will assist with fairer and more transparent decision-making, and they will lead to better outcomes for those who live in apartments with owners corporations.

The first amendment limits the number of proxies that any member of an owners corporation can hold for voting in an OC meeting to one per person, except for the current exemptions for family members and so on. Until now this has already been the case in buildings with up to 20 lots, but for buildings with more than 20 apartments, one person has been able to hold proxy votes for up to 5 per cent of all the owners. The issue is that developers and real estate agents have been intentionally soliciting large numbers of votes from absent or disengaged owners and using these votes to influence and control decisions made in owners corporation meetings. Proxy harvesting is a particularly big problem for large apartment buildings and towers in places like Melbourne, Abbotsford, Richmond and Box Hill. Currently in an apartment tower with 1000 units, one person can legally attend an OC meeting holding 50 votes, and depending on attendance at an OC meeting, this could potentially be enough to control the outcome of a meeting. It should not be like this. At one OC AGM that we heard of, at the meeting 33 owners attended either in person or online, with a small number of people also holding proxies, and then one real estate agent turned up, who did not even live in the building, with 35 proxies. This allows people with vested interests to influence or control decisions and outcomes for a building. The owners and the people who live in this building should have control over these decisions. We want more people to get involved in owners corporations and the decision-making process, and online attendance is a good step to engage owner engagement. Allowing proxy farming does not improve outcomes for owners, and it is good that this practice will be ended with the Greens amendment.

The other amendment that we moved successfully in the upper house addresses the fact that large owners corporations are having trouble pursuing large debts. When a developer owns multiple units and is not paying their fair share of fees it can be really difficult to get the large number of votes required to commence legal proceedings against them to recoup this debt. When there is a large debt owed to an owners corporation it makes it really difficult for it to function, to maintain the building and to do what is required to keep the building going. This impacts on all owners, who have to pick up the slack or forgo the projects that the OC cannot afford. This amendment is specifically aimed at very large owners corporations who have been finding it hard to pursue debts over $100,000. It lowers the voting threshold to a simple majority when voting to start legal proceedings, and it makes it clear that these proceedings can be commenced in whichever court or tribunal is most appropriate.

The Greens will continue to advocate for people who live in apartment buildings, will continue to advocate for people who are struggling to find a home and will continue to advocate to address the housing crisis, because right now we are facing the worst housing crisis in living history: 30,000 people sleeping homeless every night, 120,000 people on the public housing waiting list, a 400 per cent increase in house prices in the last 20 years, rents rising 2.5 times faster than wages and the income needed to service an average home loan being $180,000. That means a whole generation is locked out of ever owning their own home. This bill does address some of the small issues that people facing the housing crisis are coming up against. It improves the information that people can access when they are looking to buy a home so that they can know whether they are in the running or not. The Greens introduced a bill in August last year to force real estate agents to disclose the reserve price upon advertising, and we are really, really pleased to see that the government has taken it up. But again the government has done a kind of half-arsed job in actually making this policy happen. Reserve prices are only declared seven days before an auction; we want to see them available from the day that the property is advertised. We do not want to see a property able to be readvertised if the seller or real estate agent thinks that the vendor can get a higher price after a period of advertising. We will keep pushing for that transparency so that we stop wasting people's time, money and energy.

Under this bill, sold prices will also have to be declared. That is additional accountability and transparency, and we are glad to see the government finally implement it. The truth of the matter is

that buying a home is one of the biggest financial decisions that you will ever make in your life. You should not be forced to make that decision in a public pressure cooker that is specifically designed to push prices up to rip you off. The research shows that auctions put an 8 to 13 per cent premium on the cost of buying a home. The real estate industry actually do not deny this, they advertise it. They advertise it so that they can encourage sellers to use auctions to push prices up and increase the commission that they take on that sale. That is why the Greens are pushing to ban street auctions. We are pushing to take this further, because tinkering around the edges in this housing crisis is just not going to cut it anymore. We are so accustomed to auctions here in Melbourne that we do not even realise that it is actually a very strange way to sell a house. Australia, and in particular Victoria, is unique in its excessive use of auctions. Most countries manage to sell homes without turning it into a bidding war on the footpath. Our housing system is stacked to drive up prices to put more money into the pockets of property investors and real estate agents. It is no wonder that Australia's housing market is among the most expensive in the world.

Abolishing street auctions is not the only way we fix the housing crisis, but if young people are ever going to afford a home of their own, we need to stop defending systems and just tinkering around the edges of systems that are specifically designed to push prices up. What about those people who cannot even imagine buying a home – those people who are stuck perpetually renting, many not by choice? Well, despite all of Labor's tinkering around the edges – they will claim 130-plus reforms – they are still living in substandard, overpriced and insecure homes. The Greens have pushed for major rent reforms, for an overhaul of the renting system. We do welcome the small improvements for renters in this bill, but they simply do not go far enough. They do not fix the systemic issues.

The bill makes some changes around fobs and keys. It makes it easier for renters to get extra fobs and keys. That is really important. It is not going to fix the system. It limits break-lease fees, but these fees should be abolished. Moving house is already hard enough. It is already expensive enough without adding extra fees, and it still leaves break-lease fees, like readvertising, to be negotiated or taken to VCAT, and renters who are moving house are in no position to take their landlord to court. It also allows renters to pay bond directly to the bond authority instead of via the agent or the owner, because too many renters are being ripped off by landlords who hold onto their bond with absolutely no justification.

But there is still no cap on rent increases, and if we are going to make renting truly fair, if we are going to make renting affordable ever – maybe one day in the future – we have to freeze and cap rents. It does not matter if you have got an extra key or an extra fob if the rent is just too damn high. It does not help you enforce your rights if your landlord can just jack up the rent by however much they want and force you out of your home. In the last five years rents have gone up 2.5 times faster than wages. Capital city rents rose 57 per cent from 2015 to 2025, with 34 per cent of that rise just in the last three years. Year after year I hear from renters who are more and more desperate, tossing up between food and medicine and rent, putting up with black mould and rising damp and too scared to take their landlord to court for failing to meet minimum standards that are legislated in law, because they just cannot risk another rent rise. In fact 80 per cent of renters report that they do not ask for repairs, they do not ask for basic maintenance, because they are scared of a retaliatory rent rise.

But we know that it does not actually have to be like this. We have come to think that if you are a renter suffering is baked in, that insecurity is just part of the deal. But the rental crisis is a political choice. Labor and the Liberals and now One Nation have had wealthy property investors in their ears and in their pockets for far too long. In fact many of the MPs from those parties are wealthy property investors themselves. They do not have the spine to stand up for renters, because they are too concerned with what the Property Council of Australia and their wealthy donors would think.

The Greens have a plan to freeze and cap rents. We will freeze rents for two years to give the chance for wages to catch up and then ban rent increases for the first two years of any new tenancy. Then we will limit the amount that rents can go up year on year, so they simply cannot go up faster than your

wages. We will tie rent increases to the property, not the tenants, so investors cannot kick you out to put up the rent, because to tackle the housing crisis we need to cap rent increases.

This bill also makes some minor updates to the owners corporation laws, but again, we need to go much further. It has got payment plans for apartment owners, which is an important step. Owners corporation fees are putting a huge strain on people, particularly during the cost-of-living crisis. The Greens are pleased to see that these changes will make it easier for people to access payment plans for their fees. There are still lots of things that we need to do to improve apartment living. We need to end insurance commissions for strata managers and all kinds of commissions, incentives and kickbacks to stop corruption, to stop strata managers from taking apartment owners for a ride. We need to empower renters to fully participate in the governance of their building and not to put disproportionate power in the hands of owners over renters to have a say. They should be residents corporations, not owners corporations. We finally got the report on the Owners Corporations Act 2006, and it made some solid recommendations, but the government's response only agreed to some of these and left others out. We will be pushing more.

Finally, this bill includes the closure powers for Tobacco Licensing Victoria and Victoria Police to shut down illicit tobacco stores for up to 90 days, and they can apply to courts for a longer closure. It has also got penalties for landlords knowingly allowing the sale of illicit tobacco and powers for landlords to terminate leases if tenants are selling illegal tobacco. People in my community in Richmond are living in fear of when the next firebombing is going to be. Just this month approximately 10 businesses on Victoria Street were impacted by a fire after a tobacco store was rammed and set alight. I thank the emergency services for their swift response to the fire. These attacks are heartbreaking for residents and shop owners, who are already struggling to make ends meet.

The community needs police and tobacco licensing to actually act on these powers to shut down illicit tobacco. The Greens pushed and the government finally established Tobacco Licensing Victoria, but it is underpowered. It is safe to say they have been ineffectual to date. Illicit tobacco is being sold in plain sight, and Victorian authorities are failing to stop it. Police should have been closing down these places, and for some reason they have not been. That is why the Greens support these changes to the legislation, to make it clear that Tobacco Licensing Victoria and Victoria Police have the power to shut down illicit tobacco and cut off these organised crime syndicates from their lucrative revenue stream. Our community deserve so much better than this, but they are suffering under a government that has lost control. I commend the bill.

Motion agreed to.

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

Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Sonya Kilkenny:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (11:01): It was 3 December 2025, Jess Wilson had been Leader of the Opposition for a couple of weeks, and her first announcement was the criminalisation of coercive control. I introduced a private members bill and I had support from the other parties and the crossbench, and I am confident that these were the actions that forced the government into bringing this bill forward. So here we are now; on 11 August the government introduced this legislation. In a nutshell, this is something that everybody wants to see. It aims to prioritise the safety of victims of family violence and introduces some new crimes here to look at tackling the efficiency of the justice processes and more effectively holding perpetrators of family violence to account.

Family violence and intimate partner violence in the main is perpetrated by men on women, but not always. It is important that gender is not ignored in family violence, because we have incidents of women on men, men on men and women on women. But in the main it is perpetrated by men on women. The bill makes changes to a number of areas, and I will talk about each of those in some detail: coercive control, good character, grooming and a number of other areas that I will touch on.

I want to begin by recognising the victims of family violence, those who have lost their lives and those who have survived and are living with it, and their role in shaping the sector and particularly this bill. I also want to recognise the agencies and organisations that were consulted during the period in which it was developed and others who work in that sector day in, day out and who have helped shape the legislation. The work that those agencies and organisations do cannot be underestimated. It is not always easy. In fact most of the time it is not easy. They deal with some pretty horrific situations that they need to deal with, but a lot of them are able to do it and navigate and help people.

As we move into the debate here, I want to be very clear that the government should not try to rewrite history, because, as I said, we put this on the table. Why I put it on the table was that it was clear we needed to do more. Things in Victoria were heading in the wrong direction. I looked at what was happening overseas. Theresa May, former PM of the United Kingdom, as Home Secretary in December 2014, almost 12 years ago, announced plans for a new criminal offence targeting coercive control. She argued at the time that domestic abuse is not limited to physical violence, that psychological domination can be equally devastating and that specific criminal laws were needed because traditional assault laws did not adequately capture the patterns of psychological and emotional domination. She had seen and spoken to victims of family violence who did not have broken bones and who did not have bruises but who had psychological scars, and she wanted to do something for them. At the end of December 2015 it became law, and we have now had more than a decade of learnings. So there was no reason why Victoria should be lagging in this area, and I think it was a blight on us for lagging.

I visited the UK earlier in 2025 and I visited the Thames Valley Police. I visited two of the largest organisations in the UK, Refuge and Hestia, and all of those organisations supported the introduction of coercive control measures. They were at pains to say, 'It's a slow burn. You're not going to get immediate results. It is difficult, but you can get results.' Awareness campaigns and education campaigns are particularly important, and they raised a couple of issues or examples with me of what helped them. Unbeknown to me, *EastEnders* is still running in the UK, their version of *Home and Away* or *Neighbours*, and they ran a coercive control theme through *EastEnders*. It got people understanding and recognising as they watched the TV, thinking 'That's actually not quite right. That person should not be doing that, and gosh, that's scary'. They recognised these sorts of things as coercive control, and it helped.

At the same time as this was bedding down, there was a case between Richard and Sheree Spencer outlining 20 years of abuse, which captured – probably a bit like the mushroom cook – the attention of so many people over there. It was eventually documented. Netflix documented this, and there was a lot of video and evidence in this case, because it was Richard who was the subject of the 20 years of abuse. The Netflix series was called *My Wife, My Abuser*. So it became clear in the UK that although in the main it is women who are subjected to coercive control actions, it can also be men. I know when we announced our intent to criminalise coercive control I had a lot of people come and say to me, 'This is not just a men-on-women situation. It can happen to men.' People cited examples in their family of exactly what has happened. But it can also happen in same-sex relationships and in all sorts of different families. It is not just specific.

Despite the Royal Commission into Family Violence, and we have had a huge financial investment, we still need to do more. The stats are not heading in the right direction. Across Australia too many women continued to be killed by an intimate partner. At the moment across Australia the estimates are about 42 to 45 women and girls killed by a male or intimate partner this year. It is a bit difficult to get exact stats because sometimes they are not always clear about what exactly has happened. In

Victoria there was a record 106,427 call-outs of family violence incidents last year, up 8 per cent in five years – pretty extraordinary. I remember when it hit over the 100,000 call-outs for police. Breaches of family violence orders have risen even faster, increasing by almost 17 per cent to 64,713. About one in four family violence incidents resulted in a new intervention order application. But the figure that is of great concern is that almost one in four of those orders were subsequently breached. An intervention order is supposed to provide protection and security, and I am sure that every person in this place, all members, would have heard from somebody who is a victim of family domestic violence who has had an intervention order breached. We hear that so much in my office. Sometimes they are constituents, sometimes there are people reaching out to talk to me.

So more needs to be done, and this bill is one step in the right direction. Following our private members bill, the government did feel the pressure from the Parliament, victim-survivors and the community and move for this introduction. At the same time they have sought feedback from victim-survivors to make a few additional changes, so this bill goes further than what we had. I have mentioned that family violence does not discriminate on age, wealth, culture or sexuality. But again, in the main, it is women who tend to be victims.

The bill tackles a number of areas, and I will work through each of those. But first is coercive control. It is an amendment to the Crimes Act 1958, and it can involve things like intimidation, humiliation, surveillance, isolation and manipulation designed to control another person and strip away their independence and confidence. I do note that humiliation has not been included in the list here. Victims can lose their financial independence. They can lose their homes, their health and their connection with family and friends. It has not been a criminal offence unless another crime had been committed or an intervention order had been breached. Now we have a maximum here of 10 years.

We have not only the examples that I have talked about from the UK, but both New South Wales and Queensland have implemented this legislation. There have been 28 reports a month in New South Wales, with one custodial sentence. Queensland's legislation came into effect in May 2025, and it takes time for these prosecutions to be worked through. They had 149 reports between 26 May and 26 October – a short period of time. They resulted in 53 charges: 43 were solved or finalised. Seventy reports remain active or unsolved. The UK figures: 853 offenders were convicted of controlling or coercive behaviour in the year ending December 2024. There were nearly 1300 defendant proceedings for the offence in the same period: 832 defendants were male and 21 were female. Police recorded almost 50,000 coercive control offences in the year ending March 2025, up from 45,000. This is not a silver bullet, but it needs to be done and I am pleased that the government are finally doing this. It is so important that it is rolled out effectively, with an appropriate awareness campaign. Yesterday there was the launch of See the Signs, a program that will be running out a series of ads. The timeframe for introduction is 18 months, which actually I had hoped would be a little bit earlier, because the other states have moved and have this in place, and there would be a lot that we should be able to pick up and adapt from them.

Coercive control has been covered quite a bit in various books and in the media, and Jess Hill has a book, *See What You Made Me Do*. She is a journalist, and her book was an investigation into domestic abuse. I will tell you, it is fairly harrowing, with the examples that she brings. I heard her speak at a two-day workshop that I attended on coercive control in Sydney last year, and there was certainly no talk that Victoria was looking at going down this path. I want to touch on some of the things that Jess Hill mentioned as a blueprint for establishing power. One is getting that love and trust, which brings people together in the first place. Sometimes people are deliberately lulled into a false sense of security, and they forgive and make excuses for behaviours and indiscretions. Isolation – victims can be removed from their support mechanisms like family and friends. They will move them away. They will stop them from seeing people, saying, 'I want you all to myself, such is my love for you.' People might feel special for a start, but then they see less and less of family and friends.

The monopolisation of perception is focusing on sometimes her faults and failures and doubts. People say, 'What am I doing wrong? Why am I being told that I'm not good enough here or I can't do that?

The problem is me, and he's really trying to help me out, and then my self-confidence is shot.' Gaslighting is particularly common, which is really exhausting and debilitating. It is playing these mind games. There are denials and fabrications, manipulation of situations, hiding things, and people start to say, 'Hang on, am I mad? Did I imagine this?' And it just keeps building: 'Yes, I am. Of course I did this. Of course this happened,' and they really start to doubt. Sometimes people enforce trivial demands, like living by rules of what you have to wear, who you can visit, how the potatoes are cooked – little things. I heard an example the other day of someone who was heading out on a first date, and the person she was going out with wanted to know what she was wearing. He said, 'You're wearing a dress, aren't you?' Pleasingly, that person did not go on that first date. It was before the first date that the person she was excited by, initially, was demonstrating the red flags that we should all be aware of: the tracking, the surveillance and making the victim know that 'I know where you are'. Something else that is quite prevalent is the alternating punishment and rewards – hurting somebody and then showering them with kindness and going, 'I'm so remorseful'. Then it happens again, and if they break down, the comfort is there. And there are the threats – people living in fear – and the degradation of verbal abuse: 'You're worthless.'

One of the books that I read recently is by Tammy Casselson, *The Grimmest of Fairy Tales*, and she documented her lived experience, outlining red flags that she put aside. She was married young, and the book talks about the distressing married life that she had and the pressure from family and friends because he was a good bloke. They liked him. This is a direct quote from her book:

> Over time, little red flags kept appearing. I, now a young woman, mostly-smiling-and-making-the-best-out-of-life, would make excuses for the red flags. Of course, sometimes it was a survival strategy – just managing the red flags.

But hindsight sadly can be the greatest skill. It is too easy for people to make excuses, especially when, to the external world, somebody looks great. You might look like the happy couple. He is a great bloke at work. Everybody likes him or her. Family and friends think this is a terrific person. 'You can't look at leaving this relationship. You know, you've got kids. This is a great person. He treats you well.' So I am very pleased to see now that something is being done in this area.

Good character is another area that is being tackled through this, and the references. Too often those impacted by family violence have to listen in court as their perpetrator is described as being of good character, and that can be humiliating when the person has been treated abysmally and has had all sorts of things happen. This bill stops courts from giving offenders a lighter sentence because of their previous good character, while still allowing relevant personal circumstances and criminal history to be considered. It tightens the rules around character references and applies similar standards to children sentenced under the Youth Justice Act 2024.

Earlier this year the New South Wales government removed good character as a mitigating factor for sexual offences. This did not come out of the blue. For four years Harrison James and Jarad Grice, survivors of sexual abuse, were advocates for this to happen, and there was a campaign calling for good character references to be abolished called Your Reference Ain't Relevant. Stakeholder feedback noted that these good character references can be particularly problematic in family violence matters, where the person using violence may present very differently in public and private, as I have just mentioned.

The Equal Opportunity Act 2010 will also be amended, and family violence will be a protected attribute. This will ensure victim-survivors should not be disadvantaged because they have taken steps to keep themselves or their families safe. These changes will make it unlawful to discriminate against someone because they have experienced family violence, whether at work, when seeking accommodation, accessing education or using services. Stakeholder feedback told me that this change also imposes a positive duty. It was something that they saw. It imposes a positive duty on organisations to take proactive steps to eliminate discrimination based on this attribute. It is a good

thing to start to have a think that this person is going through some pretty harrowing experiences, and let us make sure that they are not discriminated against.

I have heard an example of this quite recently, brought to me by somebody who I know personally, regarding one of their good friends who fled family violence. Sadly, she had to flee interstate. She is now back. She worked in a local government area, at one of the councils, and they held her job and did the right thing and really looked after her. She has had a horrendous experience, and it is still not over because of the number of adjournments that keep happening in court. She keeps having to live through all of it when she thinks it is about to be resolved and perhaps her perpetrator will be jailed. It is just another couple of months for her and her children and then it is another couple of months. It bothers me greatly. I do note that the amendment here is consistent with the positive duties imposed on workplaces to eliminate sex discrimination under the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1984, and that has been welcomed by stakeholders.

There are changes to family violence and personal safety. These changes put victim-survivors first by reducing the need to repeatedly return to court and relive the trauma simply to maintain their protection. That is a good thing, because every time you have to go back to court – not everywhere has a family violence court with separate entrances – you can bump into the perpetrator. The family violence courts have been terrific. If you go and see them in action, people do not have to see each other and can give testimony without that. They are terrific. They are not everywhere at the moment. Limiting the number of times people have to go to court is certainly positive. The courts will have greater ability to extend or strengthen intervention orders while taking into account what the victim-survivor believes they need to be safe.

Grooming is another area. Grooming is something that we have talked about for a long time because we have had a lot of sexual abuse claims and inquiries. People have got a reasonable understanding about grooming, but perhaps it is not as good as it should be. The bill allows PSIOs, the personal safety intervention orders, to be used against adults engaging in grooming behaviour, helping to protect children and stop predatory behaviour before it escalates to sexual offending.

I received an email from GenWest, and I want to give them a shout-out because they have just run body safety education groups for families in the west. The lack of knowledge about grooming in the community was striking. We might think we have done a lot of work here, but they were alarmed by this. They have had very strong feedback that families want more education in this area. While the government is looking at the education program around this legislation, and I know it is focusing on coercive control, giving some attention to what more could be done in the area of education about grooming needs to happen.

There are changes being made to MARAM. MARAM is the multi-agency risk assessment management framework, which people talk to me about very positively. It was developed to identify and address issues and gaps. The royal commission talked about how this was needed so services can effectively identify, assess and manage family violence risk. It is, as I said, viewed positively. The bill aims to strengthen how organisations and professionals assess family violence risk and share information, helping services better protect victim-survivors and hold perpetrators to account. That is what they want to do. Stakeholders again like the emphasis on timely information sharing for risk assessment and management.

The criminal court variations are interesting because the bill introduces own-motion powers. I had a lot of feedback about this. With the consent of the victim the court may extend or vary a family violence intervention order. Ordinarily a criminal court does not deal with civil applications; sometimes they might be co-listed. But if a perpetrator is in a criminal court for assault, for example, the judge may see it as necessary to extend or vary the FVIO with the intent of streamlining the process. It saves the victim another trip to court and the stress of fronting up. I had considerable feedback about this. The criminal court may not have the full picture of the ongoing family violence risk because it is only working with what has come up in the criminal proceedings rather than that fuller picture of

family violence. I met with Women's Legal Service Victoria and heard from them and others as part of the Federation of Community Legal Centres family violence working group, which did have concerns about incomplete, outdated information or a focus on a single incident rather than something broader. I thank the minister's office for their discussions with me on this area, because if the judge thinks it is clear that they do not have the full picture, they do not need to make a variation or an extension. They can say, 'Look, in this case there are a whole lot of other things happening. This does need to go back to the other court.' I thank Eliza from the minister's office for talking to me about that.

Clarifying electronic signatures on family violence and personal safety intervention order documents is fine, and addressing fines and infringements by providing greater support to fine recipients experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage is also fine. That includes excessive speeding and court fines, whereas it is currently only available to infringement fines. The government certainly consulted on this. The Victim Survivors' Advisory Council was somebody they dealt with quite extensively, and that was established following the royal commission. As I said before, I certainly acknowledge their role and the experiences that they bring to the table, and I note that there have been another eight people moving into that council, that advisory body, whereas others are moving out.

So many women and families have contacted me to share their awful family violence stories. Family members of men who have been subject to coercive control talk to me all the time, so I know that this is important. Misidentification, where the wrong person gets blamed as the perpetrator, is a big problem, and I will stress this is particularly relevant to First Nations women and also the LGBTI community. Everybody raised misidentification. There is that awareness around that, and I know with the police there is awareness of that as well to get better in this area. Somebody who works in the legal area said to me the other day how they managed to get that misidentification turned around, and she goes, 'Oh, it only took three times at court.' I thought, 'It still had to happen three times to go to court.' She said, 'Sometimes it's a little bit easier, but often it's not.' When somebody is incorrectly labelled as a perpetrator, the process to change that should not be as difficult as it is. I acknowledge pretty well everybody in the sector said, 'This is a problem. It's hard to quantify the extent of it. It's not massive but it's there, and it's there too much; it's there too often.' That awareness needs to continue.

I consulted widely and received so many responses, and I thank the stakeholders who came back to me with detailed responses, thoughtful responses, that they have taken so much care and effort with, not just about this bill but about the future, the focus on prevention and resourcing and how important that is and the fact that legislation alone will not fix problems and we need to do more. There is one that I want to mention as well. One stakeholder expressed reservation about the way the bill treats carers. If they are caring with support from the NDIS – this is an example – would they be excluded? As we know, the carer role, even by intimate partners, can become abusive, and at the very least this would need to be monitored closely and the unintended consequence of this provision to allow coercive control in these circumstances may need amendments or revision. I do note that there is a statutory review, and I think that was in three years.

There is more to do, and one of the things that I would like to see the government do, which we have committed to doing, is the introduction of Clare's law – the introduction of a domestic violence disclosure scheme. This would be the right to ask and the right to know. For those people who may not be aware, Clare's law was introduced in the UK after the tragic murder of Clare Wood by a former partner with a history of violence. The scheme allows individuals to request information from police about a partner's violence, which is the right to ask, and places an onus on police to proactively disclose information if they identify a risk, which is the right to know. I implore the government to get on board with the coalition and introduce Clare's law here in Victoria.

I know Jo Cooper has done an enormous amount of work – her petition was signed by thousands of women – to try and introduce a national scheme. But again I want to talk about the South Australian scheme. It is up and running, and it is a good model that Victoria could pick up. The media over there

reports a 172 per cent increase in people asking about their partners. An assistant commissioner last year said:

> I have no doubt it can save lives and it probably does …

Since its introduction in the UK tens of thousands of people have asked questions. Last year, 2024–25, nearly 90,000 people asked questions and there were 38,000 disclosures. Forty-two per cent of people that asked a question had a disclosure made. That is just staggering. South Australia has had 2500 applications, with 1064 disclosures, since its inception in December 2024.

Clare's law will be introduced in Victoria under a Liberal government, and I urge the government now to get on board, because it has been lagging in this. Introducing coercive control legislation has been a positive move on our back. As I said, it was Jess Wilson's first announcement that she would criminalise coercive control. The government have done that now, and I am pleased to see that and to support this bill.

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Corrections, Minister for Victim Support, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Community Sport) (11:31): I am very pleased to speak today on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026. This bill is about listening to victim-survivors and responding to their needs. Victim-survivors have told us what is needed to keep them safe and deliver better outcomes. This bill delivers a range of significant reforms which prioritise victim-survivor safety, improve the efficiency of justice processes and ensure perpetrators of all forms of family violence are held to account. Before I speak to the detail of the bill I want to acknowledge all of the victims, particularly the women and children, who have been impacted by family violence. I also want to recognise that the impacts of this are not felt equally. First Nations women and children continue to experience family violence at disproportionate rates, with devastating outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

This government has done more than any other government to protect women and children, prevent family violence and hold perpetrators to account. I have had the privilege of working in this space throughout my time in Parliament, including through my previous portfolio of prevention of family violence and through First Peoples, and now through my responsibilities in victim support, youth justice and corrections. But this government knows that there is always more work to be done. There is always more that we can do to keep victim-survivors safe, strengthen our justice system and prevent further harm.

Today this bill takes another important step forward. Firstly, the bill will abolish the use of good character as a concept in sentencing, including in its use as a mitigating factor for all offences. Put simply, if you commit a serious offence, you will no longer be able to rely on claims about your good character to reduce your sentence. Currently victim-survivors can be required to sit in court and hear that the person who harmed them is a person of good character. This can deepen their trauma and diminish their lived experience. Being considered respected or good by others does not make the harm inflicted on a victim any less serious or any less deserving of recognition. These reforms are about ensuring sentencing remains focused on relevant, objective information. The court will still be able to consider information that is relevant to sentencing, including matters that may properly inform an assessment of an offender's prospects of rehabilitation. What will change, however, is the court will no longer receive or rely on vague or subjective assessments of an offender's reputation as a person of good character. This is an important reform that puts the focus where it belongs: on the offending, its impact and the factors that are genuinely relevant to a fair and appropriate sentence.

Further, this bill will introduce a new protected attribute of subjection to family violence. This means it will be unlawful to discriminate against someone because they have experienced or are currently experiencing family violence. No victim-survivor should lose the opportunity for a promotion or be denied a rental because they needed to attend court, relocate for safety or access support. These reforms recognise an important reality: experiencing family violence should not create another barrier to a person's safety, stability or ability to participate fully in their community.

The bill also contains a number of reforms to family violence and personal safety processes. Too often victim-survivors are required to attend court multiple times to seek or maintain protection from a perpetrator. This can force them to repeatedly relive their experiences of violence and subject them to further trauma. Victim-survivors should not have to fight so hard for protection and safety. These changes will deliver more victim-centred processes for extending or varying family violence intervention orders to better protect children and families from predatory behaviours through the personal safety intervention order service.

Coercive control is a deeply damaging form of family violence. It can involve intimidation, humiliation, surveillance, gaslighting and isolation. It is often used against a female intimate partner to undermine their autonomy, their confidence and their sense of self-worth. It can mean controlling who someone sees, where they go, what they wear, who they speak to or how they spend their own money. It is about taking away a person's freedom little by little, so they have no control over their own life. We know the devastating impacts this can have on victim-survivors. Coercive control can increase the risk of homelessness, suicide, poor health outcomes and poverty. It can leave people isolated from their family and friends. Currently there is no specific criminal justice response available to victim-survivors experiencing coercive control unless there is a family violence intervention order in place or the behaviour escalates to another criminal offence, such as assault or a sexual offence. Victim-survivors deserve better than waiting for the harm to escalate before the justice system can respond. They deserve to be seen, they deserve to be heard and they deserve to know that when they reach out for help, our systems can respond in a way that keeps them safe and protects them from further harm. That is why we are criminalising coercive control as a standalone offence.

Considerable work has gone into developing this offence, and I want to acknowledge the many stakeholders who have contributed, raised difficult and complex issues, challenged us to get the detail right and worked constructively to ensure that the reform is effective. We will continue to work closely with stakeholders as we prepare for implementation, including ensuring family violence services, police, courts and the legal profession have the training, resources and support that they need to implement the offence effectively. The introduction of this offence will also help build greater awareness and understanding of the harm that is caused by coercive control. Our government stands firm that controlling, frightening and devastating the life of another person is not acceptable.

The bill also strengthens support for people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage in relation to fines and infringements. These reforms will help ensure that fines do not compound the disadvantage experienced by people already facing significant barriers. The bill will also clarify that electronic signatures can be used for family violence intervention order and personal safety intervention order documents. The change will make proceedings less disruptive for victim-survivors by confirming that they can sign relevant documents electronically without having to attend a court or police station simply to provide a signature. This is a really practical and important improvement. The bill also strengthens protections for children and families by enabling PSIOs to be made against adults engaging in grooming behaviours. Grooming is a predatory behaviour undertaken to facilitate child sexual abuse. It is insidious, it is deeply harmful and it deserves to be recognised within the PSIO framework. These reforms will provide an opportunity to disrupt this behaviour before it escalates into sexual offending, helping to keep children and families safe.

We know that family violence destroys lives, harms children across generations and destabilises homes, communities and our broader society. Listening to and centring the experience and voices of victim-survivors is what this bill is about. I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to doing this work. We will continue to fight to keep people safe, to stop violence before it starts and to hold perpetrators to account. I commend the bill to the house.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (11:40): I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026. Victim-survivors deserve a more contemporary justice system and the coalition has, through the work of a number of our members, including the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Eildon, lived

up to that commitment in our work in recent times and over our time in opposition. On coercive control, last December the member for Eildon sought to introduce in this place a private members bill that would have seen action taken almost one year ago, because we strongly believe that victim-survivors deserve a more contemporary justice system.

As the Attorney-General said in her second-reading speech, this bill enables reforms to prioritise victim-survivors' safety and improve the efficiency of justice processes, and in some ways it does. But it does not go far enough to provide that contemporary justice system that we as a Parliament have an obligation to deliver. What this bill does, in summary, is it makes amendments in relation to family violence, intervention orders and criminal proceedings; enables information sharing; makes some changes in relation to electronic signatures; adds the new offence of coercive control; and makes amendments to the capacity of good character when it comes to sentencing. I do note that an amendment that does not get brought into effect for a full year – until August 2027 – provides that grooming constitutes prohibited behaviour. The bill also makes a number of fines reforms and prohibits discrimination on the basis of subjection to family violence. What this bill does not do is deliver a number of much-needed contemporary reforms and reforms this government has committed to delivering. This is a lost opportunity.

When it comes to the outstanding reforms, we need to think of them as a required set of changes that only bring about a contemporary system when they are all enacted. The measures in this bill are important and that is why the coalition supports them. As I said, in relation to coercive control, we moved a private members bill to do just that. When it comes to character references in terms of sentencing, of course we support the reform, but there are a number of other issues that we are seeing in our justice system at the moment which are causing significant damage to victim-survivors.

I refer specifically, firstly, to suppression orders. Suppression orders are causing serious damage in the way that they are, in my view, being misused. We are the suppression order capital of the country in Victoria, and it is a change that is needed. After months and months of calling for action, we have seen the government commit to reviewing the issue. We have as a coalition committed to end the abuse of suppression orders because we are angry with how they are being given out. There is no other word for it. As has been reported, it has been proposed that a change in that area should restrict orders to genuine physical safety reasons and severely limit the current mental health loophole. We have committed to fixing this loophole. A coalition government led by Jess Wilson will see reform of suppression orders, because we cannot see the continuation of suppression orders being issued in a way that is hurting and damaging people and being misused.

Further, as the member for Eildon rightly put it, a coalition government will see the introduction of Clare's law in Victoria. For background, for the chamber, Clare's law was introduced in the United Kingdom after the tragic murder of Clare Wood by a former partner. What the scheme allows is for individuals to request information from police about a partner's history of violence – their right to ask – and places an onus on police to proactively disclose information when they identify a risk – their right to know. This scheme is in place in South Australia and has seen 2581 applications and 1064 disclosures since its inception at the end of 2024, a significant measure which shows that where there is a right to ask, there is a set of information to know, as it were. That is why we strongly support those laws being introduced in Victoria. Again, under a coalition, that will be introduced.

I would also note our commitment to prerecording sexual assault evidence. Victim-survivors deserve a more contemporary justice system, as I said earlier. That is why we have talked about and committed to the capacity for prerecorded sexual assault evidence. I note that after our commitment the government matched our commitment to introduce that reform and has not done so, which is causing distress in the sector. Reform is needed and should include letting victims in sexual offence proceedings be given the option of prerecorded evidence. Again, a coalition government will do that.

Other than suppression orders, a number of other matters were recently raised at a Melbourne University round table that are worth mentioning. Though it is not specifically in the act, there are

issues with pseudonyms and concealment orders which deserve looking at because, as has been put by the courts before, they operate as de facto suppression orders. There has also been an argument put that is worth considering in relation to suppression orders, which is whether there should be an obligation to publicly publish reasons, which is not always the case, so that we can understand the reason for a suppression order.

Tangentially, I think it is worth considering current court documents and the processes around court documents. I note that in Queensland there is a legislative requirement in relation to court documents, and that is worth looking at. There are some outstanding issues in relation to the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 in relation to victim consent, for example, where an adult victim has an order against their partner, and whether or not there is a consent issue whereby the person who has the order placed against them may be protected by the law. Clearly it is a mistake at law, if you will, when there are some circumstances where they are protected in a way that perhaps they should not be.

I think it is finally worth also noting the Victims of Crime Commissioner's recommendations at the end of September last year in relation to court safety. Court safety is of course a matter that should always be considered.

All of these issues that I have raised go to providing victim-survivors with a more contemporary justice system. They are important changes that could have been included in this bill and in some cases, as I said, have been committed to by the government but not delivered; I went through prerecorded sexual assault evidence as an example of that. These are commitments that we as a coalition have made in most of those cases. Victim-survivors deserve that contemporary justice system, and that is what they will have under a coalition government.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): I acknowledge former member for Wills Phil Cleary in the gallery today.

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Creative Industries) (11:50): In speaking in support of this bill I start by acknowledging those who have survived family violence, those who have dared to rebuild their life, their self and their identity. You are worthy of so much respect. What you have been through should not be experienced by anyone. I acknowledge those who have not survived family violence, those whose lives have been stolen through the choice to use violence by someone close to them. And my acknowledgement includes Vicki Cleary, murdered on this day in 1987. I acknowledge the ongoing advocacy of her brother Phil and of all advocates who are relentless in wanting to see this violence end. I pay my respects to the woman who has been found dead in her home today, with a 75-year-old man arrested. The violence in homes continues, and it continues to affect mainly women and children who are experiencing and witnessing violence through predominantly the choices of men. It continues to disproportionately harm First Nations women and children, often at the hands and voices of non-Indigenous men.

Yesterday we heard from former AFL footballer Mitch Brown at Respect Victoria's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence launch here in Parliament. He asked where the men were. The room was filled with women, with only a few men present. Mitch spoke of the responsibility of men in ensuring the safety of women. He said:

> … all of us, not just violent men, not just men who control their partners … For too long, good men have been able to look at violence against women and see someone else's problem. I know I have … I have seen things I knew were not right and stayed silent. I laughed at a joke … I have watched countless times other men disrespect women and decided it was not my place to say something. Not any more.

Mitch's words were powerful. He recognised that the problem of family violence does not reside with women and children; it resides with men. 'It is our problem,' he said.

The fundamental problem comes down to not enough men respecting women and girls. This is evident when we see AFL male players – those who are admired by young people and children, those who are to set an example of healthy masculinity – behave in such unhealthy ways, whether it is the alleged

behaviour at the Pullman by Swans players or the mocking of this behaviour by Richmond players. We see such hurtful and harmful disrespect of women and girls, and this behaviour is beyond hurting someone's feelings; it is dangerous. It is physically and emotionally dangerous.

When you disrespect one woman, no matter who she is, you disrespect all of us, and that includes these players, the women who raised these men in their homes, the women who taught them at school, the women who cared for them in child care or as maternal and child health nurses, the women who are now likely their physios and therapists, the women they have needed throughout their lives and will continue to need. They show disrespect when they disrespect one woman, and it needs to stop.

This disrespect breeds harmful behaviours and choices, and that includes coercive control. The reform we are debating today builds on our government's unparalleled commitment to keeping women and children safe. We have invested over $4 billion to build the nation-leading prevention and response infrastructure that does help keep people safe, and will continue to do so, and to change the cultural attitudes to violence in the home, because that is the core issue. We heard from Rosie Batty yesterday the confirmation that our state is leading the nation when it comes to investment, reform and improvements, and we know that as long as any woman or child – any person – in Victoria is unsafe at home, this work is not over.

This bill will take the important next steps in strengthening our laws against harmful behaviour. It builds on our previous reforms strengthening accountability for perpetrators, prioritising the safety of victim-survivors and improving the efficiency of our justice system. This bill will criminalise coercive control of an intimate partner, making coercive control a standalone offence, and it needs to be. This behaviour, this coercive control, is a pattern of abuse that is used to establish or maintain control over another person, often through intimidation, humiliation, gaslighting and isolation. The effect of repeated and prolonged coercive control is incredibly harmful. It removes a person's sense of autonomy, and it diminishes their sense of self-worth. It erases people. We see the effects and consequences of this type of abuse around us regularly. Family violence is not something that happens to other people; it is present in every one of our communities, in every one of our workplaces, in every part of our social circles. The insidious nature of it means it is often broadly not seen; it is behind closed doors. Every day every person in this place will interact with somebody who has experienced or witnessed family violence; it is that pervasive. For those who experience coercive control, it is a relentless form of abuse that degrades their sense of safety, trust and wellbeing, not just within the bounds of an abusive relationship but also with the world around them. It shrinks them.

We know people who experience this form of abuse have an increased risk of homelessness and poverty, of becoming suicidal and even of committing offences themselves. Currently there is no criminal justice response available for victim-survivors of coercive control unless there is a family violence intervention order in place or a physical criminal offence has occurred, such as an assault or a sexual offence. By criminalising coercive control, this bill aims to bridge this gap, allowing perpetrators to be held accountable for their non-physical violence, such as psychological, emotional or financial abuse.

Another important change introduced into this bill is the abolition of the concept of good character as a mitigating factor in sentencing for offences. Too often our criminal justice system is a retraumatising experience where victim-survivors must sit in a court and hear that their perpetrator – the person who harmed them, the person who made that choice to cause harm – is a person of good character. This is an incredibly damaging practice that suggests good character and family violence are not mutually exclusive. We know that violence is a choice that perpetrators make, and it is the choices that we make that define our character. Abolishing the concept of good character requires the courts to focus purely on the offence committed by the perpetrator, what it did to the victim-survivor and how it affected them. It is time to end the 'but he's a good bloke' narrative. If you are harming someone, you are not a good bloke, you are not a good woman, you are not a good person; you are a violent person, you are a person who has chosen to use violence. That does not make you good. No matter what else you have

done in your life, you need to be held accountable for that moment where you made a choice to use violence. I am so glad that this practice will end with this bill.

These reforms also ensure that grooming behaviours are captured as offences under the personal safety intervention order framework. Grooming is a predatory behaviour undertaken to facilitate child sexual abuse. It can happen over time and may be directed at the child or parents or caregiver in order to get access to that child. A PSIO can be made to protect a person from unwanted prohibited behaviour such as assault, including sexual assault, as well as harassment and property damage. Under the bill, we are expanding the definition of 'prohibited behaviour' to include grooming to reflect its particularly dangerous, harmful and terrifying nature that profoundly affects children and their families. It is well and truly time that we recognise the harm of grooming behaviours and what they do to a child's sense of the world. Often the effect of this behaviour does not end when the grooming ends but can affect their safety in relationships and the community well into adulthood. This behaviour stays with people; it becomes a part of a child's story. This bill not only recognises the inherent harm of grooming but creates more mechanisms to stop this conduct before it escalates into sexual offending.

Another important aspect of the bill is the proposed amendment to the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 to add a new attribute of subjection to family violence. Family violence significantly affects the Victorian community, particularly women, First Nations women and women with disabilities, and currently there are no provisions in the act to recognise the effect that this has on other aspects of their lives. The time, energy and stress associated with experiencing family violence – requirements to attend legal proceedings, access support services or housing relocation – is a tax they should not have to pay. I support the bill.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (12:00): I rise today to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026. I have been a member of this chamber for 12 years. Over my time I have seen the Royal Commission into Family Violence. I have seen the implementation of the final report and the recommendations that were arising from that royal commission. I have seen a lot of sunshine put on the impacts of family violence, on the necessity to do things better and do things more and on how serious this matter is. I have also over that time had many, many people come to me and disclose to me their experiences as victim-survivors of family violence, which are some of the more challenging experiences to engage with as a member of Parliament. I am sure that you share this sentiment, Acting Speaker, that when you put your hand up for parliamentary office you do not get a job description and you do not necessarily have a full depth of understanding of the issues that will be presented to you.

Those issues run deep in our communities, and I would like to acknowledge the victim-survivors in our communities, particularly in my electorate of Lowan but right across Victoria and even Australia. We know that things must change, yet they have not. We have had a royal commission and things are getting worse. We have had a lot of money spent on family violence, yet the outcomes are still getting worse. We have had opportunities within this Parliament to ensure that there were the relevant laws changed to support police to do their job as part of enforcing the law and stopping family violence, which has not yet occurred. In many ways I think it is a sigh of relief for all of us that a long time after the family violence royal commission handed down its report, we are seeing legislation that will finally outlaw coercive control in the state of Victoria.

This has been a long fight and there have been many people involved in that, and I commend all on both sides of the chamber and all within the community, the quiet victims, people who are courageous enough to share their experiences and their stories. For those within Victoria Police, who have added their voice to needing additional supporting laws so that they can do their job and do it well, and those particularly who work within the family violence sector, it is an incredibly difficult sector to work within. You are confronted with some of the worst of communication breakdown, of physical violence, of control, of one person having to be much bigger in a relationship and making the other person much smaller with many different tools, whether it is through psychological control, financial control or physical control elements. This is something that I have witnessed firsthand – not as a

victim-survivor; I will make that clear. I do not understand what it is like to be in that position directly, but I do know the harm that it causes to so many people right across Victoria, particularly women.

I would like to acknowledge the Shadow Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence Cindy McLeish, who has done an outstanding job in ensuring that legislation like that before the house today was made a reality. I would also like to acknowledge the previous shadow ministers for family violence on our side of the chamber who have fought very, very hard for family violence, and I would like to acknowledge particularly Ms Crozier in the other place, who has been a fierce campaigner for better responses and better supports for victim-survivors of family violence. I would also like to acknowledge my colleague the member for Mildura Jade Benham. She has made many raw emotional contributions to this chamber that have helped put this law in place today. It is the courage of somebody like the member for Mildura to stand up in this place and share her direct experience of being a victim-survivor of family violence that helped others, who have not got a voice or have not got the ability to speak up, to be heard. I commend the member for Mildura. I am so proud of her in how she has been able to do that. It will be a difficult contribution, I am sure, that she will provide later today, but like all victim-survivors in Victoria, the Parliament of Victoria has her back.

I do not want to dwell on this, but I do want to say that it is somewhat disappointing that politics gets in the road of good legislation. It was in December last year that the Shadow Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, the member for Eildon, and the member for Mildura put forward very similar legislation to what is before us today. It will take some 18 months to implement this legislation and to roll it out. It still grinds my gears that we have lost a year to be able to enforce laws around coercive control. There are many women who will have to suffer because of politics getting in the road of good legislation and good policymaking. That should not be the case. I think probably all members of this place sometimes have to say no to legislation simply because the government has not brought it forward. That should not be the case when it is an outcome that would result in women and other Victorians not being victims of family violence by providing police with the tools to be able to do their job, supporting our family violence workers to be able to do their job and redirecting someone who is using physical, psychological or financial violence and wants help to not do that anymore. They recognise it as a problem, and they cannot access support and assistance to stop that behaviour. We have let all of those Victorians down.

It is deeply disturbing to me that still we hear that Sunday is family violence day for many police officers around the state of Victoria. It is the day that they know that most of their workload will be knocking on doors around inquiries, following up complaints around physical violence, in particular in the home. That is not good enough in Victoria when we have had a Royal Commission into Family Violence. We need to make sure that we are providing the laws to police, and I am very pleased that we will be providing additional laws today. We also need to make sure that we are providing the appropriate resources, not just to support the victim-survivors after the case. We need to make sure it stops happening in the first place. That includes making sure that men understand how to communicate well and how to improve their behaviours and supporting them through that journey.

We know there are horrific crimes. Locally, I have spoken with Simone O'Brien, who has been a fierce campaigner against family violence. She has told her story so many times. She was beaten to near death with a baseball bat. It is utterly disgraceful what happened in that instance. That is horrific assault, and it is absolutely inexcusable. But there was a series of red flags that took place up to that moment that perhaps could have resulted in an intervention that would have stopped that assault from happening. The forgotten part of the journey of how we bring family violence to an end is how we pick up those red flags early – this is something I learned from Simone – by listening to someone who is a victim-survivor. If we pick up those red flags early, we can either end a relationship or we can redirect it into a way that people communicate and treat each other with much more equality within a relationship so that there is equal contribution and respect and no control within a relationship. I would encourage any politician to pursue that going forward, because it is a step that has been ignored and it is a step that would bring family violence closer to an end.

Again, I would like to congratulate all who have been involved in bringing this legislation forward. I have recently been involved in a stalking case, which has been incredibly difficult for me to deal with. I cannot imagine what that is like when it is a loved one who is stalking you. It is something that I think should be addressed. We need to make sure that this can be put to an end. It should not be a prolonged process where the victim is not appropriately protected. Most importantly, we need to be able to give the police the tools to do their job, because men who are treating women like objects or trying to control them, frighten them, intimidate them or make them fearful in how they go about their day-to-day lives should be locked up. They do not deserve to be out on the streets. We should be keeping other women safe from these men who are doing this disturbing behaviour so their behaviour can be sorted out. I commend the work of Victoria Police, all family violence workers and all of the victim-survivors who assisted to put this bill forward today.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc – Minister for Local Government, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Renters) (12:10): It is important and critical in this chamber today to rise and speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026. This is a bill I feel like I could speak for days on. This is a significant piece of work that has been done. But before I go into some of the elements, I want to acknowledge victim-survivors and those that have been lost to the traumas of family violence and intimate partner violence. While it is sometimes not in order to recognise the contributions of people, it would be beyond me not to recognise Phil Cleary's presence in this house today and his advocacy for his sister Vicki over a number of years. When I became Parliamentary Secretary for Men's Behaviour Change a little while ago, his was one of my first events, out at Coburg and bringing people together under the stewardship of Anthony Cianflone, the member for Pascoe Vale, who is an outstanding member of Parliament and advocate. We all have work to do, and every hour that ticks by is another hour when we can do everything we can to prevent violence and intimate partner violence in our community. That never rests; all those years on, it still goes on. I acknowledge the work of family members like Phil and so many others that have had that trauma and that impact, live with that and have every bit of resolve to make change into the future.

This is an incredibly important bill. Coercive control has a presence in so many elements, the overwhelming majority of elements, of gendered violence and intimate partner violence in our communities. We know we cannot law-and-order our way out of this crisis. We need, in particular, men and boys to be responsible for their actions and their behaviours, because if we are to stop gendered violence in Victoria, it starts with men and boys. Every single bit of the work and effort that we need to make is to create an environment where we call out bad behaviour, because we know those first elements of poor attitudes towards women and girls can bring the enabling environment for violence into the future. The evidence stacks up. The evidence is clear that that can have an impact across our society – we see consistently tens of thousands of people, particularly the overwhelming majority being men, that are known to Victoria Police to use violence against an intimate partner. Coercive control is a key feature of that. This is as much about an education campaign across the state – and we have seen the feature of coercive control legislation in New South Wales – as about having a key conversation around the really unsafe impacts of coercive control, its presence in relationships and how it can lead to violence over time.

When I was Parliamentary Secretary for Men's Behaviour Change, I had the opportunity to join the Attorney-General in some of these consultations, and I acknowledge the work that was done by the sector and the genuine concern from a range of different communities – I remember some of the discussions that were had at the time – about making sure this is right and making sure this legislation is fit for purpose. It builds on a huge legacy that this government has in more than $4 billion invested in the prevention of family violence to create an environment in which when victim-survivors seek out that support and care, we are there in that moment of need. The Orange Door network is nation leading across the 37 sites and the outreaches that they have. Hundreds of thousands of people have gone through those services. What really jars on me is that over 250,000 of those individuals have been kids.

When we see the pervasiveness and the impact, this being the number one law and order issue in our state, and the intergenerational trauma that flows from family violence and intimate partner violence, this is an epidemic. This is a crisis in our nation, and in every minute that ticks by we need to be focused on this in all of our systems and all of our engagement. It is a responsibility of all in the community to be front and centre, whether it is in workplaces, in sporting organisations, in government or in private sector work and across our communities. We need to make sure that in every form and facet the prevention of family violence and intimate partner violence is a core focus.

This bill does really good things and it builds on that work. Particularly we saw the Premier yesterday address the activism campaign, 16 days of activism that will go forward. We will see a sea of orange when we get together on 20 November and march the streets to end gendered violence. To have our Premier as an upstander and an ally and to see the work that we have done to get to this point is really important.

I want to give a big shout-out to the legends at Respect Victoria. They do an outstanding job. The CEO Helen Bolton is an incredible leader. Helen has had a decorated career in the prevention of sexual violence across our state. That organisation has set the tone for how we talk about gendered violence and intimate partner violence. Their campaigns are internationally leading. They have a depth of research and policy that we could only dream of. The *Willing, Capable and Confident* report around the corrosive nature of men's violence and the Man Box work and the Adolescent Man Box that have been put together give us the evidentiary basis. It gives us all the tools and understanding. The amazing team at Jesuit Social Services – I want to acknowledge the longstanding work of Julie Edwards and Matt Tyler, who has departed that organisation now but they set up the foundation – and then the absolutely magnificent leader in Kate Fitz-Gibbon, who led Respect Victoria as the chair for a decade. They have set the foundation for us to take action, and they have set up the foundation for us to push in and do further.

I note the really sincere and important comments from the member for Lowan in her reflections, but the notion that we can law-and-order our way out of this – this starts with cultural change and attitude change. When we say the royal commission made a certain amount of recommendations and the opposition says that because we have not ended family violence yesterday that is a failure of the royal commission, I think it is a very delicate point in just how pervasive and impactful gendered violence is. The notion that recommendations on a page and a service sector stood up would end it that quickly goes against every bit of evidence that there is an intergenerational need for understanding around how men and boys are raised and how we make sure that those damaging stereotypes and attitudes are responded to over time. That is what changes outcomes.

We have got the foundations with the Respect Victoria work, with the policy intent, but it is not just a political point around where that sits. I call that out because I think this should be a multi-Parliament approach. We have had the rapid review with Micaela Cronin and the great work that has been done. This is not about colours and movements in politics. This is about the evidentiary basis and following that and following the lead, and this government has not wasted a moment. There were some that said this would be a lawyers picnic. Now we have multipartisan support for the work that is being done. In the work that I was able to do and in the briefings I have had with some of the federal representatives, they see Victoria as the jurisdiction that leads in this space.

One crazy idea – the notion that someone's good character could lower a sentence for a crime that they may have committed, particularly sexual violence or intimate partner violence – I think has made everyone's skin crawl. I am so glad that the Attorney-General has done outstanding work. I want to call out the advocacy of Harrison James in this space. We connected on Instagram a while ago. To see Harrison the other week was moving and inspiring. To see the press conference that was done was absolutely outstanding. This work has been really important to bring this through and to make sure that if you are a perpetrator, if you have been sentenced and you have impacted on someone with your crimes, and I particularly think of contemporary references in gendered violence or sexual violence, that is not a good character. That is someone who has absolutely degraded their character. It does not

matter what things you have done before, you are a perpetrator of sexual violence and harm, and that is that. The letters that people might write have no relevance to the conduct that is put forward. This is a really important change and recommendation, and I am really happy to see that. I know the Attorney-General has not wasted a moment going forward with that.

We have a lot to be really grateful for in Victoria. We have a great organisation in Respect Victoria, we have great department engagement through Family Safety Victoria and people who tirelessly put their work forward. But I want to end on this point: it is the victim-survivors and those that are no longer with us who have been impacted by gendered violence that we have at the forefront of all of our messaging and minds into the future. Katie and Zaiba spoke so well yesterday as members of the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, of which the magnificent Rosie Batty was the inaugural chair. Katie and Zaiba are representatives on that Victim Survivors' Advisory Council. I have had a chance to interact with that council, and I know how important they are and how fearless they are in their advocacy for change. They are some of the most incredible people to put their story forward, to share their understanding of policy, to drive a better outcome and to fearlessly hold government to account. The honesty in some of those chats and the urgency of reform is not about just the policy outcome; it is about saving lives. It is about keeping families safe, and it is about keeping kids safe. I commend the bill to the house. To the Attorney-General and to the department, thank you for all your work on this.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (12:20): So far this year 47 women in Australia have been killed by a man known to them. That is more than one woman a week so far killed by a current or former intimate partner or a man known to them. Why isn't this on the front page of every single paper every single day? If this was one man murdered in his home by a partner, would we treat this differently? Or have our media and our leaders become so numb and so accustomed to women being killed that it barely rates a mention anymore? The last fortnight has been shocking for women in this country. When a woman reported a sexual assault in a hotel room in East Melbourne where five Sydney Swans AFL players were present, how did the media report it? Headlines said it was a scandal or an incident. The CEO of the Swans said that he was disappointed the players found themselves in this situation. I am sorry, but they did not find themselves in this situation. No-one just trips over and accidentally sexually assaults someone. It is a choice. Perpetrators make a choice to assault someone, and we as a society can make a choice not to stand for it or excuse it anymore.

Now we have Tigers players as well – and I am a lifelong Tiger, so this pains me – making light of women's experiences of sexual assault and treating women's experiences of having their physical and sexual boundaries crossed as a joke. It is not a joke. One in five women will experience sexual assault in their lifetime. That is 20 per cent of women, and that is just the ones that are reported. Gendered abuse is far, far too commonplace, and it has become much too normalised. Gendered violence does not just mean assault. There is emotional abuse, financial abuse, stalking, online harassment and things like reproductive coercion, where people are pressured to either have children or have abortions against their will. Right now, all of these forms of abuse are becoming far too normalised, and it is time for a reckoning. Women across this country are being treated like their safety just does not matter, like they do not deserve to be safe, but everyone deserves to be safe. It is the first job of politicians and governments to do everything in their power to keep people in their state and in their country safe. Leaders in our society and our institutions are failing when they refuse to call alleged sexual assault what it is or when they dismiss jokes about it as just boys being boys, when they deny that there is a cultural problem with men and in particular in men's sport and when they fail to commit the money and resources to address the scale of the problem.

The saddest thing is that I thought we had had this conversation before, but it seems to have dropped off the radar of the media, of institutions and even perhaps of governments. It needs to be put back on the radar, so I am pleased that we are having this conversation in Parliament today. But why, for example, has the ministry for men's behaviour change been quietly dropped from this Labor government and renamed the ministry for men and boys? Doesn't men's behaviour change deserve some specific attention, given everything that we have seen in the last two weeks and after all the

women who have been killed this year by men? This cannot just be women's problem to solve. Men need to step up. It is about men's behaviour change. As we have heard so many times in this place before from people like Rosie Batty, who spoke on the floor of this Parliament all those years ago, changing the culture starts with setting a standard that women should be respected everywhere, that respect should be normal behaviour and that disrespect needs to be called out at every opportunity, not swept under the rug, and it needs to be stamped out early. It includes how we treat women in the workplace and how we treat women in the public eye, when everybody is watching, and setting the culture. Honestly, I think there is a reason that we have never had an elected female Premier in this state, and I think that the way that women are treated in the public eye and in politics and the way men often let it happen or exacerbate it has a lot to do with it.

I have talked about my own experiences in this place. I note that the member for Essendon has left the chamber, but before he leaves this place for good with his retirement I want to take the opportunity to call him out specifically and some of his colleagues, because I think if we want to talk about culture change it needs to start here in our Parliament, in the highest decision-making body in our state. When I first entered Parliament in 2014 as a young woman – I was just 29 during that election campaign – when I first stepped into this place, honestly I could not believe how women were treated, including by fellow members of Parliament, and I think many women in this place would have had common experiences. Sly comments about their appearance, sexualised comments about their experience in the chamber – sure, I had those. Rape and violence threats on social media, on the internet – sure, I had those too. Women in politics seem to just get used to it, although we should not have to. I am sure that the male politicians in this place would say that they would never, ever see themselves doing those things to a woman.

But there is something that is a little bit more insidious and subtle that happens to women in this place, in the way that they are treated differently from men every day in this culture, that does not get called out enough. Things have changed. But in my time in Parliament, from day one, for the first few years almost every single time I got up to give a speech as an elected member of this place there were two members of Parliament in particular, the member for Essendon and the former member for Melton Don Nardella, who would come into this chamber specifically just to yell over the top of my speeches. Regardless of what the speech was about they would use their booming voices to yell throughout the entirety of it so that I could not be heard, attempting to silence me, and then they would get up and leave when I was finished.

A member interjected.

Ellen SANDELL: I note someone opposite said, 'It's just Parliament.' But this was not just politics and Parliament. This was relentless. It was not just political theatre. It was a deliberate, targeted intimidation tactic. At the time, after a few years, when I got up and called it out, I had Labor women come up to me in the corridor and say, 'Yes, this is not okay. This behaviour is not okay.' But other people said I should just get used to it, that it was just because I was a Green, that it was just politics. But do you know what the interesting thing is? It never happened to my male colleagues, the ones who sat right next to me, who were also Greens, even though they gave very similar speeches. Their speeches were just as fiery, just as passionate, but somehow they were allowed to deliver their speeches free of the kind of behaviour that I experienced for years. The member for Richmond, though, my female colleague, was treated similarly to me when she entered this place.

The sad thing is I actually do not think these two MPs or perhaps other male MPs in this place ever actually realised what they were doing, because treating women like this had become so commonplace and normalised. I think they would not think it was gendered at all. But I hope that in their retirement they take some time to reflect on whether their behaviour really was okay, whether it really was just politics or whether it was something that contributes to a culture that keeps women out of public life. I hope that they will reflect on whether having two older men with booming voices yell at the top of their lungs over the top of a woman in this place really was appropriate behaviour in the workplace and what they really were trying to achieve deep down and perhaps how that kind of threatening and

intimidating behaviour might hit differently for young women witnessing that, given everything that women grow up experiencing in society. We know that gendered violence does not start out of nowhere. We have had this conversation before. It starts with a culture of disrespect, of intimidation, of putting women down. It starts with violent language. It starts with coercive behaviour, like we are talking about in this bill today.

But despite all the horrific statistics that we have heard in this place today, I do have hope, because I have been so heartened in the last few days at the outpouring from people speaking up and calling out leaders who are not taking gendered violence seriously. We had #MeToo, where women felt emboldened to get up and talk about their experiences, and it felt like we were having a reckoning. In the last few years it feels like that has really fallen away, that women's experiences are not being talked about, are not being legitimised. But it feels like, in the last few weeks, we are starting to finally have this conversation again.

I think people in the community know the difference between right and wrong, and they can see the crisis for what it is, an emergency that needs an emergency-scale response. New laws might be part of this; I do not think that they are the only answer. This bill today includes some important reforms that stakeholders have been asking for for a very, very long time. I would like to acknowledge all those stakeholders and acknowledge the minister who has brought these changes forward today. It is absolutely right that experiencing family violence will be a protected attribute under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010. No-one should lose a job or be denied a promotion or face discrimination in housing because they are experiencing family violence or have taken steps to protect themselves. Of course they should not.

The changes to fines are also welcome and long overdue. We know financial abuse is a common form of family violence, and perpetrators can weaponise fines, debts and financial systems to keep victim-survivors trapped. This is something that we have brought up in this place many times before, particularly with things like CityLink and toll roads, where often a perpetrator will keep the tag that is actually registered to a female partner. The female partner has left, but they still keep racking up the fines and they keep going to the female partner. I think we need not just these changes but real fines reform overall. I think we need concessional fines, and we also need reform that means that the big private companies like Transurban, the toll road companies, do not get the government to be essentially their free debt collector and put people into huge amounts of debt that they could actually end up in prison for. Expanding access to the family violence scheme and other forms of fines relief is a practical reform that will really make a difference.

There are also some sensible changes to family violence intervention orders, reducing the need for victim-survivors to repeatedly return to court, requiring courts to consider their views and safety when extending orders and making sure the system better recognises patterns of risk. My colleague in the other place Kat Copsey has some questions she is putting forward to the minister's office about the process flow of criminal courts, just to make sure there will be no unintended consequences. But I will leave those questions to her.

This bill also raises a much bigger question about how this government is responding to family violence. Family violence is not inevitable; it is preventable. The real test of a government's commitment is not just the number of new offences it can announce; it is what happens to a woman or child when they put their hand up and ask for help. Can they get through to a service? Can they get a lawyer at a community legal centre? Can a young person who has grown up around violence get specialist support before the patterns are repeated? Right now, too often the answer to those questions is no. Victoria recorded more than 106,000 family violence incidents in the year 2024–25, and that is an all-time high. Specialist services tell us that demand is significantly outpacing supply. Maybe we will never be able to keep up with the level of demand until we have that real culture change that brings down the incidence of family violence. But we can do a lot better.

This year Labor allocated just 2.9 per cent of the family violence budget to primary prevention, and that is down from the year before. The current waitlist for people fleeing family violence to access housing, for example, is 18.6 months. That is an increase of 1.3 months from the year prior. The problem is getting worse, and there is more investment needed. I do not think anyone in this place wants governments to just keep legislating after violence has occurred. We actually want to fund the services to prevent violence before it happens.

I also want to acknowledge that specialist organisations do have some concerns about the new standalone offence of coercive control in this bill. Coercive control is real, and it can be devastating. As we know, it is not just one incident but a pattern of isolation, surveillance, financial control, threats, humiliation and the gradual stripping away of a person's autonomy and dignity. We need our systems to recognise it and respond to it, but organisations including the Women's Legal Service Victoria, the Federation of Community Legal Centres, Safe and Equal and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service have warned about the risks of relying on a new criminal offence which alone will not solve the issue and might hurt some of the most vulnerable women who themselves are experiencing family violence.

These organisations are particularly concerned about misidentification, and we know that this happens where victim-survivors are wrongly identified as perpetrators. Often it is perpetrators who use the justice system itself as another form of control to deliberately have the victim misidentified as a perpetrator and then use these types of offences to further the abuse that they are being subjected to. The risks are real. This does unfortunately happen, and the risks are especially acute for Aboriginal women and others who already experience discrimination within the legal system at high rates. We do not want to brush these warnings aside. If the new offence is to operate safely, implementation matters enormously. Specialist training for police, lawyers and courts and strong safeguards against misidentification will be very important. Culturally safe services, early intervention, properly funded legal assistance and independent monitoring of what the law does in practice will be really important.

We know a law cannot implement itself, and family violence policy should not become a contest of who can create the toughest-sounding offence. That might get a headline, but it does not solve the problem. Ten years after Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence, we know far more about what works. We know crisis response matters. We know that safe housing matters. We know legal assistance matters. We know children need to be treated as victim-survivors in their own right, and that matters. We know we must tackle the harm caused by industries like alcohol and gambling as well, which fuel violence. We know prevention and respectful relationships education matter, and we know that specialist services need stable, long-term funding rather than having to constantly wonder whether their programs will survive the next budget. There are reforms in this bill that will make the system fairer and safer, and they should be acknowledged. But legislation is only one part of the job. I hope the government, as they say they are serious about family violence, will match these new laws with investment in the people and programs doing the work every day. I know they have made significant investments to date, and the job is not done.

Ultimately the measure of success is not how many new laws we pass in this chamber. The measure of success is whether fewer women and children experience violence in the first place and whether every person who reaches out for help can actually get it. The measure of success will be seen next year when we are in this place: will we be able to bring that number – 47 women killed so far this year – down to the number it should be, which is zero?

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (12:38): I rise to support the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026. I do so as the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Safety and the state member for Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West but also, importantly, as the father of two young daughters, who I want to grow up, like all young women, in a world that is free from men's violence against women and children. In doing so I acknowledge and thank the Attorney-General and Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister Kilkenny, and nearly all the other justice ministers for bringing this bill to the chamber. I also thank the thousands of stakeholders, organisations, advocates,

justice community representatives, victims and survivors who fought for years to arrive here today, including via the incredible work of the landmark Royal Commission into Family Violence, which continues to provide us with a pathway to a better future.

But most importantly I would like to acknowledge all of the women and children whose lives have been taken by family violence – namely, men's violence against women and children. Across Victoria and indeed Australia family violence and men's violence against women is the number one law and order issue that is destroying lives, harming children across generations and destabilising homes, communities and our broader society. The evidence and research are very clear: on average, one Australian woman every week is killed by a current or former intimate partner. The Victorian family violence framework notes that overwhelmingly the perpetrator in these cases is male.

Around one in four Australian women have experienced violence from an intimate partner. Around one in four Australian women have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner since the age of 15, and one in five women have experienced sexual violence. Women are five times more likely than men to require medical attention or hospitalisation because of intimate partner violence and five times more likely to report fearing losing their lives. Indeed the Victorian government describes intimate partner violence as causing more illness, disability and death than any other risk factor for women aged 25 to 44 years of age. In 2024–25 Victoria Police recorded 106,429 family violence incidents, more than 290 incidents every single day. It is around one police call-out every 10 minutes. Victoria Police's Safe from Harm strategy shows just how gendered this violence is: women and girls accounted for 74 per cent of victim-survivors recorded in family violence incidents, while in 62 per cent of family violence incidents the perpetrator was the victim-survivor's current or former partner.

We must do better. Males, men, boys must all do better. Husbands, dads, brothers must all do better, because behind every statistic is a woman or a young girl, a mother, a daughter, a sister, a colleague, a neighbour, a friend, a human being who should have had the right, like all of us, to live the life they choose, marry whom they choose, partner with whom they choose and even not to partner or de-partner and leave whom they choose when they choose, on their own terms, without fear of violence, threats, coercion or repercussions. Sadly, we know far too many women have continued to have this fundamental right ignored, disrespected and taken away from them at the hands of violent, misogynistic men. I would like to quote Kym Valentine, who is an advocate for my community on these important issues. She says:

> To end coercive control is to dismantle the invisible prison that strips away a person's autonomy, restoring the fundamental human right to live, think, and breathe without the shadow of another's will dictating the terms of their existence.

One of these women who experienced the tragic consequences of coercive control, from my community, was Vicki Cleary, and I thank and acknowledge her brother Phil Cleary and sister Lizzie for being here today and for the letter they sent to me to share with the chamber about Vicki's story and their family's story:

> Dear Anthony,
>
> On this day, 26 August 1987 –

almost 40 years ago to this day –

> our sister, 25-year-old Vicki Cleary, was stabbed to death by her ex-boyfriend outside her place of work, the Shirley Robertson Childcare Centre in Coburg.
>
> Vicki's killer was a violent man, who'd previously stormed into the childcare centre on several occasions and frightened her and members of staff.
>
> He was the epitome of a coercive and controlling man, whereas Vicki was a kind, talented, artistic and beloved woman.
>
> Parents at the kindergarten marvelled at Vicki's kindness and the way she cared for their children.

Vicki was Lorna and Ron Cleary's firstborn daughter after 4 sons, one of whom died 24 hours after birth. Her birth on 9 October 1961 was treated like a miracle in our home.

On Vicki Cleary Day at the Coburg Footy Ground this year I –

Phil –

told the story about Vicki blowing out the candles on the celebratory cake with me after my 200th VFA game in June 1987, 11 weeks before we lost her.

So too have I told the story of her jumping off the tram after seeing me crossing Sydney Road on the way to the last training night of the 1987 VFA season, six days before her murder.

Having escaped a coercive man, she was bursting with happiness.

Unfortunately, like so many women at that time, she chose to stay silent about her ex-boyfriend's threatening visits and calls to the kinder and threats to do her harm.

Forty years ago, no one was talking about the terror women were enduring at the hands of men driven by male self-entitlement and misogyny and what governments could do to stop these –

evil –

men.

Today, more and more women are prepared to challenge men's coercion and control.

Today, every thinking person knows that male entitlement, misogyny and the refusal of an underbelly of men to accept women's newfound rights is the reason we are losing somewhere in the order of 80 women a year to men known to them.

Today, every thinking person knows that overwhelmingly, when a woman dies at the hands of a man known to her, the murder occurs in the context of separation and is a brutal expression of power by the killer.

After nearly 40 years of campaigning to stop men like –

their sister's killer, Phil –

… will support any law that stops men –

like their sister's killer –

… and enshrines a woman's right to independence and agency in the world.

We need to tell those misogynistic, coercive men who act as if a woman is their chattel that the law will no longer turn a blind eye to them.

From Vicki Cleary in Coburg in 1987 to Julie Ramage in Balwyn in 2003, to Adriana Donato in Aberfeldie in 2012, to Fiona Warzywoda in Sunshine in 2014 and Hannah Clarke and her children in Brisbane in 2020, we've lost woman after woman to an ex-partner in circumstances where every Red Flag was flying.

There just isn't time in one speech in parliament to name all the women and all the cases where a woman has died in circumstances where every Red Flag is flying.

It's time for legislation that not only recognises the Red Flags but stops these coercive men in their tracks.

On the annual Vicki Cleary Day at the Coburg Football Ground we remember Vicki and all the women lost to violent men and we stand in solidarity with the campaign to end male coercion and control.

Phil is here today with his sister Lizzie:

… who was 14 years of age when she lost her big sister Vicki in 1987 and spoke so powerfully about Vicki and the campaign last year.

Ask Lizzie about the impact of Vicki's murder on her physical and mental wellbeing and you'll quickly grasp the depth and impact of that trauma.

Mum and Dad aren't here to tell us about their trauma.

Phil writes:

After our mother Lorna died in 2011, Lizzie found several of Mum's diaries and a letter she'd written in memory of Vicki. The letter, which began with the sentence, 'My Darling Vicki I think of you often, always with tears in my eyes and wonder why it had to be,' and ended with the words, 'You dear Vicki, were always

> a beautiful child, a young girl with such a beautiful and compassionate nature. You did not deserve to die in the way you did, Mummy,' is simply heartbreaking.
>
> The heartbreak Mum wrote about was only magnified by the decision of the trial judge, George Hampel, to grant Vicki's killer a provocation defence and send him to gaol for 3 years and eleven months after he was found guilty of manslaughter not murder.
>
> It's a testament to Vicki's character however, and that of her parents, that she has become synonymous with the anti-violence campaign in Australia and the ending of misogynistic provocation defence in Victoria in 2005.
>
> Vicki's name and her memory lives on in the hearts and minds of campaigners. She is our inspiration.
>
> Today, Lizzie and I want to pass on our thanks to –

the Victorian Parliament –

> … for remembering our sister Vicki today in our presence …

and on the day of the anniversary of her life being taken on 26 August 1987, nearly 40 years ago. There are moments in public life when history seems to arrange itself in ways that are difficult to explain. Today is one of those days. Sometimes dates are more than dates. Sometimes history has a way of bringing us back to where the story began, not to reopen old wounds but to remind us of why the work must continue. Phil wrote:

> We genuinely hope that the proposed legislation is a watershed in the campaign and is a step towards ending the heartbreak that we and so many families have, and continue to endure.

I thank and commend Phil and Lizzie for being here and for Phil's staunch and ongoing advocacy over many years to call out, stamp out and prevent men's violence from taking the lives of more women, girls and children.

That is why this bill is so important. It contains a number of landmark and significant reforms to prioritise victim-survivor safety, improve the efficiency of our justice process and ensure perpetrators of all forms of interpersonal violence can be held to account, including with respect to coercive control, good character references, risk assessments and other family violence and prevention matters. As we have heard, coercive control is an insidious form of abuse, usually by a man, to intimidate, humiliate, surveil, gaslight and isolate another person, usually a female intimate partner, and strip them of their sense of autonomy and self-worth so as to have control over them. We are getting rid of the 'good character' concept as well. There are Equal Opportunity Act 2010 reforms, family violence and personal safety reforms, reforms around grooming, multi-agency risk assessment management reforms and numerous other reforms. I commend this bill in honour of Vicki Cleary and her family.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (12:48): Gee, this has been a long time coming, but what a day. I thought I was going to be fine, but my voice is already shaking. I am incredibly grateful to not only have language around things like coercive control, gaslighting, like the member for Pascoe Vale just highlighted, and all the words and language that we have for this kind of insidious behaviour now, but also to now have laws around them. I thought I was going to be so good today. I have heard about it in this place so many times. I know I lose it about this stuff all the time, but it has obviously been a trauma for a long time. Things trigger me and bring it up, and obviously days like this do too. I have heard in this place sometimes, probably when I should not, 'always the victim'. I say in response to that, I hate the term victim-survivor. I am not a victim; I am a victor. Today I feel like a victor.

In her first act as Leader of the Opposition, Jess Wilson promised that she would introduce coercive control in a standalone bill, which we tried to do. That was a momentous occasion for me. I have been advocating for this for a long, long time – since before we had language for it. But today, to see this piece of legislation presented to the house is like – gosh, I want to say it is a win, but for so many women who have lost their lives waiting for this it has been an evolution, and we are not done yet. There is more work to do in this space. We know that. It feels like a win, but it is such an important step forward, and I just hope everyone in this place and the entire community of Victoria understands the gravity of this piece of legislation and that there are now laws around not only coercive control but

good character and the good character risk assessment. The fact is that not only in a court of law, when you have people coming in backing your perpetrator, saying how good a bloke they are, but also when you have people – and I am going to touch on this a little bit more because I do want to give the AFL a whack in a second – welcoming your perpetrator back into footy clubs after they have been convicted, it is triggering and traumatic not just for the victim who is still at that club but for every other woman who has not been game enough to speak out. For them to see someone who has been convicted of a domestic violence crime welcomed back into a club with open arms – in Kim O'Reilly's case her perpetrator was released on day release and welcomed back into the club. How is that right?

We understand that in small communities – and I have raised this with members of the AFL Commission from time to time – it is hard for individuals within small clubs like that to make a call given that those perpetrators may very well have kids that go to school with the kids of members of those committees as well. Small communities, right? They are fearful that those kids will then cop backlash from any decisions that are made to refuse registration or refuse entry to the club at all. The ramifications can be, in some cases, quite scary. The AFL are the martyrs of all things virtuous, and they spend a hell of a lot of money – which could go into state tax coffers, but that is another matter – virtue-signalling on every cause that comes along. But when it comes to the crunch, particularly in domestic violence, they need to take the decision out of the hands of the judges, particularly with regional and local sport. For every community sport, for everything that falls under the AFL banner, the AFL need to make it their policy that if footballers are convicted of a domestic violence crime they then write themselves off – that they cannot be registered with an AFL club again, and that means AFL Victoria, AFL Victoria Country, wherever. This is something they could do. It would not cost them a penny, but if they are going to stand for something, they should stand for this. It makes sense.

Again, the gravity of that little policy would carry so much weight, particularly in small communities where survivors of domestic violence would not have to worry about seeing the face of a known and convicted perpetrator running around on Thursday night, or within the clubroom having dinner, like everything's wonderful. There is the gravity of that for survivors, for people that are going through cases at the moment – several friends of mine this year in fact, with our local netball club, have come to me and said, 'What can we do about this?' I have taken up that baton, and I am like, 'You know what, we've brainstormed it, and this is the solution: take the decision out of the hands of the judges,' like we have done today. This good character reference – how can you be of good character when you are being accused of the crimes that you are being accused of? It is ridiculous. The AFL need to take note of this legislation that is before the house today. They actually need to stand for something, because at the moment they stand for not much, and women are angry. I am not going to comment on any other case at all with regard to the AFL, but they need to do something. They really do.

I welcome this bill today, I really do, but there is much more work to be done, and it is not just the legislators in here. I am grateful that this is now law, I really am. It feels like a win. Like I said, I am not a victim, I am a victor, and I feel like a victor today. The fact that we introduced this in December of last year and we have been able to debate it today and feel like this is our win in opposition is monumental. I am grateful for this; it is a big one. I do not care about credit. I care about the woman who is sitting at home at the moment who does not yet realise that that gaslighting and that control and that manipulation and that financial control are coercive control. This is the start, and there are actions she can now take. There are supports and there are consequences. There will be consequences for this. We have never had that before, and it has been, like I said, a long time coming.

It is not just women. Over the course of this advocacy project I have spoken to men who are reluctant to come out – it is usually after a relationship has ended – but they have said to me: 'Oh my gosh, this is exactly what happened to me.' So it happens. Obviously women are the victims of this more than men. I was not surprised, but I have heard some pretty confronting stories from men and intimate partners – other men as well. There have been some really harrowing stories that I have witnessed in my time advocating for this. I am so proud. I truly believe everything happens for a reason, and today

is a win. There is no other way I can put it. It feels like a win. It has felt like a battle, but today I am incredibly proud to stand here and commend this bill to the house.

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (12:59): I am pleased to rise to contribute to the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026, and can I acknowledge the member for Mildura's contribution. I know how difficult it is for many women, but for you in the chamber today, I acknowledge that. Women and children are dying. That is a fact, and the need to do something about it grows every day. I think this legislation is of great significance, as we have heard from all of our speakers so far. I do want to acknowledge the work of the Attorney-General and previous ministers for prevention of family violence and the work that they have done. But importantly, to all of those family violence workers out there that deal with this every single day, to victim-survivors who deal with it every single day –

The ACTING SPEAKER (Iwan Walters): Apologies to the member for Geelong, but I am going to interrupt debate there. You will have the call when the house resumes.

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

Business interrupted under standing orders.

Members

Premier

Minister for Police

Absence

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Education, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Women and Gender Equality) (14:02): I wish to advise the house that for the purposes of question time today I will answer the questions for the Premier, the Minister for Artificial Intelligence and the Digital Economy will answer questions for the portfolios of police and crime prevention, and the Minister for Public Transport will answer questions for the portfolios of emergency services and multicultural affairs.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Suburban Rail Loop

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): My question is to the Deputy Premier. When the Premier was Minister for Public Transport, the government resolved to keep a public transport tax secret from the Victorian people. If integrity is no longer optional, why did the Premier keep this $8 billion tax on every public transport user secret?

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Education, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Women and Gender Equality) (14:03): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. Each and every year we communicate to the Victorian community the adjustment to public transport fares that takes place and is implemented from 1 January each and every year. Like all fare revenue, fare revenue goes back into the public transport trust fund and is reinvested back into our public transport network to deliver the services that Victorians need. Of course it has allowed us to invest in record levels of services –

Richard Riordan interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Polwarth is warned.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this question asked the Acting Premier to explain why this tax was kept secret. The Acting Premier is debating the question.

Anthony Carbines: On the point of order, Speaker, the Acting Premier is being relevant to the question that has been asked with regard to fares.

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

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: As I have outlined, each and every year we communicate to the Victorian public what the impact will be on their public transport fares that come into effect from 1 January each and every year.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Acting Premier is required to be factual. The government did not communicate this secret tax. They did not communicate it.

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

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): The Premier says integrity is no longer optional. How can Victorians –

Members interjecting.

Jess WILSON: He did. Should we get the clip? We will get the clip. I will send it to you.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wendouree is warned. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to direct her comments through the Chair.

Jess WILSON: Certainly, Speaker. The Premier says integrity is no longer optional. How can Victorians possibly trust a Premier and a Deputy Premier who kept an $8 billion tax on every train, tram and bus user in this state secret for five years?

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Education, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Women and Gender Equality) (14:06): I appreciate that it has been some time since those opposite were in a position where they had to oversee something as significant as a public transport network, and so I forgive them for not necessarily paying attention to annual processes, including of course the work that takes place to determine the public transport fares that come into effect from 1 January every year. In the lead-up to that, typically in December, the responsible minister usually goes out and communicates to the Victorian public – maybe occasionally the Premier –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Nationals! The member for Polwarth can leave the chamber for an hour.

Member for Polwarth withdrew from chamber.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: The public transport minister would go out to the Victorian community and communicate what the fare rate will be starting from 1 January of the following year. That communicates very clearly what any potential fare increases may be. That is the practice, and that will continue from here on in.

Ministers statements: education system

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Education, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Women and Gender Equality) (14:07): On this side of the house we are investing in the future of our state. In schools across Victoria it is our hardworking teachers, as we all know, as well as principals and our education support staff, who are instilling in young people the knowledge and skills they need to set them up for life. With Victorian students having the best NAPLAN results in the nation for the second year running, we know that their hard work is driving strong outcomes. Victoria is indeed the Education State, and Victorian teachers, principals and education support staff deserve pay and conditions that reflect the value of the work they do. Last week union members resoundingly endorsed the government's pay offer – some 79 per

cent – which will make Victorian teachers the best paid in Australia and with the best conditions. It will now go out to a vote of all staff. Importantly, this offer gives our educators back what matters just as much as pay, and that is time – time to plan lessons properly, time to support students who need it most and time to do the job that they entered this sector to do. And for our students this means that we can also focus our efforts on recruiting and retaining the best teachers in the nation, who have served us so well.

When we back our educators, we back every student in every school across Victoria, but we can only become a more prosperous state if we continue to invest in education. That should be obvious to anybody in this place. The last time they had the chance, the Liberals sacked thousands of teachers. They shut hundreds of schools, and with a promise of $40 billion of cuts they are planning to do it all over again.

James Newbury: Speaker, I renew my point of order of yesterday across all five ministers statements and note that in the first ministers statement today –

The SPEAKER: Member for Brighton, state your point of order succinctly.

James Newbury: The Acting Premier is already misusing the ministers statement to attack the opposition.

The SPEAKER: There are correct ways to raise points of order. It is not an opportunity to make a statement to the house. I remind ministers when they are making ministers statements not to attack the opposition. I do not necessarily encourage you to do comparisons and contrasts, but if that is what you need to do then so be it.

Suburban Rail Loop

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:10): My question is to the Deputy Premier. The Premier's secret tax on every train, tram and bus user in this state will mean –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. Members will be removed from the chamber if they continue to interrupt while members are on their feet.

Jess WILSON: The Premier's secret tax on every train, tram and bus user in this state will mean fares will increase by more than $60 per week. Why should every public transport –

Members interjecting.

Jess WILSON: I cannot hear.

The SPEAKER: I expect members on both sides of this chamber to show respect to the members on their feet. One side does not have an advantage over the other when it comes to this. The Leader of the Opposition without assistance.

Jess WILSON: Why should every public transport user have to pay $3000 more every year because this government has run out of money?

Colin Brooks: On a point of order, Speaker, that question is just a big lie, and it should be ruled out of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! Of all the people in this chamber, the Treasurer should know that that word is unparliamentary. I do not uphold that point of order.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Education, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Women and Gender Equality) (14:12): While I wholeheartedly reject the premise of that question and as education minister question the opposition leader's maths

skills, I relish the opportunity to talk about what this Labor government has done to keep public transport fares more affordable than they have ever been in this state. In doing so, we should talk –

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

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

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: This year this Labor government delivered two months of free public transport for Victorians. We have delivered half-price public transport fares until the end of the year. That is on top of free public transport for kids permanently, saving families on average $755 per child per year.

James Newbury: On a point of order on debating the question, Speaker, this question was specifically around Labor's secret tax. Clearly the Acting Premier is debating the question.

Anthony Carbines: On the point of order, Speaker, repeating the same point daily is simply a way of continually raising the question, and that cannot be done. Continually raising the same point of order, in *Rulings from the Chair*, is not a point of order.

The SPEAKER: I cannot tell the Premier or any minister how to respond to a question or how to answer a question. The Deputy Premier was talking to the question. I do not uphold the point of order.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: Free public transport for kids permanently. Of course that is all on top of the regional fare cap that we introduced a few years ago, pegging travel to regional Victoria to the price of a daily metro fare. We have seen people vote with their feet on that policy, travelling to regional Victoria, spending their money in regional economies, in droves.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, standing order 58(1)(b) is very, very clear in prohibiting a response or an answer from extraneously allowing an Acting Premier to debate a question, which is what the Acting Premier is doing. There was a very clear question, and the Deputy Premier is not responding to it.

Anthony Carbines: On the point of order, Speaker, the Acting Premier rejected the premise of the question. She is speaking to public transport fare cuts and cheaper public transport under Labor, and she is in order.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the member for Brighton's point of order.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: The reality remains this: those opposite cut train lines; we cut fares.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:16): The government's half-price fares –

Sarah Connolly interjected.

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

Jess WILSON: Oh, you will miss it.

Member for Laverton withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, you are not immune from being removed from the chamber also. Through the Chair.

Jess WILSON: The government's half-price fares saved public transport users $433 million, while the Premier's secret tax will cost them $8 billion. Why is the government perpetuating a fraud on Victorians by secretly hitting them with an $8 billion tax?

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Education, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Women and Gender Equality) (14:16): Again I reject the premise of the question and again remind the Leader of the Opposition that each and every year, without fail, we communicate to the Victorian community what public transport fares will be from

1 January the following year. That is a standard practice and is the height of transparency in explaining to the Victorian community exactly what they will be paying.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, with respect to transparency, the Deputy Premier is required to be factual.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: These fare adjustments are commonly reported on in the press and are available online too to inform the Victorian community of what those fare adjustments will be year on year, as is appropriate. Of course, though, we have worked hard to keep public transport fares low, whether that be through two months of free public transport, half-price public transport to the end of the year, free public transport for kids, and I could go on.

Ministers statements: dental services

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit – Minister for Youth, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (14:18): Every young person deserves the chance to smile with confidence, to speak up in class, to laugh with their friends and to live their best lives. That is why dental care matters, and that is why a re-elected Carroll Labor government will invest in free dental care for all Victorians. For young students working and studying, money can be incredibly tight, and I was recently talking to a university student who was unable to afford a root canal treatment. She had to suffer in excruciating pain while studying and working, trying to scrape together the money for the procedure. This reform will mean that young people, young students, will not have to worry about the cost of dental treatment, especially when they need it most. It means that families delaying the treatment for their kids because they cannot afford it, working mums putting off that check-up or young tradies working through the pain – these people and many more – can now get free dental care when they need it in a clinic that is close to their home. That is the difference that this government will make.

Good oral health is about far more than teeth. It is about dignity. It is about confidence. It is about wellbeing and opportunity. When a young person has access to regular dental care they are more likely to stay healthy, attend school, participate in sport and engage fully in their community. By providing free dental care we are removing a barrier and opening a door. We are making sure that every young Victorian, regardless of their postcode or their family circumstance, can access the care that they need to thrive. Preventative care today means healthier adults tomorrow.

Let us contrast this to the approach of the One Nation–Liberal coalition. Rather than investing, they seek to cut $40 billion from health services.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I think it is now six times that you have ruled that ministers this week should not be using their ministers statements inappropriately, and again this minister is using their statement to attack the opposition. What is the point of the rulings?

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Brighton, I do not appreciate reflections on the Chair. I have reminded ministers on several occasions now not to attack the opposition. If ministers cannot do their ministers statement without doing that, then they should not do a ministers statement.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH: As I was saying, rather than investing, those opposite, if elected, the One Nation–Liberal coalition –

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume her seat. I am sitting the minister down.

Suburban Rail Loop

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (14:21): My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. Yesterday the government claimed it was saving $1 billion from the Suburban Rail Loop by scrapping underground interchanges at Box Hill and Glen Waverley. Today the Auditor-General revealed that at least $1.6 billion of those interchanges was never included in the Suburban Rail Loop's budget.

Why did the government deceive Victorians by painting this as a $1 billion saving when it was never funded in the first place?

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:21): The government has been very clear. This billion dollars has been found through careful scrutiny, and we will find an additional billion dollars in savings when we do our technical review. I am glad to see that the member, who has supported this project, I am sure continues to do so.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Glen Waverley withdrew from chamber.

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (14:22): Isn't this government policy change just another Suburban Rail Loop con job, with the Premier and the government pretending to save taxpayers money by cancelling projects that were never actually funded?

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:22): The only con job in front of us is their relationship with One Nation and their threat to rip $40 billion out of Victoria's budget.

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

The SPEAKER: The minister has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: used car sales

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc – Minister for Local Government, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Renters) (14:23): I rise to inform the house of a great new campaign of the Carroll Labor government to protect people buying a used car, because we are on the side of working Victorians. Last week the government launched the Don't Buy a Regret campaign.

Matthew Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bulleen, you are warned.

Tim RICHARDSON: We are not talking about a colour of blue or a colour of orange. We are not saying that is not a regretful campaign that some in the Parliament might feel a little aggrieved about. No, we are talking about a campaign that provides practical support to consumers to understand their rights in navigating the used car market. More than half of used car sales are through private sellers and are private purchasers' opportunity to access those protections and have a statutory warranty that may apply to buying a motor car. Buying a car is a massive decision, whether it is about getting to your place of work as a young person or whether it is about getting your kids around. These are the realities of working families, and Victorians deserve to have the confidence in their rights to negotiate a second-hand car. Victorians deserve to have those protections, because a Carroll Labor government is on their side. This government is working to protect them, whether it is our Don't Buy a Regret campaign or our consumer affairs laws or allowing the Consumer Affairs Victoria team to investigate, fine and prosecute odometer tampering and create a single point of contact for Victorians that might be ripped off. Buying any car is a massive financial commitment that we make in our lives, and when people are facing cost-of-living pressure it is a mental anxiety that each and every one of them faces. The Carroll Labor government is protecting Victorians from dodgy deals, and we fight hard every day to protect them from duds, clunkers, rust buckets and the ultimate lemon – or should I say orange – a coalition One Nation–Liberal government.

Education system

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (14:25): My question is to the Minister for Education. The teachers and education support staff across the Ringwood electorate deserve to be properly recognised for the

vital work they do in classrooms and school communities every day. Minister, following the endorsement of the pay deal, what benefits will the new pay and conditions deliver for teachers and education support staff across Melbourne's eastern suburbs?

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Education, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Women and Gender Equality) (14:25): I thank the member for Ringwood for his question. I was very pleased to hear him rightly praise the efforts of our educators, our principals and our education support staff in schools across Victoria, including in Melbourne's east. We know that our education staff show up every day for our kids, and we have worked hard to put on the table a pay and conditions offer that values that work.

As I just had cause to outline, the pay offer that we put on the table, which was voted on by AEU members, was resoundingly endorsed with a 79 per cent support vote. I can see why, because that offer will deliver a pay increase of between 28.3 and 32.4 per cent for teachers, assistant principals and principals over the four years of the agreement. It means that an experienced teacher's salary will rise from about $118,000 to about $150,000. An early career teacher pay increase will be about $12,000 by later this year, bringing them into line with New South Wales. A minimum pay increase of 29.8 per cent over four years for range 2 education support staff is also included. That includes classroom support, administrative staff and those supporting students with a disability, and we know how important that work is.

But it is more than just a significant pay increase for educators across our system. It is also giving teachers back what they have told us is so very important in their day for them to do their jobs properly, and that is time. As part of that, this offer halves meeting hours from 80 to 40 a year, effectively giving staff more time for planning, for preparation and for assessments so that they can make sure that the time they get with students in the classroom really counts.

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (14:27): Minister, how will this significant investment in our education workforce strengthen local schools and improve outcomes for students across the eastern suburbs?

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Education, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Women and Gender Equality) (14:28): Again, I thank the member for Ringwood for his question. We know that when we value the work of our hardworking teachers and support staff and principals as well we have the best possible chance of retaining the best and brightest right here and attracting the best and brightest to the Victorian education system, and that is exactly what we want to do. We do this through investing in the facilities that we know our schools need and deserve. We have invested at record levels in our time in government to make sure that we are not only delivering the programs that students need and delivering the pay and conditions that our teachers and education staff need but also delivering world-class learning environments for students as well. Holistically, that is all about creating learning environments where students are ready to learn, with teachers, education support staff and principals who feel supported in their roles and who have the time to do what they need to in support of Victorian students.

Ministers statements: economic policy

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Artificial Intelligence and the Digital Economy, Minister for Major Events, Minister for Medical Research, Minister for Racing, Minister for Economic Development) (14:29): I rise to update the house on the work the Carroll Labor government is doing to deliver a strong, high-skill, high-wage economy right here in Victoria. That is because we are pro jobs. We are a pro-investment government. We also know that we are a government that will roll out the red carpet for those wanting to do business here in Victoria. Some want to cut nurses and want to cut teachers; they give them the bird. That is what we have seen in the past. What I would say, though, is that Labor is the party of working people, but also the economy is a partnership between working people, the government and business. We respect that partnership, making sure Victoria is the best place for business to invest.

As Victoria's first Minister for Artificial Intelligence and the Digital Economy, it is my top priority to make sure our state is the epicentre of innovation and investment. We know that AI has the potential to generate some $30 billion for the Victorian economy over the next decade. Harnessing that growth means more jobs and more opportunities for working people. Earlier this year we saw that the Labor government delivered more than half of all jobs created in Australia right here in Victoria. We know that for major events and medical research we are the capital. We lead the country when it comes to major events and medical research. We also want to make sure that we work very hard to continue to be the economic engine room for the digital economy into the future.

Some in this place do not even have a spokesperson for economic development, and they do not even trust anyone over there to be their Shadow Treasurer. But we also know what they do trust. What you can trust them to do is cut – cut by $40 billion. What we will do on this side of the house is invest in working people and invest in jobs for working families, and the digital economy provides every opportunity for our government to do that. We will continue to make sure that you cannot cut your way to economic prosperity here in Victoria. You must invest in Victorians, invest in working families and make sure that they have every opportunity to prosper and to thrive, and that is what our Carroll Labor government will continue to do. We will do that through our work with the digital economy and training our people for the jobs of the future.

Suburban Rail Loop

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:31): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Why are regional Victorian travellers being slugged a new $8 billion tax to cover the cost of Labor's SRL vanity project, a project that most of them will never use?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Public Transport is warned.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Education, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Women and Gender Equality) (14:31): I thank the member for his question and also relish the opportunity to correct the record on one of the assertions that he makes. First and foremost, I will repeat what I have said previously about the fact that fare increases are reported to the Victorian community annually, as they should be, and that is a practice that will continue. In terms of the assertion he makes linking the rail improvement charge to the Suburban Rail Loop, that is incorrect. This is not part of the SRL funding and financing strategy. Like all fare revenue, it goes back into the public transport trust fund, which in turn is reinvested back into our public transport network to enable us to continue to add services. In recent weeks we have added 400 additional services to our public transport network. That is in addition to the thousands that we have added in recent years. We know how important this is in a growing and changing community. It is important that we have an accurate understanding of what fare revenue goes towards in this state, and it is investing back into public services that are there to get Victorians to where they need to go.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:33): Why did the Deputy Premier approve hiding a tax that will cost regional Victorian travellers $3000 per year because of Labor's underfunded and overbudget vanity project?

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Education, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Women and Gender Equality) (14:33): Again I reject the premise of the question. I have a couple of things to say. Again I remind those opposite that we report fare adjustments every year to the Victorian community in advance of changes coming in on 1 January every year.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, the Deputy Premier is clearly debating the question. The Auditor-General has made it clear today this was not announced.

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

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: As a foundational point, that is important. We always report fare adjustments to the Victorian community in advance of them coming into effect. Now, out of respect for the Auditor-General's work, I will also say that where the Auditor-General has made recommendations as to how we could improve our communication to the Victorian community, I acknowledge that DTF has accepted that recommendation, as is right. But the fact remains that each and every year we communicate through multiple forms to the Victorian community what the fare adjustment will be for 1 January the following year. That is a longstanding practice and a practice that will continue.

Ministers statements: housing

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (14:34): The *Financial Times* has reported that Melbourne is building more homes than any other world city – more than London, more than Paris, more than New York City and, yes, more than Sydney. They are not quite a world city like us, but they do their best. But there is more good news. Victorians are leading the nation when it comes to first home ownership, with one in three first home buyers in Australia living right here in Victoria. We should be so proud of Victoria. Victoria is a great place to live, work and invest, and we are building the homes that Victorians need. But you would not hear this positive news if others had their way, because others seeking government like to talk Victoria down. Others, like the One Nation–Liberal noalition, promote their shameful –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, again a ministers statement is being used inappropriately to attack the opposition.

The SPEAKER: The minister will come back to her ministers statement. I will sit the minister down if she cannot make a ministers statement that is not attacking the opposition.

Sonya KILKENNY: More than 55,000 new homes in the last 12 months is the number under Labor, and we have not finished yet. Only the Carroll Labor government has a positive, fresh and proven plan to build more homes, support more first home buyers and make sure Victoria remains the best place in the world to live, work and invest. But how can we expect new ideas from a party full of negative Nancies, or should I say negative Newburys? While they are talking Victoria down –

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Planning will resume her seat.

Constituency questions

Evelyn electorate

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:38): (1778) The Carroll Labor government continues to ride roughshod over local communities, approving plans for massive developments under its development facilitation program without any consultation, putting corporate interests before people. My question to the Labor government's Minister for Planning is: why have you approved a massive, secretive development at 65 Quarry Road, Lilydale, of 106 warehouses and 481 car parks on open green space within metres of homes, a school and the Nelson Road open drain flood zone, without proper community consultation and while ignoring residents' fierce objections? Lilydale residents are shocked by the scale of this mega-industrial project that will result in a significant increase in traffic and large trucks – over 1100 vehicles seven days a week on a quiet residential street – and they deserve an explanation from Premier Carroll and his planning minister about them riding roughshod over the Lilydale community without an environment effects statement or information on impacts on road safety and congestion, stormwater management or increased flood risk in a flood zone. The community is wondering what deals have been done.

Pascoe Vale electorate

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (14:39): (1779) My constituency question is for the Treasurer. What cost-of-living measures is the Victorian Labor government continuing to provide for people across Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West to help make life easier and more affordable,

and how many members of my community have been accessing these respective initiatives? We know the ongoing impacts of global conflict, volatility, inflation and uncertainty continue to affect the cost of living for all Australians and indeed Victorians. But the one thing that is certain is that our Victorian Labor government will always be there to fight for working Victorians and to support local households with practical measures to help make life easier – the 20 per cent car rego rebate until 31 August, half-price public transport until the end of the year, free public transport for young people and seniors, free L- and P-plates, free rego for apprentices, access to the Servo Saver app and cheaper fuel, the free chemist care program, the virtual emergency department, free Medicare urgent care clinics, free TAFE with more than 80 free TAFE courses, free study for nursing and teaching, free dental in schools, free glasses for kids, free school breakfasts, free kinder and so many other initiatives, like the free energy default offer, the hot water solar panel rebate and the energy upgrades program.

The SPEAKER: Member for Pascoe Vale, did you ask two questions?

Anthony CIANFLONE: I asked for information from the Treasurer about initiatives. What initiatives is the Victorian government providing for cost-of-living relief for people –

The SPEAKER: Asking for information is an action.

Anthony CIANFLONE: What cost-of-living initiatives are being provided by the Victorian Labor government for people in my community to access?

Morwell electorate

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (14:40): (1780) My constituency question is for the Minister for Energy and Resources in the other place, and my question is: how is the minister assisting Latrobe Magnesium to progress its commercial project in the Latrobe Valley? Latrobe Magnesium has hit a roadblock with commercialising its project in my electorate because of the trailing liabilities issue that has prevented access to land and the fly ash needed to produce the magnesium by-product. This has come about as an unintended consequence of the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment (Financial Assurance) Act 2026, which was passed earlier this year. The previous minister promised to resolve the issue preventing progression of the project by August, but that has not happened. The company's operations in Victoria are not viable unless a solution is found immediately. This project is worth millions to the local economy and hundreds of jobs, but Latrobe Magnesium is under pressure to leave Victoria because of the delays.

Cranbourne electorate

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (14:41): (1781) My constituency question is to the Minister for Health Ms Stitt in the other place. What will a new urgent care clinic at the Cranbourne Community Hospital mean for the people living in Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs? On 6 October last year, which also happened to be my brother's birthday, the new Cranbourne Community Hospital opened and we could not have been happier. Ophthalmology; dental; dialysis; adult mental health services; rehabilitation; family, child and youth services; pathology; pharmacy and great coffee – what more could you ask for? There is one more thing you could ask for, and that is free parking. I fought like a woman possessed to get free parking for my community hospital, and I won. While some, including those opposite, say the community hospital is not a real hospital, I happen to know that the many nurses, clinicians, doctors, cleaners, physiotherapists and allied health professionals love the work they do, and I want to thank them. The last piece in the Cranbourne Community Hospital is the urgent care clinic. I look forward to the minister's response.

Narracan electorate

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (14:42): (1782) My constituency question is to the Minister for Police. When will the minister come to Drouin to visit the Drouin police station? I asked the previous minister three times through this term to come and see the actual state of the station, because it is in great disrepair. I am asking the new minister to come down for a visit. Drouin has a population of

23,000 people, and this station is imperative for the safety of my community of Drouin. Where the previous minister failed, I am hoping the new minister will come down, take up the invitation that I am putting out there and have a look at the condition of the station and reopen it.

Narre Warren North electorate

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (14:43): (1783) My constituency question is for the Minister for Government Services. How many people in the electorate of Narre Warren North have taken up the vehicle rego rebate? The rego rebate has been an incredible initiative by this government for my constituents. With the cost of living increasing, being able to claim this incredible amount of money has made a real difference to my community, so I ask the Minister for Government Services how many people have claimed the rego rebate.

Prahran electorate

Rachel WESTAWAY (Prahran) (14:44): (1784) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Each school day hundreds of children from Wesley College Junior School cross Punt Road at Union Street. I met the head of the junior school and parents onsite recently. Punt Road is the council boundary. Port Phillip City Council funds a crossing supervisor on the western side; Stonnington has none on the eastern side. The pedestrian phase is too short for children to cross in one signal. The eastern crossing sits on an angle, so drivers turning right out of Union Street cannot see pedestrians, especially children, until they are already turning, and there is no school crossing sign and no variable 40-kilometre-an-hour zone, unlike the one on Dandenong Road outside St Mary's. The question I ask is: what is the government doing to improve pedestrian safety at this intersection for parents and for children?

Narre Warren South electorate

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (14:45): (1785) My constituency question is for the Minister for Police and concerns the expansion of police and PSO patrols in shopping centres. Minister, how will these changes to Operation Pulse help support community safety in my electorate of Narre Warren South? I welcome the Carroll Labor government's recent announcement, which commits to putting more police and more PSOs in areas where our community shops, works and spends time. This is bolstered by the recruitment of an additional 150 PSOs for the expansion of Operation Pulse until the end of 2027. My community has welcomed PSOs and police patrolling throughout the year at our local shopping centre Westfield Fountain Gate. Everyone should feel safe as they go about their daily lives, which is why this government is giving police the powers and resources they need to do their important work. I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

Polwarth electorate

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (14:46): (1786) My question this afternoon is to the Minister for Public Transport. Minister, for how many years will the people on the Warrnambool line who use the train through the electorate of Polwarth be paying your new Suburban Rail Loop tax on their fares each and every time they get on the train? My community will have been shocked today to learn that the Auditor-General has found a secret tax that you have levied now since January 2025 on every single bus and train user in the electorate of Polwarth to help pay for your tunnel in the outer-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. This tax of course is cumulative, and the Auditor-General revealed that it is going to increase 1 per cent every year for X amount of years. Minister, I really want to know and the people of Polwarth want to know: how long will they be paying for a tunnel in Melbourne they will never use?

Sunbury electorate

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (14:47): (1787) My question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. What is the latest information on design and planning for this government's more than $10 million upgrade at Kismet Park Primary School in my electorate? It is a terrific primary school,

and I was absolutely delighted to make such a significant announcement and confirm with principal Sam Carlton that this government will invest a very significant amount of more than $10 million for this outstanding school. It builds upon the additional investments that this government has made – more than $100 million to local schools across the Sunbury electorate – when it comes to capital projects, making for better education, better teaching and learning and the opportunity for our young people to be their very best. I want to acknowledge the work that has been done by the minister, and I look forward to her timely response.

Bills

Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (14:48): I believe I was up to thanking and congratulating the family violence workforce for everything that they do in our community every single day, and the importance of that. I also want to thank all those advocates and the people that have been actively working towards this change and acknowledge what it means for them and their families, particularly those families who have lost loved ones. That advocacy work has been so important to the work that the Attorney-General and others have done over a period of time.

I do want to also acknowledge the lived-experience Victim Survivors' Advisory Council and the important work that they have done. I really want to acknowledge Katie Alexander in particular as someone who is on that lived-experience advisory committee and who also lives in the Geelong electorate and has made contact with not only me but also other members of the Labor Party, including the member for Lara, the member for Bellarine and the candidate for South Barwon, to talk about what we can do together to work towards making change. I will read part of her speech that she did yesterday right here in this Parliament talking about survivors of family violence:

> Survivors of family violence often say "I wish I had seen the signs." It was hard for me to see the signs because harmful behaviours were minimised and normalised in my family.
>
> Men using manipulative behaviours were all around me. My father was abusive and bread-crumbed attention; my first boyfriend was domineering and demeaning; and my fiancé love-bombed and gas-lit me. After marriage and parenting tied us together my husband stole our son's childhood.

This experience is something that probably all of us in this place have heard time and time again. There are many women in my electorate of Geelong who have told me their experiences and their stories of family violence and of coercive behaviour, and we know that Aboriginal women and children are over-represented in this space. Often in talking to those people they will go through what their experience has been and what needs to change, and this bill has been about listening and responding to those voices of victim-survivors.

Reflecting on what I have heard over the years and preparing for this contribution, I thought about all the things that women in particular and young girls had talked to me about in terms of what their experience was. Many of them described exactly the same things over a period of time, and sometimes it was quite slow. Those insidious changes would creep into their life, and they felt totally controlled by their male partner or sometimes their father. It started with things like controlling their phone and tracking where they were. It also included things like having to explain why they were meeting a family member or a friend, to the point where it got just all too hard to even try to get out the front door. They talked about then having tracking put on their phone to monitor where they were, control of finances and the bank accounts in the family household and how that was completely controlled by the male partner and then of course the physical and sexual violence that was also associated with that. I know that many of those women will be either watching this today or reading *Hansard*, looking at this bill that we are about to pass and knowing that we have listened to what they have had to say. For

me it is really important that we continue to listen to what women and girls are telling us needs to change.

As I said, I hear from many Aboriginal women who have been removed from the family home because they have been misrepresented as the perpetrator. Multicultural women have had similar experiences, where the perpetrator may be a white man and convinces the police attending that they are not the perpetrator; their female partner is. For Aboriginal women in particular the consequences of that often lead to having their children removed. It leads to child protection being involved. We know that we need to start making real change, and this is what this legislation is all about. Criminalising coercive control as a standalone offence is something that I believe everybody in this chamber supports, but we need to also have that awareness out there for women so that they know that this is there to support them, to help them. Ensuring that Victoria Police have that knowledge – my understanding is that they will be trained up to implement this legislation – is so important to so many.

The bill, in criminalising coercive control as a standalone offence, will apply to adults, with a focus on coercive control within intimate partner relationships. The offence will commence on 1 March 2028. This will allow time to educate the community and for family violence response services, including police, to prepare. That preparation is really important. Unfortunately there are still some situations where police attendance does not always turn out the way it should, so this knowledge is really, really important. I value the police role in family violence. We have a fantastic unit in Geelong. I acknowledge and thank them for the work that they do, because I know how difficult it is. But I also want to make sure that they are trained up and skilled enough to be able to deliver this legislation on the ground. Many of us have heard from the coalface, from those women and girls who have been impacted by coercive control, what that means for them and their families, for their siblings and for their loved ones and the difficulty that they have because of that coercive control. Trying to get away from that situation, we know, is terribly difficult for many of those women.

This is really important legislation. I again want to thank the Attorney-General for her work and also previous ministers for family violence prevention, because if it were not for them listening and all of our colleagues on this side of the house listening to survivors of family violence, we would not be standing here today debating this bill. It is such an important one, and I commend the bill to the house.

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (14:57): I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026. At the outset I will say that the coalition will be supporting this bill. Right now there is a meaningful public conversation going on about gender-based violence, and rightly so. There are some very public incidents that are going on that I will not weigh in on. But I will say that it became a renewed issue for me when I recently visited an all-girls school in my capacity as Shadow Minister for Youth, a school called Strathcona in the electorate of Hawthorn. During a Q and A session with a year 11 class one of the students poignantly asked me: 'Nicole, what are you and the government doing to combat misogyny in my generation?' That question that day honestly floored me. It was direct, it was sincere and it was astute, and it took me a moment to gather my thoughts and give her a response, because it was such a weighty question.

Misogyny is not a new concept. What is new in more recent generations is that it is no longer socially acceptable. Culture has changed. Times have changed. Society has progressed. This is due in part to legislation that also changes as society and culture changes. Once upon a time women were not allowed to vote. Once upon a time women were not allowed to hold public office. It was three years ago to this very day that I became the first woman to ever represent the seat of Warrandyte. Times continue to change. That is why it is incumbent on us as legislators to listen to our communities and keep pace with what our communities' expectations are and pass laws that reflect the needs of our times. That is our responsibility to the Victorians that we have been elected to represent. That is why it was a year ago that the Liberals introduced a bill to criminalise coercive control in Victoria, which, shamefully, Labor voted down. This is why we support this bill today despite its delay.

I said to the group of year 11 girls I spoke to that these are the types of things we are doing, moving bills like this and changing laws like this to criminalise coercive control. 'What is coercive control?' people may ask. By definition it is a repeated pattern of abuse by a current or former partner, meant to control someone, where the abuser should have known it would probably cause harm. It can involve intimidation, humiliation, surveillance, financial control, isolation and manipulation designed to control another person and strip away their independence and confidence. It is the gaslighting, it is the financial control, it is the emotional abuse, blackmail, manipulation and unseen control that takes place nearly 100 per cent of the time before physical abuse takes place. Sadly, over 90 per cent of the time it is gender based, with a man coercively controlling a woman. We know it does happen to men too, so that is why we are bringing in these laws to protect whoever is the victim, irrespective of gender. However, sadly, we know that statistically one in four women have experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner from the age of 15 – one in four. If we let that sink in, that is a quarter of us. We either are someone or we know someone that has been a victim of gender-based violence, and that is devastating.

Coercive control in practice is that girlfriend of yours whose husband does not let her use or have access to her own bank account. It is your friend at work who you know needs to dump her toxic partner, but what you do not know is that he says to her every day, 'If you leave me, I'll kill you.' It is the boyfriend you used to have that would call you worthless, ugly, hopeless every single day until you gave up and started to believe it too, stealing your self-worth so he could control you. Coercive control precedes almost every intimate partner homicide in this country. Emotional and psychological abuse was present in 96.7 per cent of cases reviewed nationally over eight years. This is why this bill is so important.

Going back to the room of year 11 girls, I said to that room that day, 'In order for culture to change, it has to take place on every level.' We cannot solely legislate our way out of it. Society and culture has to change as well, and it takes all of us for that to happen. For me, that is why I supported the social media ban for under-16s – not because we should wrap kids in cottonwool but because a child's role model should not be chosen for them by an algorithm optimising for outrage. It is why I supported the federal government locking children out of pornography sites. Violent and degrading pornography is rewriting the sexual scripts of a generation. Children are learning what a relationship looks like from the material that treats coercion as normal and cruelty as intimacy, and they are carrying that into real relationships with real people.

Another form of change comes through education, because we have to champion boys becoming good men. People doing work like Daniel Principe are leading the way to help change that narrative for boys in schools. We have the chance to help boys become the men they deep down actually want to be: courageous, decent, kind, respectful – the kind of men that care about the people around them. We have the chance to help them reject the crap that is being sold to them on social media, the crap that says that dominance is strength or that women exist only for their pleasure and that feeling nothing and not caring is what makes a man. I am raising a son, and I am personally so conscious that we must show boys a better vision of what it takes to be a man. We must be ruthless in calling out the negative influences and behaviours that too easily take root. In the words of this advocate, Daniel Principe, we have to champion boys and challenge culture.

We also know we must go further in preventing domestic violence. That is why the Liberals have committed to implementing a domestic violence disclosure scheme, also known as Clare's law. Clare's law was named after Clare Wood, a woman who was tragically murdered by a partner with a violent criminal history which she did not know about. Clare's law would allow partners who are in an intimate relationship with someone and who have concerns about that person's behaviour to check in with police to see if there are any domestic violence offences or intervention orders. It might be before they are about to move in together or before they take the next step and get married. Whatever it may be, where police can see that someone is at risk, it lets them proactively disclose information to warn them. If Clare Wood had had this law, if she had been able to find this information and if it had

been able to be disclosed to her by police, things might have been very different for her. It is a law that could have saved her life. Sadly, there are many more people in similar situations. Clare did not have this. She was murdered. That is why we sought to move this law in her name two years ago now.

Domestic violence disclosure schemes have already proven to be effective in New Zealand, Canada, the UK and even South Australia. For over two years the Liberals have pushed for it here in Victoria. Under our policy anyone who uses the scheme will be offered two free trauma-informed counselling sessions to help them work out what to do next. We will not leave them alone. Standing with victims cannot only mean helping them after the harm is done or if the harm is imminent. It has to also mean giving them the chance to walk away before it starts. That is why we fought for Clare's law to be brought here in Victoria. Sadly, again, the Labor government voted it down.

It is up to all of us. I return to the room full of year 11 girls. When I spoke to them in answer to that question – 'What are you doing to combat misogyny for my generation?' – with all of the legislative change and all of the culture change and the education that must take place, I said to them, 'But at the end of the day, we are all responsible. Boys and men are responsible for their own behaviour: to do better, to respect women, to be real men and call out unacceptable behaviour when they see it. And for women it is on us to call it out too.' I told those girls, and I will say it again, that when you see bullying or unacceptable behaviour do not stand by and do nothing. Call it out. Do not tolerate it. Do not accept it. Demand a better standard from those around you, whether it be your brother, your boyfriend or your friend, whoever it may be. Do not let that standard slip. In the words of AFLW great Daisy Pearce, be a good human. Integrity matters. Humanity matters. Doing the right thing even when you think no-one is watching matters. So my message to every young woman who is wondering right now what is happening in our society is, 'We are with you. Things are changing. Laws are changing, culture is changing and we are on your side.'

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit – Minister for Youth, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (15:07): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

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

Council's amendments

Message from Council relating to following amendments considered:

1. Clause 1, page 2, line 4, omit "child." and insert "child; and".
2. Clause 1, page 2, after line 4 insert –
   "(d) to establish a new process for requiring financial institutions to produce documents that are relevant to certain offences.".
3. Clause 2, line 6, omit "This Act" and insert "(1) This Act (except section 7A)".
4. Clause 2, after line 7 insert –
   "(2) Subject to subsection (3), section 7A comes into operation on a day to be proclaimed.
   (3) If section 7A does not come into operation before 21 December 2026, it comes into operation on that day.".
5. Insert the following New Clause to follow Clause 7 –
   '**7A New Subdivision (33) inserted in Division 1 of Part III**
   After Subdivision (32) in Division 1 of Part III of the **Crimes Act 1958 insert** –
   "**(33)** ***Production notices***

470A Definitions

In this Subdivision –

applicable offence means –

(a) an indictable offence against the law of Victoria; or

(b) any other offence against the law of Victoria that is prescribed or that belongs to a class that is prescribed;

bank means –

(a) the Reserve Bank of Australia; or

(b) an ADI; or

(c) a person who carries on State banking within the meaning of section 51(xiii) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth;

building society means a society registered or incorporated as a building society, co-operative housing society or similar society under an Act or the laws of another State or a Territory;

financial institution means –

(a) a bank; or

(b) a building society; or

(c) a credit union; or

(d) a body corporate that is a financial corporation within the meaning of section 51(xx) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth (or would be if it had been incorporated in Australia); or

(e) a provider of a registrable virtual asset service within the meaning of the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006 of the Commonwealth; or

(f) a casino operator within the meaning of the **Casino Control Act 1991**; or

(g) a wagering and betting licensee within the meaning of the **Gambling Regulation Act 2003**; or

(h) an entity that is prescribed or that belongs to a prescribed class;

issuing officer means –

(a) the Chief Commissioner of Police; or

(b) a police officer authorised under section 470C;

production notice has the meaning given by section 470B.

470B What is a *production notice*?

A ***production notice*** is a notice requiring a financial institution to do either or both of the following –

(a) to produce to a police officer one or more documents that –

(i) are possessed or controlled by the institution; and

(ii) contain information in respect of an account that an entity holds or keeps with the institution; or

(b) to compile one or more documents from information that –

(i) is possessed or controlled by the institution; and

(ii) is in respect of an account that an entity holds or keeps with the institution.

470C Chief Commissioner of Police may authorise police officer to be issuing officer

The Chief Commissioner of Police may authorise in writing a police officer of or above the rank of inspector to issue production notices.

470D Police officer may apply for production notice

(1) A police officer may apply to an issuing officer for the issue of a production notice directed to a financial institution if the police officer believes on reasonable grounds that

the financial institution possesses or controls information, or one or more documents, that may assist in the investigation or prosecution of an applicable offence.

(2) The application must –

(a) be in writing; and

(b) identity the financial institution; and

(c) identify the documents sought to be produced, including by identifying –

(i) the account in respect of which the production notice is to be issued; or

(ii) the entity that holds or keeps that account; and

Note

See subsection (3).

(d) state the applicable offence the investigation or prosecution of which may be assisted by the documents; and

(e) state the grounds on which the applicant has formed the belief required by subsection (1), including –

(i) the grounds for believing that the financial institution possesses or controls the documents or information referred to in that subsection; and

(ii) the grounds for believing that the production referred to in that subsection may assist in the investigation or prosecution of the applicable offence stated in accordance with paragraph (d); and

(f) set out the facts, matters and circumstances on which the application relies; and

(g) specify the period of time that the applicant proposes for the financial institution to have to comply with the notice; and

Note

See section 470E(6).

(h) specify how, in what form and to which police officer the applicant seeks for the documents to be produced; and

(i) if a form is prescribed, be in that form; and

(j) if additional material is prescribed, include that material.

(3) Without limiting subsection (2)(c), identifying the account, or an entity that holds or keeps the account, for the purposes of that provision may involve –

(a) stating an account number; or

(b) stating a name in which the account is held or kept; or

(c) stating an address, an electronic address or a unique identifier associated with the account or the entity.

Examples

1 A residential or business address used by the entity.

2 An email address used by the entity.

3 An internet protocol address used by the entity.

4 If the account concerns cryptocurrency, a unique identifier, known as a wallet address, that is used by the entity.

(4) The police officer is not required to give notice of the application to any person.

470E Issue of production notice

(1) On an application under section 470D, an issuing officer may issue to the applicant a production notice that –

(a) concerns every document identified in the application; and

(b) is directed at the financial institution identified in the application –

if satisfied of the matters set out in subsection (2) in respect of each document.

(2) The matters of which the issuing officer must be satisfied in respect of each document are that –

(a) the financial institution either –

(i) possesses or controls the document; or

(ii) possesses or controls the information from which the document is to be compiled; and

(b) the document may assist in the investigation or prosecution of the applicable offence stated in the application.

(3) In determining whether to issue the production notice, the issuing officer must have regard to the reliability of the information on which the application relies.

(4) A production notice must –

(a) identify the financial institution to which it is directed; and

(b) identify each document that is to be produced, including by identifying –

(i) the account in respect of which the production notice is to be issued; or

(ii) the entity that holds or keeps that account; and

Note

See subsection (5).

(c) specify, in accordance with subsection (6), the period within which the institution must comply with the notice; and

(d) specify how, in what form and to which police officer the documents are to be produced; and

(e) state the effect of sections 470H and 470I; and

(f) if a form is prescribed, be in that form; and

(g) if additional material is prescribed, include that material.

(5) Without limiting subsection (4)(b), identifying the account, or an entity that holds or keeps the account, for the purposes of that provision may involve –

(a) stating an account number; or

(b) stating a name in which the account is held or kept; or

(c) stating an address, an electronic address or a unique identifier associated with the account or the entity.

Examples

1 A residential or business address used by the entity.

2 An email address used by the entity.

3 An internet protocol address used by the entity.

4 If the account concerns cryptocurrency, a unique identifier, known as a wallet address, that is used by the entity.

(6) The period specified in accordance with subsection (4)(c) –

(a) is to begin on the day that the production notice is served on the financial institution; and

(b) must be no less than 5 days and no more than 28 days.

(7) A production notice may be issued in respect of a financial institution that is not located in Victoria.

470F Service of production notice

(1) As soon as practicable after a production notice is issued, the Chief Commissioner of Police must ensure that the notice is served on the financial institution identified in the notice.

(2) A production notice is to be served –

(a) by delivering the notice personally to the registered office of the financial institution; or

(b) by sending it by post to the registered office of the financial institution; or

(c) if the financial institution has given Victoria Police an electronic address that is to be used for receiving production notices, by sending the notice by electronic communication to that electronic address.

(3) A production notice ceases to have effect if it is not served within 3 months after it is issued.

470G Police powers in relation to produced documents

(1) If a document is produced to a police officer in response to a production notice, any police officer may do any of the following things –

(a) inspect the document;

(b) take an extract from the document;

(c) make a copy of the document;

(d) take the document.

(2) An extract taken or copy made under subsection (1) is to be retained by Victoria Police.

(3) A document taken under subsection (1)(d) is to be retained by Victoria Police for as long as is reasonably necessary for the investigation or prosecution of an offence.

(4) The Chief Commissioner of Police must ensure that a document –

(a) that is taken under subsection (1)(d); and

(b) the retention of which is no longer reasonably necessary for the investigation or prosecution of an offence –

is returned to the financial institution that produced the document.

470H Financial institution must comply with production notice

(1) A financial institution that has been served with a production notice must not, without reasonable excuse, fail to comply with the notice.

Penalty: Level 5 fine (1200 penalty units maximum).

(2) A financial institution that has been served with a production notice must not, in purported compliance with the notice, provide a document that –

(a) is false or misleading in a material particular; and

(b) the financial institution knows is false or misleading in a material particular.

Penalty: Level 5 fine (1200 penalty units maximum).

(3) An offence against subsection (1) or (2) is a summary offence.

470I Offence to disclose existence of production notice

(1) Subject to subsection (7), a financial institution on which a production notice is served must not disclose the existence of the notice to any person (including the holder of the account to which the notice relates) except –

(a) to a police officer in accordance with the notice; or

(b) to an employee, officer or agent of the institution for the purpose of ensuring the notice is complied with; or

(c) to a legal practitioner for the purpose of obtaining legal advice or representation in relation to the notice.

Penalty: Level 5 fine (1200 penalty units maximum).

(2) Subject to subsection (7), a person to whom the existence of a production notice is disclosed in accordance with subsection (1) must not –

(a) while the person is of a kind referred to in subsection (1)(a), (b) or (c), disclose the existence of the notice to any person except another person of that kind for the purpose of –

(i) if the disclosure is made by a police officer, the performance of the officer's duties; or

(ii) if the disclosure is made by an employee, officer or agent of the financial institution, ensuring that the notice is complied with or obtaining legal advice or representation in relation to the notice; or

(iii) if the disclosure is made by a legal practitioner, giving legal advice or providing representation in relation to the notice; or

(b) when the person is no longer of a kind referred to in subsection (1)(a), (b) or (c), make a record of, or disclose, the existence of the notice in any circumstances.

Penalty: 240 penalty units or imprisonment for 2 years.

(3) An offence against subsection (1) or (2) is a summary offence.

(4) Nothing in subsection (2) prevents the disclosure by a person of a kind referred to in subsection (1)(a), (b) or (c) of the existence of a production notice –

(a) for the purposes of, or in connection with, legal proceedings; or

(b) in the course of proceedings before a court.

(5) Nothing in subsection (2) prevents the disclosure by a police officer of the existence of a production notice for the purposes of a report under section 470M.

(6) A reference in this section to disclosing the existence of a production notice to a person includes a reference to disclosing information to the person from which the person could reasonably be expected to infer the existence of the notice.

(7) It is not an offence against subsection (1) or (2) to disclose the existence of a production notice if the existence of the notice has been made known in any proceedings in open court.

470J Protection from liability

The following do not incur any civil liability for any action taken or document produced in response to a production notice –

(a) the financial institution identified in the notice;

(b) a person who is an officer, employee or agent of that financial institution acting in the course of that person's duties as an officer, employee or agent.

470K Admissibility in criminal proceedings

If a financial institution produces a document in response to a production notice, neither the production of the document nor any information, document or thing obtained as a direct or indirect consequence of the production of the document is admissible against that institution in any criminal proceeding other than a proceeding against that institution for an offence against section 470H(1) or (2).

470L Chief Commissioner of Police to keep records

The Chief Commissioner of Police must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the following records are kept –

(a) a record of each application for a production notice;

(b) a record of each production notice issued;

(c) for each production notice that is served, a record of how and when it was served;

(d) a description of each document produced in compliance or purported compliance with a production notice.

470M Annual report to Attorney-General about production notices

(1) The Chief Commissioner of Police must submit a report to the Attorney-General in respect of each financial year that includes the following information for that financial year –

(a) the number of applications for production notices that were made during that year;

(b) the number of production notices issued during that year;

(c) information about the different kinds of offences (as determined by the Chief Commissioner) in respect of whose investigation or prosecution production notices were issued during that year;

(d) any other information that relates to production notices and that the Attorney-General notifies the Chief Commissioner, in writing, is required to be included in the report.

(2) The report must be submitted –

(a) as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year to which it relates; and

(b) no later than 3 months after the end of that financial year.

(3) The Chief Commissioner of Police must advise the Attorney-General of any information in the report that, in the Chief Commissioner's opinion, should be excluded from the report before the report is laid before Parliament because the information, if made public, could reasonably be expected to –

(a) endanger a person's safety; or

(b) prejudice an investigation or prosecution; or

(c) compromise any law enforcement operational activities or methodologies of Victoria Police.

(4) The Attorney-General must –

(a) exclude information from the report if satisfied on the advice of the Chief Commissioner of Police of any of the grounds set out in subsection (3); and

(b) cause a copy of the report to be laid before each House of the Parliament within 12 sitting days after the day on which the Attorney-General receives the report.".'.

6. Clause 8, line 27, after "**Criminal Activity**" insert "**and Production Notices**".

7. Clause 8, page 5, line 12, after "**Criminal Activity**" insert "**and Production Notices**".

8. Clause 9, lines 15 and 16, omit "the first anniversary of its commencement" and insert "21 December 2027".

9. Long title, after "activity" insert ", to further amend that Act to establish a new process for requiring financial institutions to produce documents that are relevant to certain offences".

10. Title, after "**Activity**" insert "**and Production Notices**".

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (15:07): I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

The government moves these amendments to provide Victoria Police with the powers they need to follow the money. We know that organised crime runs on money, and it is why these networks recruit children in the first place. Follow the money and you find the people who are giving the orders. But right now we know that when police want records from a bank they must get a search warrant, they must set out every document sought, and it is linked to the offence in an affidavit. If the institution has no office here in Victoria, they need an extraterritorial warrant. Then an officer must physically attend premises to collect documents that only ever existed digitally. That is a slow process built for filing cabinets. It was not built for online banking and certainly not for cryptocurrency.

These amendments insert a new production notice scheme into the Crimes Act 1958. The Chief Commissioner of Police or an inspector authorised by the chief commissioner may issue a notice to a financial institution to produce documents relating to an account where there are reasonable grounds to believe that they may assist the investigation or prosecution of an indictable offence. The scheme covers banks, credit unions and building societies, digital currency exchanges, casinos and betting licences, and notices may be directed interstate. Institutions will have between five and 28 days to comply. Failing to comply or knowingly providing false documents carries a penalty of 1200 penalty units. Those who comply in good faith are protected from civil liability. These are serious powers and they come with limits. Applications must be in writing, must state the offence, must identify the account and must set out the grounds for the officer's belief. The chief commissioner must keep records of every application and notice and must report annually to the Attorney-General. That report

is to be tabled in both houses. I want to thank the opposition for supporting the amendment, and I commend the amendment to the house.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (15:10): As the Attorney-General just said, the coalition will not be opposing the amendments. When they were put to us, in the spirit of bipartisanship we took those amendments at face value and worked with the government to ensure that they were put through. We believe they are reasonable amendments, and as such we will not be opposing them today.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (15:11): The Greens will oppose these amendments. We oppose giving Victoria Police broad new powers to secretly obtain people's banking and financial records without a warrant or any independent authorisation, particularly when those powers are being inserted at the last minute into an unrelated bill with inadequate parliamentary scrutiny. The amendments give police major new coercive powers to secretly obtain private financial information. If the bill passes today, we would like Victorians to understand that police will be able to authorise themselves across the entire field of indictable crime without a judicial warrant. There is no magistrate, judge or other independent issuing authority involved. The powers are extraordinarily broad – they are not confined to organised crime or to serious financial offending – and the threshold test is merely that the information may assist an investigation or prosecution, with no requirement that obtaining the information be necessary or proportionate. There is no mechanism that we can see to protect a person from an improperly issued or excessively broad production notice, and the government has awarded itself even more powers to define any additional entity or class prescribed later by regulation.

The government is legislating these powers through an eleventh-hour amendment to an unrelated bill, and that is because if it were done in a separate bill, they would need a statement of compatibility with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. They are getting around that and not subjecting it to the scrutiny that a significant expansion of police powers deserves, which is the scrutiny of Parliament and scrutiny against the charter of human rights. No wonder the government slipped through these last-minute amendments. They really wanted to avoid any scrutiny or having to assess them against the charter of human rights. For those reasons, the Greens will be opposing the amendments.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (72): Juliana Addison, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Anthony Carbines, Anthony Cianflone, Annabelle Cleeland, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Chris Crewther, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Wayne Farnham, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Matthew Guy, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, David Hodgett, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Emma Kealy, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Cindy McLeish, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, Danny Pearson, John Pesutto, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Bridget Vallence, Emma Vulin, Peter Walsh, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (2): Gabrielle de Vietri, Ellen Sandell

Motion agreed to.

The SPEAKER: A message will now be sent to the Legislative Council informing them accordingly.

Workplace Legislation Amendment (Accident Compensation and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Steve Dimopoulos:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (15:20): I was wondering when we would get on to the Workplace Legislation Amendment (Accident Compensation and Other Matters) Bill 2026, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this bill. The purpose of this bill is about improving the workers compensation system by cutting red tape for employers who self-insure and strengthening OH&S in Victoria by changing the employee representative arrangements. It is argued that this is to make them work better. The bill covers off on several areas: supported or specialist disability accommodation; financial guarantees for self-insurers, and this is around surety bonds; powers of authorised representatives and health and safety representatives; and a number of administrative arrangements related to the WorkSafe Victoria board chair and the medical panel fees.

Interestingly, all of these are unrelated, and that allows the government to put good things in with bad things. And I think that is probably what they have done here. We have got a number of acts that are being amended: the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013 and the Accident Compensation Act 1985 – that is the main legislation that governs the Victorian WorkCover Authority and the compensation schemes – and also the Transport Accident Act 1986 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004.

The changes around supported accommodation – specialist accommodation – and the surety bonds for self-insurers came around by fairly simplistic means. I am going to start with them, and I will start with the specialist disability accommodation. This is in place to clarify existing practices and arrangements. So this is a clarification, and this is an easy spot to start. SDA is specially designed housing for people with extreme functional impairment or very high support needs. This will include homes with wheelchair access hoists or automated doors. For people that have suffered serious and profound injuries through a workplace accident, or more likely through a serious car accident, this is particularly important, because often things need to be modified. Homes and cars need to be modified to cope with the wheelchair access and hoists and automated doors.

Ordinarily TAC and WorkSafe are not liable to fund accommodation costs. Accommodation costs are in the same category as daily living expenses like food and personal items, which are the responsibility of the person. However, the amendments and modifications made to homes and vehicles are included. What has happened is that there has been a drafting error, so these amendments seek to correct a drafting error from legislation in 2024 which makes it clear that WorkSafe will continue to fund supported accommodation arising from a workplace or transport injury, but it will not be liable – this is the critical bit – for the separate housing costs of NDIS-funded specialist disability accommodation. It was unintentionally ambiguous, and these changes are to restore the intended legal position. It has been the longstanding policy position that accommodation costs are generally considered ordinary living expenses. There have been no issues around this to date, so that is a good thing. There could be something in the future, and this will just clarify it so that there is not. Even though everyone understands the intent and it has been the arrangement in place, this will just make that clarification in legislation clear. This needs to be done, and the coalition certainly supports that element of the bill.

I will move on to one of the financial guarantees for self-insurers, which is around surety bonds. Self-insurance is an option under the WorkCover scheme, and there are 33 self-insurers in Victoria. They are large insurers, and they operate in multiple states. You can think of any of the banks – Westpac has been a self-insurer since inception in 1985; BHP; Melbourne Water, which only operates in Victoria, but many others operate interstate and have come on board over time; Mars; Qantas; and RACV. These are organisations, companies actually, that people will know. They manage their own liabilities. That is part of the self-insurer deal and represents about 5 per cent of the WorkCover

scheme. As part of that deal, self-insurers are required to provide WorkSafe with financial guarantees to ensure injured workers will receive the compensation they are entitled to. If an employer fails, if something happens and they exit the scheme, if they have financial distress and market issues and should they fall over, they have to have money there so that anyone who has a worker's compensation claim will continue to be serviced and receive the entitlements they are receiving. Currently, self-insurers provide bank guarantees. Under the act they provide these guarantees, which are in favour of WorkSafe, equal to about 1.5 times their claims liability or about $3 million, whichever is greater. In the event that a self-insurer fails to pay their liabilities as they fall due, the WorkCover authority can step in, obtain the funds from the bank and pay those liabilities directly.

In order to obtain a bank guarantee, a self-insurer needs to provide the bank with cash or property as collateral – if you are a very large employer, this is a lot of money – as well as pay a range of fees. The assets provided as collateral are effectively mortgaged, so they cannot be borrowed against or sold without the bank guarantee being discharged. This in itself can cause issues, and it is an expensive mechanism should they need to sell some things and put something else up as guarantee, because the WorkCover authority needs to have that certainty. This amendment allows self-insured or non-WorkCover employers to use surety bonds instead of a bank guarantee as long as they meet Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) and financial safeguards. These surety bonds will provide an alternative way to guarantee the liabilities that are paid in the event of default. In effect, the surety bond is like an insurance policy. A self-insurer will obtain a surety bond in favour of the Victorian WorkCover Authority, again equal to 1½ times their claim liabilities, or $3 million. Unlike with a bank guarantee, though, a self-insurer will not have to put up assets as collateral. However, the cost of the bond is likely to be far higher because it is not secured. In any event, if the self-insurer defaults, a surety bond insurer would pay that outstanding amount.

The bank guarantees and surety bonds need to be issued by APRA-regulated entities. This is viewed quite positively by the stakeholders, the Self Insurers Association of Victoria, who claim the current arrangements are costly and inflexible and tie up collateral and have an impact on the balance sheet. What this may also do is make it easier for new entrants into self-insurance. That is not the aim, but it is interesting that Victoria has the lowest rate of self-insurer insurance. If you have a look at Safe Work Australia's national comparison, which does its best to compare – every state does things a little bit differently, but it does the best that it can – there are 71 self-insurer licences in South Australia and 70 in New South Wales. In Victoria there are only 34. New South Wales is comparable in size to us, but maybe they are going a bit better than us. South Australia is probably going a bit better than us too, and Victoria is much lower. So this is a sensible change. It can make life easier for those self-insured or those seeking to be self-insured. The coalition supports this component.

There are a number of administrative arrangements related to the WorkSafe board chair. Interestingly, the processes around the appointment and fees for the chair of WorkSafe are different to the directors, so this change brings it in line. What it does is it gives the minister the power to set and adjust the chair's terms and conditions. It removes the process of going through the Governor in Council. That is interesting. I see more and more of this bypassing of the Governor in Council, and generally the coalition has no problem with this.

There are also components around the medical panel fees. It allows the minister to set the fees and costs paid to medical panel members rather than their being set by the Governor in Council and gazetted. I will say a couple of things about medical panels. I have had a lot to do with those over the years. Medical panels were set up to adjudicate on medical issues. Rather than the insurer's doctor saying one thing and the worker's doctor saying another thing, there is a referral to the medical panel, and they are specialists who are accredited or approved to be on that list. There can be two or three panellists, doctors, who talk together and determine what they think is the level of impairment for someone. There were changes to WorkSafe a little while ago, and that resulted in massive delays of eight to nine months with medical panels. That is significant. It is coming down a little bit. I think they

have had to put extra people on to bring that down. But in the main, the coalition does not have a problem with the medical panel fees.

I want to move now to the perhaps more contentious area of the powers of authorised representatives and health and safety representatives. In August 2025, a year ago, the government commissioned an independent review into the powers and functions of and supports for employee representatives to see if they were still effective and fit for purpose. The arguments were that the OH&S act had been operating for 20 years, workplace arrangements had changed quite a lot and there were different types of hire work. The government looked at the insecurity of people who are not permanent employees; they were very worried about insecurity. There was the rise of remote and hybrid work and some safety challenges in high-risk industries – and there is a lot of high-risk work happening at the minute. There have also been some reforms in labour hire and other workplace protections.

The review was to look at whether the current employee representation framework still enabled workers to effectively raise and resolve safety concerns and whether legislative, regulatory and operational changes were needed. They were to look at a whole bunch of different areas: the effectiveness of the health and safety representatives, the ARREOs, right of entry notice requirements, powers to inspect documents and to speak with workers, the penalties and the eligibility criteria for employee representatives and training and support things. It was reasonably broad. I am not sure that that was conducted by somebody particularly independent and not with the government's agenda in mind. Eugene White was the barrister. He made 17 recommendations, several of which informed the changes to the powers of health and safety representatives and ARREOs, which are the authorised representatives of registered employee organisations. These amendments are a significant change in the powers of WorkSafe inspectors, with greater powers to investigate matters onsite, copy whatever documents they deem necessary and extend any notices or bans to multiple sites owned by the same interests. At the same time there are some new penalties for using any material they gather in the public domain and enforcement action for intimidation of staff or workplaces. I will have a lot more to say about these, because I have received a lot of feedback.

The changes give workplace health and safety reps greater powers to access relevant documents and investigate additional safety breaches they uncover during a workplace visit. They can photocopy papers, and it allows them to investigate other matters that they believe necessary. To some degree the legislation cracks down – I am not sure, but 'cracks down' might be a bit strong – on misuse of workplace safety powers by preventing representatives from improperly sharing, publishing or live streaming information gathered during those investigations, and it introduces penalties for coercion or interference in health and safety representative elections. It gives WorkSafe inspectors greater powers to make binding safety decisions at multi-employer workplaces, such as construction sites and even shopping centres, while standardising and digitising improvement notices.

There are also measures which give ARREOs powers to investigate a new issue without leaving and re-entering a premises, as is the current practice. I have done quite a lot of consultation around this, and I have had some very extensive and thoughtful feedback from a number of groups. I have spoken with the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Business Council of Australia, Master Builders Victoria, the South East Melbourne Manufacturers Alliance and the Australian Industry Group, and there are a lot of concerns. I am going to talk to those concerns now because they bother me as well.

The sweeping access to company documents is a concern. Employers strongly oppose the expanded powers of health and safety reps and union reps, the ARREOs, to access, copy and remove documents, citing risks, and fairly I would say, to commercial confidentiality, privacy and sensitive business information. Just to clarify so people in the house understand: health and safety representatives are employees elected by their colleagues under a designated work group to represent health and safety interests, and ARREOs are union officials who hold valid permits, allowing them to enter workplaces to inquire into suspected OH&S breaches. Some of the feedback that I have received is that this is complete overreach. We are against it. What if we have critical infrastructure documentation? And

how does a business set out to protect confidential information? Is that off the table or is that not off the table? It is quite possible that there will be a lot of confidential information. It might be the nature of subcontracting, it might be other projects that they are looking at, like joint ventures, or different things that they have got in place that are not in the public domain. There are some safeguards, but we think that they are inadequate. Groups are very worried about whether this can become an unfettered fishing expedition for documents that contain personal and sensitive information.

I have mentioned commercial-in-confidence information, confidential information, but what about if it is information on bullying allegations? I think particularly about a lot of the workplaces, the worksites at the minute where there has been well documented on government Big Build projects a lot of bullying and harassment of women. That is something that the employer should have documents on because of the safety. If the ARREO's mate or the health and safety rep's mate is perhaps somebody who is being accused or alleged to have done things, for these representatives to go into their workplace and demand to see those documents may have consequences. This is serious. These are serious issues because people are frightened. People have spoken up and are frightened at some of these workplaces. They do live in fear of, I guess, intimidation from the CFMEU, and we have outlaw motorbike gangs and organised crime on these Big Build sites. If some of these people are the health and safety reps or ARREOs, I think that that is absolutely fair enough.

Photos to copy documents are likely to be taken on phones. You can imagine that you go somewhere and you have got your phone. It is your private phone; it is your work phone. How long are they kept, and what happens with unauthorised or improper use? Some of these groups do not feel like they have any reason to push back here. On this protection of privacy, if somebody who has put in a bullying and harassment allegation has not yet put in a claim but has made a list against a number of people, somebody can go in and see they have a list of 10 people that these claims are being made against. I have mentioned commercial confidentiality, privacy obligations, sensitive business information and ensuring that information obtained under OH&S powers is not used for purposes unrelated to WorkSafe safety.

I do note that ARREO permits can be taken away – they can be disqualified – and the government has maintained that these changes do not displace privacy, secrecy and confidentiality requirements. The feedback here is about the scope of the powers and what pushback they have.

On the inadequate safeguards against misuse, employers argue that the proposed prohibition on publishing documents online does not adequately prevent information being shared with unions, Trades Hall or other third parties, while questioning whether penalties for misuse will actually be enforced. It does not address security issues, as I have mentioned, if copies are made using a personal device, nor timeframes for removal.

The regulatory overreach and disruption is another area. The expanded ARREO investigation and multi-employer powers could allow representatives to pursue a shopping list of additional allegations, potentially disrupting worksites, delaying projects and increasing costs.

On WorkSafe having the ability to investigate and enforce, employers argue that WorkSafe, as the independent regulator, already has extensive investigative and document-gathering powers. The priority should be improving WorkSafe's responsiveness, consistency and enforcement, rather than transferring some of these investigative powers to employees or union representatives.

There are concerns about more regulation and costs for employers, and the overarching concern is the bill increases regulatory burden without demonstrating improved safety outcomes. I think it is fair to say that in this place everybody wants improved safety outcomes. There are too many claims, there are too many bad accidents and the bullying and harassment on government sites is too great.

Potentially there are increasing compliance costs and premiums, making Victoria less attractive for investment. We already know Victoria is not so attractive for investment, with the huge number of taxes that have been introduced by this government. We talk to employer groups regularly who move

interstate and who talk about moving interstate. I look at the Labor government in South Australia, who are actively poaching Victorian employers with incitements for payroll tax or reduced premiums on certain things. South Australia is having a crack at stealing employers from here, and because the environment is not so great, they are looking, they are going interstate, they are going to New South Wales and Queensland.

Employers also ask the question about the misuse provisions, reflecting the existing problems with the bullying, coercion or misuse of representative powers on major construction projects. It has been put to me – and I am sure this will be no surprise – that some of the worst abuses and misuses of safety representative powers are in the construction sector. There are concerns that this will be, but should not be, weaponised for industrial, criminal and other purposes. I have mentioned the CFMEU. The Electrical Trades Union, I understand, are doing some of their work now, so the ETU might be meeting with the Premier rather than the CFMEU. On the ministerial diary disclosures, it looks as though they are just meeting with the ETU, who are doing the bidding of the CFMEU.

I have had so much feedback on some of the issues here that it is staggering to keep up with the amount. One of the other areas that I wanted to touch base on is the investigation of new issues without leaving and re-entering for ARREOs. Currently an ARREO is limited to investigating a suspected contravention that they have provided notice of prior to entering that workplace. They cannot make inquiries about a new or suspected contravention without leaving and re-entering the workplace and providing a new notice of suspected contravention. The balance has to be right here, because if they see something, they have got to walk outside and then come back in. There is an issue here of how that looks, and whether they hang around, stay all day and take up a lot of time. This has not been supported by the stakeholders that I have dealt with. This change means that the scope of an entry can expand pretty well while a visit is underway. If this person makes a nuisance of themselves, continues to stay all day and requires somebody from that employer group to spend that time with them, this could become frivolous.

You have got to strike the balance here, because you do need some things that are streamlined. You want things to work smoothly, but you have to have the right balance. When a new notice comes in of a suspected contravention, the company site management receive it, and they will have to assess it in real time without pause and make personnel available almost immediately. Those personnel might be some distance away. They could be in a different workplace. This can cause quite a number of problems. The issues that I have received from the stakeholders show that clauses 22, 23, 25 and 27 are particularly concerning, and the opposition does not support those clauses. Whilst we are supporting a number of areas of this bill, we are not supporting those.

I want to touch on some other administrative improvements that are being made to the OH&S representation framework, and they are in relation to WorkSafe intervening in and making determinations on disputes between employers and health and safety reps on workplace safety matters. Currently they can only make determinations on or in relation to the designated work groups – functional workplaces and functional areas of business that usually have their own health and safety rep where they involve a single employer. In workplaces where there are multiple employers, such as a major construction site involving alliances or consortia, you can have a work group that is made up of people from different employers. That is just what will happen. Seemingly the inspectors cannot currently make determinations in respect of these multi-employer groups; they can only make recommendations or provide advice. This will allow them to make determinations. Conceivably this could be a problem area, as the health and safety reps' and WorkSafe determinations have been used as instruments in industrial disputes rather than for genuine OH&S reasons. There are many issues that I have raised here that I am concerned about. The restrictions on using and publishing WorkSafe information are a two-way street. If an ARREO publishes material onsite, WorkSafe can prosecute. If a health and safety rep does the same thing, the only available response is for the employer to take its own employee to the Magistrates' Court. That is probably not going to happen. People would be very reluctant to do that.

With regard to new offences of threatening, intimidating or coercive behaviours, if there is threatening, intimidating or coercive behaviour to somebody over a health and safety rep election or over whether a representative issues a notice, this has never been acceptable conduct, and this bill creates two new offences directed at that conduct. The explanatory memorandum confirms that they are intended to protect employers, employees, health and safety representatives and other participants alike. That balanced approach is certainly welcome, but given the provisions apply in both directions, perhaps it is a good idea – and I encourage the minister to take this on board – to have public reporting on enforcement activity. That would help demonstrate that the framework is operating as intended. I think that that is something that the government should give consideration to. It is a two-way street, so let us show everybody. Let us be transparent. Apparently transparency is a new thing for the current Premier, but let us see whether this will be included or can be changed or looked at in future, because I think that is not a bad option. I want to thank the minister's office for the briefings and being so forthcoming, but I also want to thank the multiple people – employer groups and employers – who gave me extensive feedback about some of their concerns.

One final one somebody mentioned is about sensitive commercial information. Once it is outside a business's custody or control, it will be hard to preserve this confidentiality. I meant to mention that earlier. It is not only having access but keeping things confidential outside the business operator's circle of influence, and that makes it very difficult. We are opposing this bill, and we will split it in the other place.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (15:50): This bill indeed makes practical improvements to Victoria's workers compensation framework to ensure it remains effective, efficient and fair for injured workers, employers and the broader community. There is balance on all fronts. It does reduce unnecessary regulatory burden and costs while maintaining strong protections for workers. It also supports Victoria's reputation as a safe place to work and a business-friendly place to invest and grow. A little note for the opposition: I do not think it is very good to trash-talk Victoria and talk business et cetera down. I do not see how that in any way helps our state. I actually love our state and respect our businesses and our community, and I think it is important to always back them in. But anyway, I will move back to the broader premise of the bill.

The bill does indeed respond to the findings of the independent review of employee representatives, led by respected barrister Mr Eugene White. Again, I am not sure there is any place for undermining the independence of the review; I do not see how that lends itself to this particular debate. I just want to put that out there and emphasise that it was an independent review. It strengthens the ability of health and safety representatives to identify and resolve workplace safety issues while ensuring powers are exercised appropriately and responsibly, respecting that that balance has to be maintained. It addresses coercion and misuse of information and supports the integrity of the occupational health and safety representation framework, because under this government, integrity is not optional.

I used to be a union organiser, and I quite often would assist health and safety representatives, and I know that it is a difficult role. It is a nuanced role. It was not to do with state matters, I should say, and those matters have long since been acquitted, so I am not actually raising a particular case. But I am just reflecting on the responsibility that they carry and the delicate nuance that there is when you are having to raise matters. It is tricky in your own workplace, ensuring that workers feel protected and respected and that it is safe for them to raise legitimate matters but at the same time not stepping over any particular reasonable boundaries that have been set under law.

A particular example I can think of was a case where duress alarms simply were not working; 18 months went by and they simply were not working. I do not think there was any particular malice on the part of the employer; it was just that it was a cost to have to rectify an electrical fault. These particular workers did have a reasonable risk of danger in the work that they did, and so having a working duress alarm certainly was not an unreasonable request. When we are talking about health and safety representatives, I think it is important to see that – certainly in my interactions, and I am sure many can reflect on this – they are loath to raise matters other than where it is necessary to

maintain safety in the workplace. Getting a duress alarm fixed was surely a reasonable request and not going above and beyond what was fair, bearing in mind the circumstances within which they worked. I really respected the way that they were professional and very much wanted to maintain that collaborative approach with their employer, to work through matters in a way that did not in any way cause tension in the relationship, because of course they had to work with each other each and every day. Maintaining that collaborative relationship, backed in by good workplace laws, is really important. The reason I am raising that matter is just to explain, on the one hand, the innate challenge of being a health and safety representative, making sure your colleagues – and that includes your employer and everyone – are safe in their workplace and can actually fulfil the tasks that they are required to do.

I will say, when we are looking more broadly, the bill is about improving the operation of Victoria's workplace safety, workers compensation and transport accident schemes. It strikes an important balance between reducing unnecessary red tape, supporting businesses, protecting workers and strengthening the integrity of our regulatory framework. I should say that the government remains committed to ensuring Victoria is one of the safest places in the world to work. That is something to be proud of, but it does not happen capriciously, it does not happen just because. It happens because of appropriate regulation and having that buy-in, for want of a better word, of health and safety reps who are prepared to undertake that role and making sure that those who are living the role day in, day out know the challenges and the risks and are able to safely raise matters that need to be addressed as they arise.

The bill strengthens the role of health and safety representatives by providing better access to relevant information. That is a really important point here: it is not any information, it is relevant information. That in itself raises a caveat in terms of the necessity of that information being accessed to improve the timely resolution of workplace safety issues. Coming back to that other example of a duress alarm needing to be repaired, having a timely resolution of that issue without too much fuss for all the right reasons would make good sense. I know there are many, many other contingencies and many other examples that people can raise, but I am just using that to illustrate the point.

With stronger powers – and I do want to in this way also address some of the concerns raised by those opposite about the boundaries within which this legislation should operate – the bill creates clear protections against coercion and misuse of information and prevents inappropriate online publication of material obtained through statutory powers. There you can see a clearly outlined boundary that must be respected. These reforms protect privacy, safeguard sensitive information and strengthen confidence in the occupational health and safety framework.

When we are talking about supporting business while protecting the scheme, something that was spoken to a little bit earlier in the debate, the introduction of surety bonds offers employers greater flexibility and lowers costs without weakening protections for injured workers or exposing the WorkCover scheme to greater risk. This is a practical reform that supports investment and business growth while preserving appropriate financial safeguards. The TAC and WorkSafe Victoria amendments are technical in nature. They correct unintended drafting consequences from earlier legislation and restore the longstanding policy approach that accommodation costs are generally personal living expenses rather than compensable costs. The amendments provide certainty but also avoid costly legal ambiguity, so these are important reforms that are being incorporated into the bill.

Overall, if you look at what the bill is delivering in total, the bill is a practical package of reforms that improves workplace safety, strengthens the integrity of Victoria's occupational health and safety system, reduces unnecessary red tape and provides greater certainty for employers and workers alike. It delivers on this government's commitments to ensure Victoria remains both one of the safest places in the world to work and one of the best places to do business. These are sensible, balanced reforms that support workers, support employers and protect the long-term sustainability of the WorkCover and TAC schemes.

This government will always back reforms that improve safety, support productivity and deliver better outcomes for Victorian workers and employers. You can see that this bill is about striking the right balance: backing in the safety of our workers but also respecting the needs and boundaries with business. It is important that all those facets are taken into account, and that has been done in a very diligent and cogent manner.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Matters of public importance

Liberal Party policy

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

> That this house condemns the Victorian Liberals for their plan to cut $40 billion from our schools, hospitals and essential services, and for cosying up to One Nation to help deliver those cuts.

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (16:01): I have been in a reflective mood. I have been reflecting that this evening we have a series of valedictory speeches and we are farewelling several members of Parliament who are retiring from their roles in the Parliament over the next few weeks. This place, our Parliament, is always evolving, and another evolution or a transformation will happen again in less than 100 days. But to be frank, I am also a little bit concerned. You see, I love Victoria. I am a Victorian to my bootstraps. I love our diversity. I love our strength. I love our weather. I love that so many people have chosen to make Victoria home from other states and from other countries. But maybe 'concern' is too gentle a word, because I also have a bit of a sense of dread – a dread of the consequences for our great state as the Liberal–National–One Nation coalition cosy up to each other in an awkward marriage of convenience. I am concerned about the risks to our state, to marvellous Melbourne and to Victoria if they get to fulfil their plan to cut $40 billion from schools and hospitals and cut one in seven public servants. Let me be clear: if the Liberal Party are given the great gift of forming a government, it can only happen with One Nation, and the impact will be felt not just in my community but across the state. Despite the Leader of the Opposition's faded whispers of 'We're different' in Kew and her murmurs in parts of regional Victoria of 'Actually, we're just like One Nation', we know the truth because they have said the quiet bit out loud. They have a plan to form government with One Nation, whatever it takes.

We know the Liberal Party, with former Prime Minister Tony Abbott as president, is sending out siren calls to Senator Hanson that she was wronged in her battle with the Greens. I actually was shocked – I was genuinely shocked – when I opened the *Age* on the weekend and saw that the president of the Liberal Party, the shadow shadow opposition leader, has agreed that they were wronged when Senator Hanson told the Greens' senator to 'piss off back to Pakistan'. Frankly speaking, it is disgraceful and heartbreaking. The shadow shadow opposition leader has a bit of FOMO, and we know, as always, he is pulling the puppet strings of the Victorian Liberal Party, because he thinks he has what it takes for the Victorian Liberals to get elected. I feel a bit sorry for the Leader of the Opposition, because I imagine how it is fielding phone calls from the other leader of the opposition. 'Fantastic. Great work. Well done, Angus,' she says. Then the Institute of Public Affairs will call: 'Don't worry, it will trickle down. We can privatise the ambulance service. We've done it before; we can do it again.' And we know that is true. Do you know where it was done before? It was done in Cranbourne, and it was a disaster. They will do it again. They cannot help themselves. It is in the DNA.

Of course the ghosts of Liberals past, experiencing their FOMO, will be on the phone: 'Jeffrey, yes. You're right. Let's get rid of the SEC. We don't need that. Let's get rid of the apprentices. We don't need them.' But what I am curious about is what happens when the Leader of the Opposition heads down to Red Hill, to the wineries, to see those slightly more urbane Liberals? What happens when the Leader of the Opposition bumps into the Baillieus? 'It's okay. We're urbane.' The phone rings again: it is Lucy; it is Malcolm. 'Oh, it's okay. I'm going to hold the east. I'm going to hold Hawthorn. We're

going to hold Bulleen. We're all okay. It's all okay.' Then the Leader of the Opposition has to pick up the phone to One Nation again.

My concern is that the Leader of the Opposition is not just looking to her federal opposition counterparts – 'Well done. Good work, Angus' – she is also looking to Camelot, and not the Camelot of the clever, accomplished Caroline Kennedy, former ambassador to Australia and a very great friend of the member for Wendouree; and not the flawed but brilliant JFK – no. The Leader of the Opposition needs to keep her right flank in order and she needs to keep One Nation happy, so she is looking to that other member of Camelot: Robert F Kennedy, the man who is leading the Make America Healthy Again campaign with his opposition to fluoride in water, his outrageous discredited claims that vaccines are linked to autism and his assertions that no vaccines are safe. How is that going to go down with Lucy and Malcolm, I wonder. What is going to happen when you head down to Red Hill and catch up with the Baillieus down there? What happens when they hear that the Leader of the Opposition is having a coffee with Senator Malcolm Roberts, because that is going to be an awkward conversation. Let us get that on a clip – Malcolm Roberts, not Malcolm Turnbull. The Leader of the Opposition, we know, does not like her colleagues to front the media, because you all saw what happened a couple of weeks ago when Ms Crozier from the other place came up with the slightly harebrained idea to consult only with the member for Berwick – not that I do not have the greatest respect for the member for Berwick, but in terms of a health service I think that that consultation needed to go a little bit further.

And the Liberal Party are going to make these $40 billion in cuts. You cannot cut $40 billion without devastating cuts to hospitals, to schools, to frontline services – the work that people rely on – and to the Orange Door in Cranbourne. Cuts to health mean longer wait times, less nurses and less hospital beds. But the Liberals cannot do it alone, so along with One Nation they are going to have to form a coalition of cuts and closures if they are to form government. One Nation, as part of a coalition government, also has real plans and real policies that hurt working people. They will privatise our hospitals, they will Americanise our health system and just like RFK they will abolish the Department of Health, because they have got to keep tickling those tummies. They will end paid parental leave, and we know penalty rates are so 1987. They plan to cut one in seven public sector jobs, and that includes health workers, it includes disability workers and it includes child protection workers – it has to. We all know that they will not stop there. Nothing and no-one are off the table. You can wear your R.M. Williams, and you can go down to the Mornington Peninsula on the weekends. But they also need to be having those conversations with their colleagues and friends – those family members who have mostly hailed from Far North Queensland – and be able to find a way to speak a common language. We know this is going to affect every family in Cranbourne and indeed every family and person in Victoria – every older person, every young parent, every worker, every pensioner and every person who needs urgent medical treatment – because that issue is what is at stake: our public health system.

My message is simple. It is straightforward. It is clear. Cranbourne – and all Victorians – cannot afford to allow its public health services to be taken for granted. We need to ask some very serious questions. What would happen to our healthcare system if the Liberal–National–One Nation coalition gained power? This is not about party politics for the sake of it. It is not sport. It is about something so much more important. It is about whether when your child is sick you can get treatment, because the virtual emergency department is life changing. It is about whether your elderly parent can get an ambulance. It is about whether you can go to hospital without worrying whether you can afford to pay the bill. It is about whether the public hospitals in our community remain as public services for everyone rather than becoming increasingly dependent on private operators and private finance.

Cranbourne is growing rapidly, just like Victoria is growing rapidly. We have a community that needs more health care, not less. We have the Cranbourne Community Hospital; I think I have mentioned it in here a few times. It opened on 6 October last year. It was opened the day of my brother's birthday, so happy birthday, Marty. It is a public hospital. It is managed by Monash Health and it provides services: ophthalmology, dental, dialysis, pharmacy, pathology, adult mental health services, and

further services are coming. An urgent care clinic is on its way. Do you know what else it has? It has free parking. I fought like a woman possessed to keep that parking free. I will continue to fight for my community. I will continue to do whatever it takes to make sure that we can keep our health services public. This hospital, my local hospital, matters. It means people do not have to travel long distances for care, and it means family can receive services closer to home. It means health care can be part of the community, rather than something we only encounter when we are forced into a major emergency tertiary hospital. It is about whether you can go to hospital without worrying about whether you can pay the bill, and it is about whether the public hospital in our community remains as a public service, because we will not put our public services on the bidding table. We will not sell our souls.

Let us not pretend that this is new territory for the opposition. We have seen this show before. It was a Liberal coalition government that privatised so much of our service, and the privatisation was so badly botched. It has been exposed locally. I was talking to a paramedic just two days ago who was telling me about what happened. He was part of the work to make sure that the Cranbourne ambulance service came back into public hands. The member for Melton has spoken often about what the consequences were. This is in their DNA, and that is precisely why we need to protect it. The state has seen what happens when the Liberals get anywhere near our health system. This Labor government, our Labor government, has built 12 new public hospitals, as many as the Liberals closed, growing our workforce by 50 per cent. We have invested in innovative services – I already mentioned the virtual ED – in women's health clinics and Chemist Care Now. Of course we have so much more to do.

The Cranbourne Community Hospital is a real hospital. Mrs Hermans in the other place, the Liberal member for the South-East Metropolitan Region, has stood up in front of the community hospital and dismissed it. She says that it is not a real hospital. I can tell you that our nurses say it is a real hospital. Our cleaners, our technicians, the people who make coffee in the Cranbourne Community Hospital say it is real. The people who turn up to work there every day and the people who work in our ophthalmology clinic say it is a real hospital. I met constituents on Monday who have used our ophthalmology clinic, and they tell me it is a real hospital. They are mortified and horrified by claims that it is not. So the member is not only insulting a building, she is insulting every person who works in it and every patient who relies on it.

This is not an abstract accounting exercise. The vast majority of this state's budget is in health and education, and you simply cannot find $40 billion without cutting into hospitals, without sacking nurses and midwives, without reducing the number of paramedics, cutting into our mental health workforce and of course dental. You cannot cut on this scale without the consequences, and the consequences land on the health system. If One Nation form a coalition with the Liberal Party, these plans will be a reality and working people will suffer. Pauline Hanson is not on the ballot in Victoria, but we know One Nation candidates have been a problem all over the place. Seventy per cent of One Nation MPs have quit before their term ended. This would be a disaster. It would be ruthless. There would be cuts, cuts, cuts to the bone. They have a history. They cannot help themselves. It is in their DNA.

Only Labor is backing Victoria's hospitals by continuing to deliver on our commitment to all Victorians over the state for a range of care options that are fit for purpose. In this election Victorians face a clear choice for the future of our health service. The Carroll Labor government will continue investing in hospitals and mental health hubs that Victorians rely on and of course in 10 new dental clinics. Our community needs more health care, not less, because we know under Jess they will get way less. Only Labor is fighting for working people. Only Labor will make sure people have the care that they need.

The SPEAKER: I remind members about using correct titles in the chamber. Member for Bulleen, hang on, I need to take my hearing aid out.

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (16:16): I do not yell, Speaker; I speak with conviction. Ukrainians like to speak with conviction, and half my family is Ukrainian. I was waiting to be flayed. I thought, 'Look

at this. They've got their big line, their key attack point.' Labor has got its attack point and condemns the Liberals about all this massive $40 billion we are supposedly going to cut. I was waiting to be flayed, but with respect, I was there, like a couple on the backbench of the Labor Party, yawning and thinking, 'When is it coming?' Ten minutes in, after hearing about Robert F Kennedy and vaccines – and I was struggling to work out where that came from – and a narrative about R.M. Williams boots, we all looked down and said, 'What has that one got to do with it?' We kind of got into it. Apparently this was serious. You can imagine the Labor Party cabinet or the Labor Party themselves trying to work out the spin for 'What are we going to say about Jess Wilson? What's our key attack point?' and they are kind of fishing through maiden speeches.

The SPEAKER: Correct titles, member for Bulleen.

Matthew GUY: The Leader of the Opposition, I should say, Speaker. They are fishing through maiden speeches and trying to work out where they can get them. They said, like a bargaining competition, 'Let's just say she's going to cut $10 billion – no, $20 billion, $30 billion, $40 billion. Let's just say it. Let's just make it up.' They all just make it up.

Members interjecting.

Matthew GUY: Sorry, did you say something about yelling? Oh, goodness me.

The SPEAKER: Member for Ripon, member for Bulleen, member for Narre Warren North, member for Wendouree, no interjections, please.

Matthew GUY: Don't you love it when they prove your point for you? It was just stunning, and you can imagine them just sitting back doing the workshopping as to 'What can we say?' It would be like, as I said, a *Utopia* episode, working out how they are going to position and whatever – not how are they going to govern or how are they going to approach the last 12 weeks of government, or of the Parliament anyway. No. What can they come up with and walk into the chamber on a matter of public importance that might be witty, funny, good for their Instagram or whatever. I am actually flabbergasted. At the end of the day I am stunned that the Parliament is sitting for another week. I would have thought the Labor Party, having some political smarts and given that it is double digits behind in every poll, might want its backbench knocking on doors. But we have seen what Kosmos Samaras has said about his own side knocking on doors. No, they are bringing them all back in here to come in and put out matters about the Liberal Party cosying up to One Nation to deliver an invented figure of cuts. That is what they have got to.

Bridget Vallence interjected.

Matthew GUY: You would think they would come in here, as the member for Evelyn said, and talk about their record in government. No. Well, you certainly could not unless you wanted to talk about corruption, breaking promises or the Suburban Rail Loop. Instead, no, they come in with this ludicrous and almost comical matter of public importance where they are referencing Robert F Kennedy, R.M. Williams boots and the Baillieus at Red Hill. I am really quite flabbergasted that that is where we have got to.

The matter actually talks about a Liberal plan for cuts. I have been around here long enough – and in fact I did not even have to be here that long – to hear the Labor Party talking about cuts. I thought, 'Hang on a tick, didn't I pick up the *Herald Sun* this morning and see the current, latest Premier talking about cuts?' I saw, 'Victorian Premier Ben Carroll announces cuts' – that is it, the word 'cuts' – 'to fat cats'. Don't you love that term 'fat cats'. You can imagine them workshopping that one in the office of the Premier: 'What are we going to say? We're going to cut the fat cats. We're going to cut all these people out of a couple of authorities and give Benny' – pardon me – 'the Premier $100 million in savings' or whatever they want to do. So they have workshopped this line about how they can walk in here. Here it is; I found it: 'Victoria to axe 140 senior public service jobs in major shake-up'. This article goes on to talk about how the Treasurer Colin Brooks, who was talking about Liberal cuts, was

talking about Labor cuts earlier on in the day. Of course one seems to be okay, and one seems to be the subject of a strange matter of public importance.

Jade Benham: Colin from accounts.

Matthew GUY: Yes, Colin from accounts, who was the mayor of Banyule. I remember his term as the mayor of Banyule. I remember the member for Ivanhoe on the Banyule council too. I have got a bit more to say about that in time too, about a few things that occurred around there. Maybe I will hint at them if they are listening – the Greensborough project. But we will come back to that closer to the election, shall we? That was just to give them a bit of a teaser so they can scurry out. The Treasurer will be in the foetal position on the floor like he usually is when there is anything of pressure applied to him. What I find stunning is just this matter about Labor cuts, because we had the previous Premier Jacinta Allan. Remember Jacinta Allan? I remember the member for Bendigo East.

Juliana Addison interjected.

Matthew GUY: I am sorry. The member for Bendigo East.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Wendouree. I am the Speaker.

Matthew GUY: Sorry about that. You are deeply offended. All right. The member for Bendigo East, the one you all tried to roll, actually came out and said – and I am reading it here, so it is not me using incorrect titles, Speaker. I am just going to read it into *Hansard*: 'Jacinta Allan admits cutting "thousands" of public service jobs' – not one, not two, not 140 but thousands. Labor will save the public service. Here we go:

> Today, Premier Jacinta Allan admitted her government has cut "thousands" of public sector jobs under the Silver Review.

Again, I have got to refer to this matter because I think it is so comical: 'the Liberal Party's plan to cut from our essential services'. Well, here it is, actually from the Premier. Was this in 2024? No. 2025? No. This was from 8 May 2026. That was three months ago. They were boasting about cutting thousands of public servants just three months ago and now walk into the chamber bereft of any ideas, bereft of a fourth-term agenda and bereft of any kind of defence of their union corruption, or might it be the Suburban Rail Loop decisions or the fact they have given us $200 billion in state debt, the highest of any state in Australian political history. No, they are actually talking about cutting things, and Jacinta Allan – pardon me, the member for Bendigo East – admitted she was planning to cut thousands of public sector jobs. Well, that is the Labor Party.

I also note that there is another addendum to this matter, and I think this is actually quite funny. It says: 'and for cosying up to One Nation to help deliver those cuts'. What a comical and unique way of popping a little sting at the end of an MPI. Do you reckon the office of the Premier came up with that one when the Premier was planning his flight to Canberra today, when he knew the report was coming out from the Victorian Auditor-General's Office? Anyway, it is fascinating because it says 'cosying up to help deliver these cuts'. So what we now have is Labor members scurrying through One Nation websites to say, 'Look what they have said – that is you.' They are saying, 'We assume you are going to preference them, so you own One Nation.' That is what they are saying, which I thought was fascinating, because I decided to go and get –

Juliana Addison interjected.

Matthew GUY: I think you need to refer to me by my proper title, don't you?

The SPEAKER: The member for Wendouree is warned.

Matthew GUY: I thought I would go and get the last electoral test of this Parliament, look at some preferences and see who was cosying up to who, and I got the now member for Werribee's how-to-vote card. A very nice picture of him there; he is a handsome-looking dude. Here he is on his how-to-

vote card. The Labor Party have actually preferenced quite high up on the list there the Victorian Socialists – what a great mob they are. I thought, looking at this matter – 'and for cosying up to One Nation' – maybe I could rewrite this with an amendment, 'and for cosying up to the Victorian Socialists on how to deliver Labor's cuts'. If you own all these things – and apparently you own who you preference – let us see what the Victorian Socialists have got to say, apart from the fact they have got a socialist policy for puppy farms, which I thought was unique. I do not know what they are going to do with my cavoodle; does he go in one part of it or the other? A socialist policy for puppy farms I thought was very unique. The first thing the socialists say they want to do is establish a state bank of Victoria. What happened to our State Bank of Victoria? I thought, 'That's a unique one,' because they are cosying up to the Victorian Socialists as per their own matter. Aren't these the people who under the Kirner government sold the State Bank of Victoria, the last time they bankrupted the state? I think that is the case. I thought that was unique. There is another one in there about a Medicare for pets. Again, my cavoodle – I love him – has just had an operation on his leg. He did an ACL. This is my dog. But I am not sure that Victoria could afford –

A member interjected.

Matthew GUY: He did not play netball. He was going up and down the stairs a lot, though. I am not sure Victoria, at this point in time, given we owe $200 billion and we have had $15 billion potentially stolen with union corruption on Big Build sites, can have a Medicare for pets. But maybe the Labor Party can give us their views on that, given they are, according to their own words, cosying up to the Victorian Socialists. It is fascinating. How is this one: they want to reverse all funding increases to Victoria Police over the last decade and then develop a plan to defund the police. I guess they are cosying up to the Victorian Socialists, because this is why we have got – and the member for Berwick will tell you – record problems with crime in this state. It is why a Wilson government is going to reopen police stations – not cuts; reopen police stations – that this government has been closing. You would not believe that word 'cuts' – been closing. We are going to reopen them. I thought this was fascinating. Take all military-style weapons out of police hands, take capsicum spray out of Victoria Police hands and disarm Victoria Police. There are some fascinating ones there. Then I thought, if we're cosying up to people, that 23 of Labor's MPs were directly elected to this Parliament at the 2022 election by Greens preferences. Goodness. What have the Greens stood for predominantly over the last couple of years? I know that the previous Premier did not do the toast to the state of Israel when she went to the Israel Independence Day celebration. Maybe they are taking some leaves out of the Greens book and starting to divide society based on that.

I have to relate it back to public transport. I think you know I like to talk a bit about public transport when I get the chance.

A member interjected.

Matthew GUY: We always give it a shot. It talks about Liberal plans for essential services cuts. No doubt we are going to hear that word over and over again – wait for it; it is really scary – Kennett. They come in here and they say it. The kids are put to bed, mother gets an Ovaltine and they are all really worried about what it looks like. Kennett – 'Jeffrey closed this and Jeffrey closed that.' What I think is fascinating is that the member for Cranbourne raised the matter. In fact under the Kennett government the member for Cranbourne actually got the first new passenger electrified rail service for 40 years. It was brought into Cranbourne. We electrified the railway line. We brought suburban trains to Cranbourne. Can you believe it? Let us go back further. They talk about Kennett; we will talk about Cain. It was the Cain government that shut the Port Melbourne line. It was the Cain government that shut the St Kilda line. It was the Cain government that tried to shut the Upfield line. Whoa! It was the Cain government that then reduced the two passenger trains to Sydney to one. Goodness me. We want to go to the Bracks government. Let us go and talk about the Bracks government.

A member interjected.

Matthew GUY: I will come to the SEC if I want to. The Bracks government shut the Yaapeet line, the Yanac line and the Navarre line. We can talk about these things all we want, but at the end of the day rather than giving positions for me to come in here and say all of these things – as entertaining as it can be for me and maybe for others around, Speaker, but maybe not for you, because I am not yelling as loud – with just a few weeks to go in this Parliament, I would have thought that the government would use a matter of public importance to stake its claim for a fourth term. With the government bringing all their MPs back in here for another sitting week, taking them off the campaign trail, weird as that might be in the politics of it, I would have thought that government would make very good use of this time to get people up to make sure they are staking their claim for a fourth term in office.

Bridget Vallence interjected.

Matthew GUY: But as the member for Evelyn says, they have nothing good to say. There is no fourth-term agenda. If there was, we would have heard in the first speech what that might be. Instead we had a rambling mix of Robert F Kennedy, vaccinations, the Baillieus and Red Hill, with R.M. Williams boots thrown in. That is not a direction for a fourth term; that is evidence that the government have run out of steam, and it is time they went.

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (16:31): It is always entertaining hearing from the member for Bulleen, also known as the former Shadow Minister for Transition to Government. I note no-one has taken up that mantle, and I wonder if it is being kept on the backburner for the moment, waiting for the frightening eventuality of a Liberal–National–One Nation coalition government. Maybe that is being kept warm for a One Nation person, who knows? I do note that the member for Bulleen said that this MPI is amusing. It is not amusing; the matter of public importance is serious.

Matthew Guy: You were talking about RFK, not me.

Daniela DE MARTINO: I will tell you what, one need not go to America to hear about the cracked theories of Robert F Kennedy Jr. One only needs to look at another Robert, or Roberts, and that is Malcolm Roberts here in this very country, when it comes to very interesting positions on COVID and vaccines that one may describe at best as fantastical, but not in a great way. One need not go too far; one need only look at One Nation.

John Mullahy interjected.

Daniela DE MARTINO: I am being informed that the past Liberal member for Forest Hill held similar views, and that also is quite a concern. That is why this matter of public importance is not a joke. It is not a matter for jocularity and it is not a matter to be taken lightly, because there are deep concerns on this side of the chamber about what our state may potentially look like, not just as a result of $40 billion worth of cuts from a Liberal–One Nation coalition.

A member interjected.

Daniela DE MARTINO: I do not know what one could call it – an unholy alliance perhaps. It is quite concerning for me as the member for Monbulk. It is concerning for all of us as Victorians and representatives of our electorates on this side of the chamber. That is why I rise today to support the member for Cranbourne's matter of public importance given the very real threat that cosying up to One Nation may very well be the only chance those opposite have of forming a government and wreaking havoc on this state.

Let us be real about what those cuts will mean for people. Do you know what it will look like? It is whether a grade 1 student from Ferntree Gully can get her eyes tested and her teeth checked at school and enjoy starting her day at the breakfast club with a full belly or not, because that might be on the chopping block. Free Fruit Friday was. It is whether a three-year-old from Emerald can go to kinder, because her parents otherwise could not afford it. They can now because of our free kinder program, ensuring that children in their most formative years get a chance to start their education journey with some of the best educators going around – not if that gets chopped as well. It is whether a woman from

Belgrave has the opportunity to upskill or cross-skill via our free TAFE program so that she can find a new career or not – if the doors of opportunity and access to education get closed in her face due to Liberal–One Nation cuts to TAFE. They did it before. They slashed $1.2 billion out of TAFE last time. They locked up 22 campuses, including the one in Lilydale. The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. It is whether an elderly man on the pension in Monbulk can be seen for free at the marvellous Angliss Hospital that we have just invested $112 million into redeveloping. It is whether he can be seen there for free – or not, because the Liberal–One Nation coalition has Americanised our hospital system and sold it off. That actually was a plan back in Kennett's time. The Angliss Hospital was listed to either be downgraded to a community hospital or just privatised.

Speaking of hospitals, there is a wonderful, wonderful idea that those opposite had but seem to have run away from very quickly, and that is PSOs, with broad consultation obviously beforehand with the member for Berwick – broad, one person, the member for Berwick, an extraordinary level of consultation. That was a great policy there. There is another wonderful policy that my local government has come out and absolutely slammed, and that is to ensure that the general waste bin is collected every week. What a fabulous policy – not. It would actually double landfill as we are experiencing it now. The former mayor of Yarra Ranges shire Cr Jim Child actually came out and slammed that policy. He could not believe it. He said it was terrible. In the bin with that policy, for sure.

Honestly, the last time the coalition were in government in this state they cut a billion from our health system, and they went to war with our nurses and our ambos, so there is a very, very important question here. It is whether or not the nurses, the teachers and the paramedics are going to have a government that backs them or a government that treats them as a line item to be crossed out on a budget paper. When they were last in government they promised there would be no cuts to the public service, full stop. Then they cut $250 million per year from the public service, with 4128 public sector jobs cut or not replaced between 2011 and 2013. The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. We do know they have a plan: one in seven public servants is to be cut. They say it is okay because they will not cut them from the front line: 'Teachers won't be cut, nurses won't be cut, police officers won't be cut. That's okay. It'll be fine.' Those people cannot do their jobs without all the support crew behind them. School buses need to be scheduled. Canteens need to be run. If all you have left in schools are teachers and maybe the admin in there, you lose a large section of people who actually keep that functioning and running well. And what then happens to those who are left behind? They then have to scramble and try and fill the gaps, and they cannot fill all the gaps because already they are working as hard as they possibly can. This is not a good plan at all. When those opposite talk about their plans to strip out this money from the Victorian budget – $40 billion – that is what it looks like.

And it hurts. It will hurt ordinary working people. It will hurt young children who should be going to kinder or who need their vision or their teeth checked or who just need a good meal to start their day and take the pressure off home when the cost of living is biting. It will hurt our elderly people who are not sitting on mountains of cash or multiple investment properties. They are living day to day on the pension, and they need a robust public health system to take care of them. And it will actually hurt businesses, especially small businesses, because you cannot rip out $40 billion from an economy without that having a flow-on effect. If one out of every seven public service jobs evaporates, there are fewer jobs going around. That means fewer people employed. That is fewer people going out for dinner to a restaurant. It is fewer people going to the cafe to buy their coffee. It is fewer people buying the gym membership to work off the dinner in the restaurant and the full-fat lattes as well. But there is nothing that should worry a small business owner more than the prospect of a shrinking economy, because the less people have to spend at your business, the smaller your income, the less your profit and the greater the prospect that your business goes under. For those frontline workers who they say will be so-called protected – the teachers and nurses and police officers and paramedics – when the support staff behind them lose their jobs, the work they perform supporting the frontline workers will not magically disappear. It will still need to be done, and who will be left to do that? Let us be honest about what is actually in this plan, because when they dress it up in the language of discipline and

waste they are actually talking about the people on the ground who keep our hospitals rostered and running and the people who make sure, as I said before, that the school has a bus roster, a maintenance schedule and a working canteen. Those jobs will fold, they will disappear, and we will end up in a terrible state indeed.

I did mention Malcolm Roberts before. I just want to point out that his thinking is dangerous not only when it comes to health. There was an article in today's *Guardian*. I will finish off with this, because we need to know who they are thinking of cosying up to. An audience member asked him what Christians should think about James Ashby, who is gay. He said:

> … I'm in two minds … I haven't got a firm position on it myself other than I don't, I'm not homosexual and I can't, I can't understand it.
>
> … there have been a number of homosexuals who are very, very prominent in many … fields throughout history. So all I know is that in this environment, James is not morally sound. But from what I've seen of him, his honesty, his integrity, his ability, he is sound.
>
> So if you pardon me, I haven't made up my mind, but there are a number of people in society in very prominent positions in the arts, sports, science, business, politics, who are homosexual.
>
> And I don't think we can afford to ban them. So it's difficult.

I cannot believe this. This is the calibre of and kind of person that they are looking at cosying up to. I worry for the state of Victoria. This is a serious, serious matter indeed. I commend the matter to the house.

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (16:41): I thought we were standing up to speak on the matter of public importance, but it sounds like a long list of valedictory speeches at the moment, I have got to say. They are coming at our side, but let me tell you, there is not a lot coming from them. What is your vision? What is your plan? What on earth have you been doing for 12 years? We should all come in for the valedictory speeches and start listening. We feel good on this side. We have a plan, and we are excited to present that. I was thinking when I was making some notes about our role here in the Victorian Parliament: what is our purpose? What is our job? When I entered this place my focus was on the Victoria that I want to provide for my children, the Victoria that I grew up in, where you could buy a home. You had so many wonderful opportunities and you were safe when you were doing so. You had governments that cared. I am going to reiterate that care factor a few times.

The member for Monbulk was just talking about billion-dollar cuts from 14 years ago. I decided to pull up a question I asked a few weeks ago to the Treasurer regarding investment in regional Victoria. And I want to note that the new Premier has not set foot in regional Victoria since he was appointed. So while he says, 'I am different to the previous one,' I beg to differ.

Members interjecting.

Annabelle CLEELAND: Well, when he was there, I wondered if –

The SPEAKER: Member for Euroa, do not respond to interjections. Member for Ripon, please cease interjecting.

Annabelle CLEELAND: I am triggering your side now, and here I thought we were under attack. But anyway, I raised a question about expenditure projects in regional Victoria. Let us look at some of the current facts. The Treasurer provided $1 billion in cuts in this parliamentary term – $1 billion. A quarter of the investment in regional Victoria was cut in the last financial year. This is just current fact. Let us not spin it. This new direction, this new man at the table – no-one is buying it, because the state has stopped listening. This Labor government has lost trust. On a local level – the member for Bulleen stood up, and we were laughing because he presents things in a humorous way – it is actually no laughing matter. What we are experiencing in regional Victoria is a billion dollars of cuts from infrastructure spending, a quarter of the spending. This is why we need a fair share guarantee. This is what we are calling for. We represent more than 25 per cent of the state's population, and you have cut 25 per cent of infrastructure spending. That was not even in my notes, by the way. I am just fuming

that Labor members keep harping on about cuts from a time gone by, trying to manage state spending, when right now we are experiencing that. In regional Victoria a billion dollars of infrastructure spending has been cut. And what does that look like on the ground? It means that we have schools running off generators. We have a growth corridor, a 300 per cent planning overlay on our community, and we cannot even access a public secondary school in Kilmore. That is where we are at.

There is no care for regional Victoria and no investment, and this is why the Nationals are committed to a fair share guarantee, because we are sick of grovelling for basic infrastructure when this Labor government has stopped caring. There is no plan to deliver a public secondary school in Kilmore. Just down the road, I actually welcomed Broadford Secondary College students to Parliament yesterday, where they raised their local issues and said, 'Our school can't cope. Our school is not coping with an inundation of students from outside the region because there is no access to a secondary school in Kilmore.' They are operating off generators. There is no reliable power to this school, and half of the classrooms are now portables. I think that for a new Premier that has barely visited regional Victoria, he is more focused on polling – which I think was his opening statement – than actually governing for the whole state. Well, I think by today's valedictory speeches it is not going great.

But if this house does want to talk about condemnation, let us talk about what is happening to our emergency health services in regional Victoria under this government. Ambulance Victoria has become so politicised that we cannot even visit our own ambulance stations. Benalla ambulance station has faulty garage doors, so they have to park their ambulances out the front to meet the turnout times – of which, can I say, one in two phone calls to 000 in regional Victoria, in my region, is either not turning out on time or they are saying, 'Get in a taxi because there is no ambulance for you.' I was thinking that might be triggering for the Labor members that are in denial about the state of play when it comes to our health services, so I have a few names just to put to these stories, so that you cannot gaslight us any further.

Last week an elderly person fell in Benalla, and they were bleeding from the head and the mouth. It was members of the public that had to step in and help that individual and carry them. When an ambulance did turn up, there was one paramedic because there were not enough on duty. That one paramedic leaned on the kindness of the community to protect this person and get them to a health service. Kerri-Ann Robbins's daughter performed CPR for 45 minutes, and Triple Zero Victoria was not going to send an ambulance because there were none in our region. Linda Robinson called for an ambulance in Bright and was told, 'Get in a cab.' Five hundred dollars later – 'Get in a cab' – she travelled an hour in a taxi. Stella Jones had to drive her son – now, this should make everyone in this place understand the failures of this Labor government – to hospital. He could not speak for himself. For over an hour he was denied an ambulance – there were none in our region – because he was 'not sick enough'. He had meningitis and was unconscious by the time he turned up to the hospital, and his mum drove him.

These are the stories, and this is what we should be talking about when it comes to an MPI, not this absolute nonsense and gaslighting that we continuously hear from Labor. Alyssa Jane shared a story about an 89-year-old woman with a broken hip who waited on a freezing floor for 4 hours until an ambulance could turn up. Can you imagine? Is this where we are at in Victoria? The member for Berwick speaks frequently about the crime crisis in Victoria. We can talk about the health crisis. We can talk about the cuts to regional infrastructure. There is not a corner of this state that is not being absolutely destroyed by this Labor government, which has stopped caring.

In my final few minutes, Labor members mentioned essential services, and I want to speak about something that I have raised ad nauseam over the last nine months and which fails to cut through the incompetent leadership at Emergency Management Victoria at the moment. We experienced a bushfire just about nine months ago. Right now, in a community that lost 100 primary residences and 300 outbuildings, there are three caravans on the ground and one modular home, and we have gone through winter. There are no mental health services covering the region. At what stage does the Labor government acknowledge it has stopped governing? It has stopped caring.

I want to just talk about soft corruption on a local level that this government is enabling. I think I am running out of time. At the start of my term, when I was newly elected, I sought to attend a concrete plant in my electorate, and I was denied access by the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure at the time. It was a private company, and I was not allowed to go there. That minister, Jacinta Allan, went on to become Premier. Now there is a new Premier. However, I believe he has been at the cabinet table the entire 12 years, and no-one is buying that spin. I was denied access to one of our private businesses, and when there is a contract and it fluctuates, it impacts our community.

Our health services are under pressure. Our rentals are absorbed by new residents into the region. We should have a relationship. We should not be feeling like this Labor government is gagging private businesses with the consequence of losing contracts if they speak with their local members of Parliament. Ambulance Victoria's legal department rejected our meeting with our paramedics or attendance at our ambulance stations that are broken, faulty and full of asbestos. That is where we are at in Victoria. No wonder Victorians are desperate for a fresh start, and the Liberals and Nationals are going to offer that. We will guarantee a fair share for regional Victoria because we are sick and tired of Labor's cuts.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (16:51): It is great to rise this afternoon and make a contribution on this matter: that the house condemns the opposition and One Nation for their plan to cut $40 billion from Victorian schools and hospitals and to cut one in seven public servants. I have been listening intently for about 50 minutes since we began debating this matter, not only the time that I have spent in the chamber on my chamber duty but also from my office when I was having a cup of tea. Opposition member after opposition member after opposition member has come in here aggrieved by the notion that we talk about the opposition and One Nation together and as one and perhaps at the next election swapping preferences.

I might just pick up a couple of points from some of those previous contributions. I am following the member for Euroa, who decided to describe some of the contributions from government members as valedictory speeches. It is a bold move from the member for Euroa, who is going to face an incredibly difficult election, to stand up in here and start talking about valedictory speeches from government members. May I impart some wisdom to the member for Euroa, and that is: if you are to get back in this place, it will be through Labor preferences. It will be Labor preferences that elect you for a second term. It will be Labor preferences that elect the member for Euroa if she is lucky enough to get a second term. We will do that with a smile on our faces because it is the right thing to do to keep One Nation members out of this place and out of Victorian politics, because they are a danger to democracy, they are a danger to our multicultural communities and they are a danger to this state. We will re-elect the member for Euroa with our preferences, with a smile on our faces every single day of the week.

The difference between us and them in that respect, and the reason that we keep talking about it, is because both the Liberals and the Nationals will do the exact opposite. They will try to help One Nation in outer suburban electorates that the Labor Party holds to beat Labor Party members of Parliament so that One Nation members can sit in this place and in the other place as well. That is the reason that we keep talking about it. Honestly, for any of them, the member for Bulleen included, to come in here with a straight face and try to question the fact that on 28 November the Liberal Party and the National Party will preference One Nation and put them in a competitive position in many Labor-held seats in outer suburbs, give me a break. That is exactly what will happen. They know it, we know it and anybody that is engaged in Victorian politics knows it. The member for Euroa consistently speaks about gaslighting. To come in here and do that with a straight face is absolutely despicable. If you are going to do a deal with the devil, have the gumption to admit it. Just come in here and say it and admit it and tell the Victorian people what they can expect.

Also, for the member for Bulleen to come in here and to talk about preferences and the Victorian Socialists being above the Liberal Party in the Werribee by-election – the member for Bulleen is the bloke that is responsible for the Greens member for Richmond being in this place. I am not having a shot at the member for Richmond here, but every time she stands up to make a contribution, everybody

in front of her from the Nationals or from the Liberals hangs their head. They mutter under their breath and laugh and speak to each other. They should just go up to the member for Bulleen and thank him. That is exactly what happened. That is exactly why she is here, because the political genius of the member for Bulleen went, 'Oh, you know how we'll get the Labor Party? We'll preference the Greens above them in Richmond.' Well done. We only got 56 members over the line. Well done, a great political strategy it was. Every time the member for Caulfield gets upset by what the member for Richmond is saying, he should just go and thank the member for Bulleen, because it is his political genius that put her here. I mean, honestly.

Voters at this election on 28 November have a binary choice – not a choice between three but a binary choice. They have a choice between a Labor government that is on the side of working people and will deliver the cost-of-living relief that they need, and a Liberal–One Nation coalition that will cut $40 billion from the Victorian economy and sack one in seven Victorian public service workers. We all know that you cannot cut that deep – you cannot cut one in seven jobs – just by cutting some jobs of some highly paid public servants. Nurses will go, teachers will go and public transport workers will go. Essential workers will go, which is what happens every time those opposite have the gift of governing – every single time.

We are calling them a Liberal–One Nation coalition because at the moment the Liberal Party have absolutely no chance of governing in their own right – absolutely no chance. There is a fair bit of hubris creeping in on the other side, let us be honest. There is a fair bit of hubris creeping in. They sit there and they have a laugh at the polls that are coming up and say 'Oh, Labor are going no good in the polls.' You are polling 27 per cent of the primary vote, and you cannot govern in your own right unless you have got a primary vote in the 40s. You guys cannot govern in your own right without a primary vote in the 40s.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member knows that he needs to speak through the Chair.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is absolutely correct, member for Gippsland South. The member for Tarneit to continue through the Chair.

Dylan WIGHT: Those opposite know. Well, maybe they do not. Anybody with half a brain that understands anything about politics knows that a Victorian coalition government cannot be formed in its own right unless they have got a primary vote in the 40s. At my count they have got about 13 per cent to make up.

Members interjecting.

Dylan WIGHT: We can govern. We can govern with a three in front of us. They cannot govern. They cannot govern in their own right the way this is looking at the moment. That is why we have got a binary choice. We have got a choice between a Labor government and a Liberal–One Nation coalition that will cut $40 billion from the Victorian economy. They sit there and they talk a big game about their economic credentials. They have got an opposition leader who is also the Shadow Treasurer – the pseudo-economic intellect that worked in the former federal Treasurer's office when net debt to GDP went from 18.6 per cent to 28.6 per cent. I am sure she learned great lessons in there; I am sure she learned absolutely great lessons. But let us be honest: they are going to, according to them, the opposition, fund more police, open police stations, run a bigger surplus and also cut taxes. That does take economic genius. Or what it takes is $40 billion worth of cuts, sacking teachers, sacking nurses and doing exactly what they do every time they come to government – every single time. It is in their DNA.

Members interjecting.

Dylan WIGHT: Settle down. It is in their DNA. They will come to government and they will cut to the bone, and it is Victorians and working people that will be worse off for it. I repeat: this election

is a binary choice between us, on the side of working people, and them, who will cut $40 billion and one in seven public service jobs.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (17:01): I would say it gives me delight to get up and speak on this matter of public importance, but then I actually read the matter of public importance and realised how desperate this government is in its last days. As they approach this election, they have decided to come into this house with a matter of public importance that condemns the Victorian Liberal Party, not some strategy to sit there and talk about all of the things that they have delivered over the last 12 years and to stand proud on their own record, because let us be honest, they have got a new Premier who is trying to distance himself as far as possible from everything that has happened under Labor in the last 12 years. They are not coming in here with a plan to look at what they are going to do for the next four years. They have got no plan; they have got no focus on the future. They have got a Premier that is reacting to the polls each and every time. And the polls – we have heard about the polls.

A member interjected.

Brad BATTIN: You say they are not good. You got rid of the Premier because the polls were that bad for the Victorian Labor Party.

When this matter of public importance came out and before I opened the email – I was just about to click on it – I thought, 'I know what it's going to be. It's going to be how Labor are focusing on a new direction, with their new leadership, and how they're going to change what they have done here in this state and all of a sudden everything will be fixed.' But the reality is that this is what the matter of public importance should have been today. If anyone in this room has not sat and read the *Herald Sun* this afternoon to understand exactly what we should come in here and talk about, then have a look at the 'adult crime, adult time' that this government goes on about. They talk about the *Herald Sun*. The first place they went to put their new 'adult crime, adult time' was the *Herald Sun*, with *Herald Sun* journalists, but they do not like it now, do they? They do not like it now that the first person to go through under 'adult crime, adult time' got farewelled from court with 'All the best and good luck' and with zero time in jail. That is 'adult crime, adult time'. I am talking about the legislation the Labor Party brought in for adult time for adult crime. I know that every Labor member goes, 'Are you trying to blame the magistrate?' No, I am blaming the useless government who brought in legislation that does not work at all. We have actually seen these crooks get back out on the street – crooks that held a knife at someone's throat.

Members interjecting.

Brad BATTIN: Labor members laugh at it. You ask the taxidriver who had a knife put to his throat what he thinks.

Mathew Hilakari: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I take offence at the implication that I was laughing at any point during that disgraceful contribution, and I ask him to withdraw.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There was no inference towards an individual member, and matters of that nature, to a collection of members, are a matter for debate. There is no point of order.

Brad BATTIN: Maybe Labor should not laugh when we talk about people being held with knives to their throats. They should not laugh about the fact that we have got 1500 less police here in Victoria under this government. Maybe they should not laugh when more than 40 stations have been closed across Victoria. Maybe the matter of public importance should have been about the fact that crime has increased faster in the areas where stations have been closed. The member for Cranbourne I note is not here now and did not stay for her own matter of public importance, because the member for Cranbourne knows that when I start talking about crime I am going to be talking about Casey. When the government went out and patted themselves on the back for a 0.2 per cent reduction in crime here in Victoria – not the increase since 2023, well and truly into the double figures – the member for Cranbourne did not want to stand and defend her position, because out in Casey crime went up 10 per

cent again. It continues to have double figures – aggravated burglaries, cars stolen – and what are we seeing? Less police.

But they could have put a matter of public importance in place to say, 'We'll put police at the Clyde North police station.' What a wonderful station – bill, $30 million. I will say – I like to give credit where credit is due – well done to Labor. You got one thing right. You built the new Clyde North police station. If only you had put police in it, it would have made a big difference. If you had police in that police station, it would mean that they could respond when people call 000, and they would not have to rely on coppers coming from Narre Warren down Clyde Road.

This government has zero care when it comes to crime here in this state. We already know that the budget is out of control. The only people that have been cutting are the Labor Party. We have got a $200 billion debt coming up. The amount of interest we are going to be paying on that debt would fund the Victoria Police force 2.4 times every year. The amount of interest you are going to pay on the debt created by the Labor Party will be 2.4 times the budget of the Victoria Police.

Jade Benham: They want to defund the police.

Brad BATTIN: Exactly right. I note we were listening to the member for Bulleen before, and the member for Bulleen was very true in his words. We actually have gone through this. He spoke about cosying up to One Nation, therefore helping deliver those cuts, and he did refer specifically to the socialists. The Victorian Socialists we know are trying to run in every single seat. They will be cosying up with the Victorian Labor Party to do a preference deal, and as part of that preference deal they are going to – let us be honest, this is the one thing that was a big concern for me, that was a massive concern when they actually said it – want to defund the police. Let us be honest, we know if we end up with a couple of socialists in here, the Labor Party will go into coalition with them, and the first thing they will do is try and defund Victoria Police. They have already started. They have got 1500 less police. They know it is just a little bit further and they can keep that path going along. They have already got the 40 stations that are shut. They have already got crime up in Victoria. The next thing they will do with the socialists is probably turn around and say any person that goes to court can just walk out. Do not worry about the actual court position at all; they can just walk back out into the street and commit more crimes.

Again, this week a family came into Melbourne for a day out, from the Bass community. They came in here just to have a look around what we like to say is our wonderful city, and what happened? A lady was stabbed here in Melbourne on our streets. A 10-year-old boy was assaulted just walking through Melbourne. That is what we have come to here in this city under this Labor government. I do not care if you want to call it the Andrews Labor government, the Allan Labor government or the Carroll Labor government, because let us be honest, they are all tarred with the same brush. They all sat around the same cabinet table. They all made those decisions. They all saw the cuts that have been happening across Victoria Police. They have all seen the reduction in the number of police we have got here in Victoria. They knew exactly the impact that was going to happen – that that was going to lead to an increase in crime. They know that it has made our streets less safe.

Then they all go on about the things that they are really good at. They talk about things like, 'We're the party to help out people with homelessness here in Victoria. We're going to make sure that we give them the opportunities and keep them safe.' Next question – I hope the next speaker can answer this one: why is it that the number of people living rough in Melbourne has doubled since December 2025? Since December 2025 the number of people who are living rough here in Melbourne, by Melbourne council's own figures, has doubled. I thought maybe they had moved in from other areas around Victoria, but no, because then you go and look through other councils, go down through Mornington, go down to Nepean, come into Casey or go out to the west. They have all gone up, because life is harder and tougher under this Labor government.

This Labor government think that they can go out there and pretend to tax the rich and the world will take care of itself, but what they do not realise is every time they have increased their taxes, rent has gone up in Victoria. Every time they have made changes in relation to crime, insurance has gone up here in Victoria. It costs more to insure your car here in Victoria than any other state – for a reason. It is costing more to rent here in Victoria because Labor continues to increase taxes. So when they said in 2014 that they would not increase or introduce any new taxes, now we know it is over 70. The impact of that generally is on those that are the most vulnerable.

The only way to fix that is to ensure you have an economic plan for the future to build jobs, to create opportunities, to give the next generation the chances that many of us had to go out and start your own business and not be at risk that the government is going to tax every single time that you try and make a profit, which actually eventually puts you off doing it. Those small businesses employ more people. They are the ones. And when the government come in and talk about the public sector being employment, I will talk about the private sector, because the private sector and small businesses are some of the biggest employers here in this state, and we have to start treating them better. We have to make sure that they have got the opportunity to grow, because as they grow, our economy grows. If our economy grows, Victoria is better off. That means we have got more money to spend on reducing crime, more money to spend on investing in our roads and more money to spend to ensure education and health are delivered like they should be here in our state.

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (17:11): I also rise today to speak on the matter of public importance before the house: that this house condemns the opposition and One Nation for their plan to cut $40 billion from Victorian schools and hospitals and to cut one in seven public servants. A Liberal–One Nation coalition government will hurt working people. A One Nation–Liberal coalition government will hurt Victorian families that rely on Victorian schools and hospitals. A One Nation–Liberal coalition government will hurt all of the families that rely on a hardworking teacher, a nurse or emergency services worker to have a safe and secure job that they can rely on. The Liberals say that they will make $40 billion in cuts. You cannot cut $40 billion without devastating cuts to hospitals, to schools and to the frontline services that people rely on. It is not just me saying this. The member for Kew said this herself. On 16 August 2024 on Sky News she said that current spending is 'simply not sustainable'. She said:

> That means that 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.

Schools are not going to be built or even fixed – let that sink in. That means young Victorians will not be getting a good public education under those opposite. If our state government is not building schools, existing schools will be massively overcrowded. Overcrowded schools, leaking roofs, broken windows, unsafe playgrounds – that is what Victorian families will get under a One Nation–Liberal coalition. Victorian students will not get the world-class education they deserve, and that is what is at risk with a One Nation–Liberal coalition.

I think those opposite should come clean. I have got some questions, and I think Victorians do too. Which new suburbs will not get that new school that families are waiting for? Which schools will be the first to be neglected and, in the words of the member for Kew, not even fixed? Will it be the regional schools like in the electorate I represent? Let us not forget that Jeff Kennett described regional Victoria as the 'toenails of the state', and now his protégé has committed to cut funding to Victorian schools. So I think it is fair to ask the member for Kew: which schools will not be built, which schools will not be fixed, which schools will be neglected? Or will the member for Kew take it one step further and take a leaf out of the book of Liberal governments past: which schools will be closed and sold off? Because that is what Liberal governments in Victoria do. They sell our schools. They have no shame when it comes to cutting funding to Victorian schools and selling the land off to their developer mates. That is exactly what Victorians will get under a One Nation–Liberal coalition: billions ripped out of school funding, billions ripped out of vital school maintenance, broken promises to communities and broken promises to families in new suburbs who buy a home thinking that their state government will

build a primary school and a secondary school for their kids. Under a One Nation–Liberal coalition that is not happening. That new school is not coming.

It is not just billions that will be ripped out of education under a One Nation–Liberal coalition. Billions will be ripped from Victorian hospitals and health care. That means no new hospitals, no hospital upgrades, fewer nurses, fewer hospital beds and longer wait times when you need urgent care. The member for Kew said:

> … we're going to have to make cuts when it comes to our health services.

The member for Kew might be regretting that Sky News interview right about now. The people in the Lara electorate certainly do not want billions cut from their healthcare system. When the Liberals were last in government they cut more than $1 billion from health and they went to war with our nurses and paramedics. They failed to deliver hundreds of promised hospital beds, despite making it one of their key election promises. These are more broken promises that we can expect from a One Nation–Liberal coalition.

In four years, the last time they were in government, they managed to open just two alcohol and other drug beds across the entire state – two. That is their commitment to health care. That is not all. It gets better, or should I say it gets worse. In four years of government the Liberals defunded 25 community mental health providers. They shut down the only 24-hour mental health advice hotline and they voted against the mental health levy, leaving Victorians on their own when they needed support the most. This time One Nation and the Liberals have a plan to cut $40 billion and sack one in seven public servants. That means billions in cuts to our public health system – from hospitals, from health workers. When the Liberals were last in power they cut funding to health care. They sacked nurses. In the past they privatised regional hospitals like Mildura base hospital. In Geelong the story is not much better, because the Liberals committed to a second public hospital in Geelong. What happened to that second public hospital? Well, funnily enough, it turned into a private hospital. When that happened Barwon Health lost funding for some of their treatments, like kidney dialysis and chemotherapy, meaning there were less public health treatments available for Geelong residents.

On this side of the house we are committed to investing in health care and hospitals, and that record is clear. In Geelong we have invested billions into health care. We are building the new Barwon women's and children's hospital, a $500 million investment into regional health care, providing more maternity and paediatric care for our growing community – a growing community that on this side of the house we back with investment in health care. We have delivered a new children's emergency department at University Hospital Geelong, providing appropriate care for children and their families on their worst days. At Barwon Health North, which includes an urgent care clinic, dental care, dialysis services, X-rays and other medical imaging, hundreds of people are going every single week for their appointments or showing up to the urgent care clinic when they need healthcare support. It is a vital service in my community – something that this Labor government built – but something I know that a One Nation–Liberal coalition would cut.

We have also got the new Geelong mental health and wellbeing local on Moorabool Street, an amazing facility, a one-stop shop where you can turn up and get the services and the support you need with your mental health. It is another important investment into our region, an investment that Labor made but an investment that a One Nation–Liberal coalition would cut.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I realise this is a matter of public importance, but the member is deliberately misleading the house. I ask her to correct the record.

Jordan Crugnale interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Without the interjections, please, member for Bass. That is not a point of order. The statement you made would be a different matter for privileges, so the member to continue.

Ella GEORGE: I am pleased to continue on the matter of public importance. In North Geelong this Labor government built the early parenting centre, supporting local families and their children in those first few years – another investment by this Labor government that would be cut by a One Nation–Liberal coalition. We have upgraded University Hospital.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, the member for Lara is making assertions that the Liberals and Nationals, I assume, rather than a Liberals and One Nation government, will cut something. This is categorically untrue. It is not on the record. She is misleading the house.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. It is a matter for debate, member for Lowan.

Ella GEORGE: The reason why we are having this conversation today in the chamber is because of what the member for Kew said on Sky News: that cuts to health services and cuts to schools are going to happen in Victoria under a One Nation and Liberal coalition.

On this side of Parliament, I am so proud of our investment into health care. I am proud of our investment into education. While the Liberal–One Nation coalition are focused on cutting the services that Victorian families rely on, we are focused on making life safer and making life easier and more affordable for Victorians. On this side of the house we have invested in local schools, we have invested in our teachers and we have invested in our healthcare system and our hospitals. We have built 12 hospitals. We are opening more. We are upgrading hospitals all around the state, we are backing our nurses and we have delivered nurse-to-patient ratios – because that is what Labor governments do. This November Victorians have a clear choice before them: back a government that has delivered health care and education to Victorians or back a One Nation–Liberal coalition that will cut $40 billion out of Victoria.

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (17:21): The matter of public importance reads:

> That this house condemns the Victorian Liberals for their plan to cut $40 billion from our schools, hospitals and essential services, and for cosying up to One Nation to help deliver those cuts.

Well, $40 billion is a very large number, so large that the Liberals apparently decided the safest approach is to not tell anyone exactly where it would come from. To be clear, the $40 billion figure is the government's assessment of the consequences of the Liberals' announced policy. The Liberals dispute that assessment, and there is plenty of conjecture about where cuts would be made. Would they cut the Suburban Rail Loop? Would they abandon hospital projects? Would they reduce funding for schools? Would they cut essential services? We do not yet know what is in and what is out, but there is one cut that is not a matter of conjecture. If elected, the Liberals have promised to introduce legislation to repeal Victoria's treaty within their first 100 days – not review it, not improve it, not sit down with First Nations Victorians to work through any concerns, repeal it. Of all the pressures facing Victoria and Victorians – cost of living, housing, hospitals, schools, community safety – the Liberals have decided that dismantling treaty must be among their most urgent priorities.

It also reflects a much broader problem with the way First Nations self-determination has been treated in Australian politics. For too long it has been kicked around like a political football. Support is offered when it is convenient; it is withdrawn when the political winds change. The legitimate aspirations of First Nations people are reduced to slogans, scare campaigns and electoral calculations. That is no way to deal with an issue of this importance. Treaty did not appear overnight. It is the product of years of consultation, democratic participation and negotiation. First Nations Victorians elected representatives to speak on their behalf. Those representatives negotiated with the state. Legislation was debated in this Parliament and passed by both houses. Treaty is now the law of Victoria. It should not be ripped up within 100 days in service of a cruel political calculus or, worse, to appease One Nation voters.

The principle is simple: government should listen to First Nations people about decisions directly affecting their communities. Instead of repealing treaty, engage with Gellung Warl and work with First Nations people to make treaty work better. The need to listen to First Nations Victorians has not disappeared. The gaps in health, education, housing and justice outcomes have not closed. What has

changed is the political environment. One Nation is attempting to establish itself in Victoria, and the Liberals are looking over their right shoulder. Once again First Nations self-determination is being kicked around like a political football. That is precisely the sort of politics that Victorians should reject.

Treaty is not simply a line in a budget. It establishes a democratic and representative body for First Nations Victorians through Gellung Warl. It continues the work of truth telling. It provides an independent accountability mechanism to examine whether governments deliver what they promise. Most importantly, it creates a practical and structured way for First Nations Victorians to be heard on policies that directly affect them. That is not radical. Governments consult businesses before changing industry regulation. We consult unions and employers about workplace laws. We consult doctors and nurses about health policy. We consult teachers, principals and parents about education. We consult people with lived experience about service delivery. It is entirely reasonable that governments consult First Nations Victorians about policies affecting First Nations peoples and communities. Treaty does not give anyone a veto over this Parliament. It does not create a separate government. It does not take away anybody's home or their rights or their opportunities. It does not diminish the voice of any other Victorian. It does not take anything away from anyone. What it does is provide a formal and democratic way for First Nations people to make representations to government. The Liberals say repealing treaty would save money, but abolishing a representative body does not remove the need for government to develop Aboriginal policy, fund services or address entrenched disadvantage. Those responsibilities are still going to be there. The difference is that government would return to making those decisions without the same structured input from the people affected.

For generations governments of every political persuasion have designed programs for First Nations communities from offices in Melbourne, and too often those programs have changed with ministers, budgets and election cycles. Too often they have duplicated existing work. Too often governments have announced what they intended to do and then marked their own homework. Despite significant expenditure and a lot of effort, much of it sincere, the gaps remain. Treaty offers a better approach: listen first, work together, agree on practical priorities, then establish an independent way of measuring whether governments deliver what they promised. That is not division, that is good government.

Victorians are entitled to ask what repealing treaty would actually achieve. Would it improve First Nations health outcomes? Would it help children remain engaged in education? Would it improve housing? Would it make communities safer? Would it reduce Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system? Would it reduce Aboriginal deaths in custody? Would abolishing an elected representative body make government more accountable? The Liberals have no convincing answers to those questions. Repeal is not a plan for improving political outcomes; it is merely a gesture. It appeals to people who have been told – incorrectly – that treaty threatens their rights or diminishes their place in Victoria. It does neither. Treaty is not about giving one group more and everybody else less. It is about recognising that the relationship between the state and First Nations people has not always been based on consultation, consent or respect.

We should also consider what repeal would say about the value of negotiating with the state of Victoria. First Nations Victorians participated in elections. They elected representatives. Those representatives spent years negotiating in good faith. An agreement was reached and legislation was passed. If a new government tears that agreement up within 100 days, what message does that send? It tells First Nations Victorians that their participation was pointless. It tells them that years of negotiation can be discarded whenever a political party believes that there are votes to be gained. It tells them that an agreement with the state of Victoria lasts only until it becomes politically inconvenient. That is no basis for trust. It is no basis for reconciliation, and it is no way for a state government to conduct itself.

Treaty should be scrutinised. Its spending should be transparent. Its institutions should be accountable. Its success should be judged by whether it produces better outcomes. But scrutiny is different. It is very, very different from sabotage. Reform is different from repeal. If the Liberals have concerns about treaty, they should identify them and propose improvements. They should meet with Gellung Warl.

They should listen to traditional owners and Aboriginal organisations. They should listen to First Nations communities. They should participate constructively in making treaty work. Instead they have announced their verdict before the new arrangements have been given a reasonable opportunity to operate. They have, in effect, promised to burn it all down before the work has begun. That is not evidence-based government. That is just ideology. There is also a fundamental contradiction in the Liberals' position, and it is this: they say Victoria must ensure government programs are effective and accountable, yet they want to abolish a structure designed to make government more accountable for its spending, its policies and the outcomes it achieves for First Nations Victorians. If the old approach had worked, the gap would already have closed, and it has not. Repealing treaty would not solve that failure. It would return Victoria to the same approach that produced it.

We must also be very clear about the role of One Nation in all this. One Nation has built much of its politics around division. It looks for complicated problems and offers trite solutions. It treats difference as a threat and resentment as a governing philosophy. The Liberal Party faces a choice: it can defend responsible mainstream government and it can approach treaty with care, assess it on evidence and work constructively with First Nations Victorians, or it can chase One Nation further to the right, adopting its language and competing with it on who can dismantle treaty quickest. On current evidence, the Liberals have chosen the second path. That should concern all Victorians regardless of how they vote. The government's assessment of $40 billion in cuts remains contested, but Victorians are entitled to clarity. Nobody needs to speculate about treaty. The Liberals have already put it on the chopping block. They have made repealing it a priority for their first 100 days.

The Leader of the Opposition once demonstrated that it was possible for a Liberal MP to listen to her community, exercise independent judgement and support the principle of a First Nations voice. She should rediscover that independence. She should not allow First Nations self-determination to become a political football yet again, and she should not tear down years of democratic participation and negotiation simply to protect the Liberal Party's right flank. Treaty will not solve every problem – no single law, no single institution could. But it provides a better foundation – a foundation of representation, truth, accountability and a commitment to work together. We should allow that work to continue. We should judge treaty by what it delivers, not by the fear campaigns run against it. We should reject the politics that treat First Nations aspirations as disposable, and we should condemn any plan to repeal treaty within 100 days. Victoria should keep treaty.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (17:31): Certainly I condemn the opposition and One Nation for their plan to cut $40 billion from Victorian schools and hospitals and to cut one in seven public servants, and I will speak to that in just a moment. There really is a very clear demarcation between a Victorian Labor government, which fights for working people on the issues that matter to them – health, education, community safety and the cost of living – versus $40 billion in cuts. I am going to unpack what that looks like. We can also go back just a little bit in time to see the form established by the opposition and the cuts that they have made in the past that are in their DNA and that they will make once again. You certainly cannot make $40 billion in cuts without having a devastating impact on our hospitals, schools and the frontline services that working people rely on. Worse still, when we think about the fact that the opposition are basically reliant on One Nation – or would be reliant on One Nation were they to seek to form government – we know that One Nation would privatise our hospitals and Americanise our health system.

It is almost easy, I think, to take for granted the fact that a Labor government always backs in our health workers and our health system. We have built 12 new hospitals and hired 17,000 more nurses and midwives, and further still, we have really strengthened those nurse-to-patient ratios. But rest assured, give them half a second, half a nanosecond of nothing, and they would be straight in there privatising and making savage cuts to those nurse-to-patient ratios. I think Victorians would be absolutely devastated if it were to be the case that we were to privatise our health system. It is hard even to imagine what that could look like, but we do not have to look too far. If we look to America and we look to the great difficulty that many Americans have in terms of being able to access the

health care they deserve without it costing an exorbitant amount of money, we know that that is really not the future that Victorians deserve.

We have also built 121 new schools, and a number, I should say, have been in my electorate. I am very proud of our government for delivering those much-needed educational services to the good people of Albert Park, whether it is Port Melbourne Secondary College, whether it is Narrarrang Primary School – with the kinder onsite, I might say – whether it is South Melbourne Park Primary School or whether it is South Melbourne Primary School, which actually, owing to its extraordinary popularity and demographic changes, is going to be expanded, much to the pleasure of the local electorate, because we have seemingly more and more people moving into the inner burbs, particularly Southbank as well. What does a good Labor government do? It delivers more educational services to the local community, and that is in the form of expanding the great South Melbourne Primary School. Indeed all the schools in my electorate are fantastic. In fact we have fabulous government schools all across the state, and that is not by accident. Also in terms of NAPLAN we have topped results across the country – again, not by accident. That comes about by backing in our teachers and our support staff in schools. The latest agreement – I know there are certainly more steps to go through – will make our teachers the best paid with the best conditions in the country. I commend them on their advocacy but also on achieving collaboratively together a great outcome, which is really important for our state.

We have also announced that we will open 10 free dental clinics across Victoria. I think it goes without saying that it is actually very hard to turn up for a job interview if you do not have a full set of teeth. Putting that aside, prevention and getting that good dental care early when you need it, not being in searing pain and having capacity to be able to attend to something that is very basic – let alone the aesthetics, but I will put aesthetics aside – are important. Being in searing pain and not having capacity to get the requisite dental care that you need just did not seem to be right and proper. Hence this is a very sensible Labor announcement that will ensure that there are 10 new clinics. There will be seven in the metropolitan area and then three in the regional areas as well. It is pragmatic, but it is a very decent healthcare proposition, and only Labor will deliver that. There is no way that an opposition–One Nation government would deliver that; there is just no way. With $40 billion worth of cuts, that is just not going to be anywhere in the equation.

Another thing I did want to speak to was with regard to health and also backing in our healthcare workforce. Again, the only way that you are going to be able to make $40 billion worth of cuts is to actually slash that. We know that the nurses and medical interns and all the hospital staff deserve to have requisite numbers to be able to deliver the kind of care that they want to deliver for fellow Victorians. If we literally strangle those numbers, which is what an opposition–One Nation government would do, that would severely compromise the quality of care that Victorians would be able to receive.

Another matter that I did want to speak to was one that is extremely important, and that is of energy. The opposition said, 'The SEC is gone if we win.' This means higher power prices for families and bigger profits for overseas corporations. They did sell off the SEC under Jeff Kennett in the 1990s. Labor has brought it back. The Liberals will abolish it again. The Liberals have recently announced that they would pause or cut Victoria's renewable energy transition. Cutting the energy transition means one thing: higher bills for Victorian families. How is that for a proposition? That is certainly extremely unpalatable.

Mary-Anne Thomas interjected.

Nina TAYLOR: Exactly right. This was not a decision based on responsible governance, it was one of fear – fear of losing seats to their ideological allies in One Nation. That is not really a sound premise to be making such an important decision when it comes to energy and securing energy into the future for fellow Victorians.

Another thing that they would certainly slash and burn would be the Victorian energy upgrades scheme. We know that the Victorian energy upgrades scheme is the largest energy efficiency scheme in the country, and it has helped more than 2.4 million households and 180,000 businesses become more energy efficient. Victorians themselves can see the wisdom in this. This is why they have absolutely warmly embraced this and taken it on board, because it is a pragmatic decision. Whether you believe in climate change or not, on this side of the fence we certainly do, and I would vouch for the fact that a fair few Victorians do as well. Certainly when I go to Victorian schools and hear from the children, I know that they are concerned about having a future, having a world that is worth living in. There is the cost-of-living aspect, but also a climate that actually will support their survival.

We know that there is energy efficiency and lowering your energy bills, and that is really important. But also we know that through the Victorian energy upgrades scheme we have saved over 96 million tonnes of carbon emissions. I will say as a further note, we know that pollution causes a lot of human diseases and is extremely toxic to humans. There are many sound reasons, particularly when you are thinking of asthmatics and other people who are vulnerable to pollutants in the atmosphere, to be reducing emissions and saving costs at the same time. I should say that in 2025 alone more than 147,000 households and 13,000 businesses – not 1300 but 13,000 businesses – received discounted energy-efficient products and services through the VEU, so whether it is the individual Victorian consumer or family or whether it is a business they could see that there are real cost savings in doing this as well as having the ability to reduce their impact on the grid and on the planet. But only Labor will continue to deliver this. Victorians have a clear choice. We are the ones fighting for working people, backing in health, education, community safety and hospitals. That is what Labor does. It is in our DNA.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (17:41): I also rise to contribute to the matter of public importance the government has proposed today. I have heard some of the contributions from government members, and they have been quite keen to frame their contributions and their offerings to the Victorian people through the prism of choice. I agree with them. I agree that Victorians do have a choice, but I encourage Victorians to consider things also through this lens.

In some 94 days time Victorians will have a choice, and their choice is simply this: do they believe the words that are coming from the mouths of government members who have had the opportunity – them and their forebears, their confreres, their colleagues – over the last 12 years have matched their actions? Have Victorians been better off over these last 12 years, or are they worse off? Do they feel like they are getting ahead or they are falling further behind? These are the conversations, these are the questions that Victorian families and Victorian businesses ask themselves because at the coalface, no matter what happens in this place, no matter what words are spoken, no matter how many times they are said or said again, it is about the impact of the decisions, of the words that are spoken in this place on the punters, on those hardworking Victorians that place an element of trust in their political leaders to get it right, to fight for them, to be on their side. That is what I believe, and I quite firmly contend during this matter of public importance debate that the Labor government have had a shot over the last 12 years and their contribution to this state is something that Victorians will remember, but it is a contribution that has not made life easier for Victorians.

This particular topic refers to cuts. Let us be frank, let us be honest about this. I wake up in the morning and before I have even opened my eyes and rolled out of bed into my blue suit and blue tie, whatever it might be, I am the cuts guy, before I have even opened my mouth. That is the way in which the Labor Party choose to categorise me and my colleagues. Apart from the fact that I believe that that is untrue and that it is a deeply unfair categorisation of who we are and what we are and what our purpose is for presenting an alternative to the last 12 years of the Labor government, this MPI topic goes on to suggest a cosying up to a party that some may be familiar with, One Nation. The only evidentiary point in the state of Victoria of cosying up to One Nation that immediately springs to mind to me, certainly in recent times, is that of the Labor government – the Allan Labor government at the time, but the Labor government all the same. It was the Allan Labor government in the other place who,

with the support of the One Nation party, passed donation laws in this place that effectively lined the pockets of Labor members and Labor candidates ahead of the next state election in 94 days time. We were here in this place, Deputy Speaker, and I am sure you will remember this, until something like 5 am. Let us be frank: the member for Sunbury was not charging on all cylinders at the time, and some of us were. It just goes to show you the lack of fight versus the vigour and enthusiasm of members of the opposition compared to that of the government. But here is the point: it was the Allan Labor government together with the support of the One Nation party in the other place that enabled the donation laws to be passed, including the ability of the Australian Labor Party, its current members and its candidates to rely upon donations from union organisations, including the CFMEU. That is the only recent evidentiary point of any major political party, certainly in this jurisdiction, cosying up to One Nation. So any suggestion –

Nathan Lambert interjected.

Brad ROWSWELL: Well, the member for Preston is piping up. Deputy Speaker, I am sure you will agree he is being very unparliamentary at the moment. I am tempted to take the bait. I will not directly other than to say this: the suggestion has been made that there is some sort of preference deal. My question to the Australian Labor Party is: what preference deal are they prepared to do with One Nation? We know that if there is something that from a political perspective could be seen to be admirable about the Australian Labor Party and the Labor government then it is this: they will win at all costs. They do not care whether it is the truth or an untruth or something that will help someone or screw somebody or something in between – no, no, no. I am certain that the labour movement has it within it to do a preference deal with One Nation, so my question back to the government is this: what preference deal is the Carroll Labor government prepared to do with One Nation in order to hold onto power? That is what they want to do. This is not about service. This is not about helping people. If it was, they would have all given up a long time ago. This is not about serving people, this is about holding onto power, and I do not think that that is the right way to look at the opportunity that the Victorian people gift us as servants of them. I will finally add this to that question of what preference deal they are prepared to do with One Nation: no-one within the labour movement is prepared to answer that question in any great substance, leaving the door well and truly open for such an eventuality taking place at some point in the future. They can do them, and they will.

What we will do is actually get on with it. While they are fiddling, while they are negotiating, while they are backstabbing, while they are figuring out who is doing what, what we are doing over here is actually presenting an alternative, because when it comes to the Victorian people, they are actually sick of politics, and I kind of get it. I kind of get that people in this place are not the flavour of the month when it comes to a Victorian household. I get it. Both sides, both major parties over a long period of time, have not done themselves any credit in terms of our behaviour and the way we have acted. But through that prism at this point in time, some 94 days before the election, it is the Australian Labor Party, the Carroll Labor government, that continues along in that vein whilst Jess Wilson, member for Kew, and Danny O'Brien, member for Gippsland South and Leader of the Nationals, lead the alternative government in this state.

Our focus is singular. Our focus is clear. We are united. We are working hard every single day not for ourselves but for a better Victoria, to deliver Victoria the fresh start that it not only needs but deserves and, for that matter, a government that works for Victorians. That is our purpose. In that vein we have not slowed down and we have not held back. We have proposed any number of things that could contribute to a better Victoria. They include keeping Victorians safe; a stronger police force; more PSOs; real consequences for criminal behaviour, with prevention and intervention measures as part of that; tackling family violence; securing Victoria's economic future; lowering costs for all Victorians; supporting Victorian businesses; investing in roads; more homes for Victorians; and affordable and reliable energy. The list goes on and on: delivering better government, getting the basics right, listening to regional communities, a fair share guarantee for regional Victorians, investing in our regions – it is so important we do that – and cleaning up corruption. The first election commitment of this now

Carroll Labor government is for 10 dental clinics to service close to 7 million Victorians. You do not need an economics degree to work out that that is an ambitious commitment at best. The Victorian people are sick and tired of a Labor government that is focused on themselves, and in 94 days time they have got an opportunity to vote for a fresh start – for a government on their side that actually gives a stuff about them and good government in this state.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (17:51): I am pleased to have the opportunity this evening to follow on from the contributions made on this matter of public importance. He is a not a bad bloke, the member for Sandringham, but I do not really agree with his policies. I was a little bit worried he might need a packet of Soothers at one point there – I think the throat is under the pump – but we will put that aside. We on this side of the house remain committed to making sure we are supporting each and every Victorian, whether that be through our serious and significant investment in schools, health, jobs, transport or the environment. We know and understand – and the journey of the matter of public importance, the course of the debate this afternoon, has indeed yet again pointed out – the stark difference between the offering from this Labor government and the offering from the other side.

I will start by making some references where the previous member finished, and that is on the announcements over the weekend around free dental. I was really pleased to join you, Deputy Speaker, and many others in Tullamarine for the announcement from the Premier. The previous speaker made some references to capacity and about what the offering would be if we had the opportunity to be re-elected. Make no mistake, we believe in this announcement. We know this announcement makes a difference to working people. We know that this announcement is something that is valued, respected and important to local communities. In fact I was told that on the day, on the afternoon after that announcement was made. If you go back and look at the investment in the community hospitals program, knowing and understanding that as communities change, as growth happens and as many of the experiences to do with economic pressures and cost of living are experienced by families, you see this is a really important announcement. Of course it came from this side of the house. It did not come from those opposite, who unfortunately spend more time focusing on this side of the chamber and less time actually doing the grunt – the policy work – around what leads you to make announcements such as the Premier made on the weekend.

This matter of public importance goes to what this government is offering, but most importantly, to where the point of contention is – where the point of debate is – around what will be more than $40 billion in cuts from schools and hospitals and a cut to one in seven public servants. We know that whether it is through the budget process, whether it is through the work of ministers and the cabinet or whether of course it is through the initiatives, programs and investments that this government has made, not just over the journey over the course of this term but of course for more than three terms now, the work that has been done to invest in schools, to invest in hospitals and to make for large-scale opportunities, such as investments in Footscray, in Melton, the community hospital program, which I mentioned earlier, and of course all of that work that has been done in our terrific education system right across the state, is something that I know is valued within my local community. I want to take the opportunity, as others have done, to give a really strong shout-out to all of those educators that do such an amazing job. Without the support of the government and without the support of those that support our teachers, we would not have the opportunity to be able to deliver the education that is needed and the work that is done.

What we have been focused on is making sure that we are providing for well-equipped, stronger and better communities. There is a really very long – longer than 5 minutes – list that we have focused on right across all portfolios, and making those investments and doing important policy work stands in stark contrast to the offering from the other side. But it is about more than that: it is about the risk that is posed by what might come. We know and understand on this side of the house that that $40 billion in cuts will have a serious impact not just on frontline services but on all of those services that Victorians rely on and all of those services that we know and understand are important for local communities, whether they be investments in the Boardman athletics track, the new Sunbury TAFE,

Diggers Rest Primary, Diggers Rest Recreation Reserve, the Dulap Wilim Hub, the Gap Road and Horne Street lights, the Gap and Horne level crossing, Gladstone Park Primary, Goonawarra Primary, Holy Trinity, the Old Calder level crossing removal, the Salesian sports pavilion, Sunbury Global Learning village, the Sunbury West upgrades, Tullamarine Primary – the list goes on and on, and we want to make sure that we have got the opportunity to be able to do them. They are just some of the investments that we have made within my local community, and this of course is all at risk should and if the Liberal–One Nation coalition move through in November.

We know of course that this is a point of serious debate, a point of serious difference. And what we have heard, certainly from those opposite this afternoon through the journey of this MPI, has really been a circus when it comes to knowing and understanding what is up for debate and the contention around what is on offer. We have made sure that we have focused on funding those core services and the work that has been done not just in education and not just in health but right across the whole board. Whether it is funding all of those projects in a really important, sound and considered way or whether it is making sure that we are investing in so many of those services that we know are right up for debate, this government stands for making sure that we are providing for and working with local communities. I have said on numerous occasions in the house: we get the best policy outcomes when we listen to local communities. When we have the opportunity to do that and we have the opportunity to be able to fund so many of these programs and initiatives, we want to make sure that this work continues to be done. All of that can be at risk, and all of that is something that is absolutely on the line when it comes to this matter of public importance. I am conscious of time, so I think I will leave my comments right there.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I acknowledge in the gallery former member for Footscray Marsha Thomson. Welcome back.

The time has come for me to interrupt business in accordance with the resolution of the house this morning for the members for Ringwood, Macedon and Bayswater to make their valedictory speeches. The Speaker has relaxed the prohibition against applause in the chamber following each valedictory statement, but I am to remind members to refrain from hugs or handshakes within the chamber.

Members

Member for Ringwood

Valedictory statement

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (18:00): Eight years ago I stood in this chamber for the first time and spoke about love. Love is perhaps an unusual word to bring into a place where the language is that of power, policy, numbers, tactics, division and divisions. But after eight years of victories and defeats, friendships won and lost, disappointments, mistakes, arguments and the extraordinary privilege of service, I think I understand it better now. I once thought love was principally a feeling. Public life has taught me it is more demanding. It is a discipline. It is choosing to care about people we may never meet, refusing indifference to another person's suffering and continuing when there is no applause, political advantage or even thanks. At its best politics organises that instinct. Concern becomes institutions, institutions receive budgets, budgets become services and services change lives. I came here believing government could improve people's lives, and I still do. What changed was my understanding of the difficulty and the vigilance required to make compassion more than a press release. The storylines must become budget lines. The promise must become a project, a building or a service, and that, more than anything, is what eight years in this place has taught me.

First, I would like to thank the people of Burwood and Ringwood. In 2018 the people of Burwood gave me the extraordinary privilege of representing them, and after the electoral boundaries changed and with them the candidates Ringwood did the same in 2022. Winning two marginal seats is exhilarating, but elections only open the door. The real honour begins when people trust you with their most profound problems. They come seeking support for a disabled child, care for an ageing parent,

help for a business trapped in bureaucracy or safety from family violence, or too often, way too often, just needing somewhere to sleep. The local member stands at the point where individual experience meets public power, and that is why electorate offices matter. They are where government stops being an abstraction. Some matters are fixed by email, others take months and a few never resolve, but each is a reminder that government is experienced one person at a time. To every constituent who trusted my office with a private difficulty, thank you. I hope we made the machinery of government work a little more humanely for you.

The eastern suburbs are sometimes caricatured as uniformly comfortable, but anyone who has represented them knows better. There is poverty, both seen and unseen; family violence; rough sleeping; families living one rent rise, illness or lost job from a crisis; young people waiting too long for mental health support; and older people experiencing profound loneliness. But there is also an extraordinary civic life, people who see a need and decide to act. Working with Stroke A Chord, Maroondah Winter Shelter, Sharing Hope and Biala have been among the highlights of my time as a local member. They remind us that community is not built by government alone but by volunteers who turn up when no-one is watching.

I have known many local heroes: Martin Semken, Gitta Clayton, Kathy Thompson, Matt Moran and many more whose names will never appear in *Hansard*. They are the people who make communities work. That heroism extends beyond my electorate and includes A Few Good Folk, ably led by Paul Benveniste, who have raised literally millions for some exceptional causes.

I am proud of what was delivered across the eastern suburbs. Train stations were rebuilt. Roads, schools, parks, sporting facilities and active transport links improved. The long task of removing dangerous and congested level crossings has changed daily life in ways that will eventually become so ordinary that people will forget how frustrating the old arrangements were. That forgetting is not a failure; it is what successful infrastructure looks like. Yesterday's political argument becomes tomorrow's ordinary convenience. Schools also received major investments in classrooms, specialist spaces, technology, grounds and sporting facilities. That work rarely makes the front page, but it matters enormously.

I remain deeply invested in Maroondah Hospital's future. I once stood in this chamber and touted the government's promised redevelopment. When the timetable slipped and the promise became harder to find in budgets and plans, I pressed for delivery. If you carry a promise into this chamber, you inherit a duty not merely to proclaim it but to pursue it, and loyalty to party must never require disloyalty to the people who sent you here.

But the issue that drew me most insistently towards politics was housing. In my inaugural speech I called housing the platform from which almost every other intervention becomes possible. I said that people in a daily scrap for survival have no capacity to address underlying health problems or secure employment or continue their education, and the cycle of disadvantage will just continue until our social compact breaks and our democracy begins to fray, and fray it has. In 2018 housing barely rated as an election issue. It now dominates debate, although one too often focused on immigration and intergenerational equity rather than homelessness and social justice. Housing instability robs people of dignity, health and opportunity. It robs them of a future. But housing is not merely a privilege, commodity or investment. It is a fundamental human need, and it should be a human right. One experience crystallised that for me. A mother with a two-year-old child and a five-month-old baby faced the prospect of sleeping in a car. My office called housing services, churches and support organisations. All wanted to help, but all were full. Emergency resources were exhausted. There was simply nowhere to go. At that point, policy language falls away. A strategy is not a bed. A press release cannot shelter a baby. A permit is not a home. That day we broke one of the cardinal rules of government and funded a temporary solution ourselves, but it should never have come to that. My greatest public policy aspiration is simple: end rough sleeping. Just end it. We know it can be done because during the pandemic we did it. It is a matter of public policy priorities, like any other. And it is not just a moral imperative and sound social policy; it is good economic policy too. The numbers

are simple. It is not just easier; it is cheaper to deliver essential government services to people in secure housing. That requires building more homes, not merely announcing, planning or funding them. Whilst my time in this Parliament is ending, this work is not. If anything from this speech is remembered, let it be these three words: end rough sleeping.

For its faults, I have seen this place at its best, most particularly during the voluntary assisted dying debate. The subject could hardly have been more serious: suffering, conscience, bodily autonomy, medicine, faith, family and death. Members held sincere and deeply felt views, views sharpened by the heroic battle being fought by my friend the member for Pakenham, surely the member who has given the most of themselves to Victoria's 60th Parliament. During the long consideration-in-detail proceedings, divisions repeatedly packed members onto one side of the chamber, and something wonderful happened: we talked. Members from different political traditions who had just opposed one another on profound moral questions were wedged together, chatting, laughing and trying to work out what was coming next. It was almost comic but also profound. We had not confused disagreement with enmity. We could believe another member genuinely and passionately wrong without concluding that they were wicked. That is Parliament at its best.

But too much parliamentary debate serves petty political pointscoring. Politics has always been performative, but social media has made the performance continuous. All of us, me included, have chased the sound bite, raised our voices, made personal attacks or reduced complicated questions to slogans, but I know of no modern workplace where the behaviour sometimes seen here would be acceptable or even lawful. Similarly, if any of us turned up at a community meeting where people were shouting or name-calling, we would likely turn heel and depart. What hypocrisy. We can do better and we must do better, because in an environment where as many as a third of voters have parked their vote in an empty chair, the invisible thread of legitimacy that runs between government and the governed has plainly frayed. In this period of profound democratic dissatisfaction, voters are turning towards grievance, populism and reactionary politics. The way politicians treat one another gives people reason to conclude that the system does not deserve their trust. There are people here with whom I disagree profoundly and whom I nevertheless like and respect. I have at times been criticised for believing someone on the other side could be a good person. But virtue is not allocated according to party membership, and our conduct should reflect that. The media makes it harder. 'Government doing quite a good job at delivering essential services' is a headline you will never see, and it would not sell many papers. Scandal travels and outrage begets clicks, but that makes our responsibility greater, not smaller.

Before the 2022 election many predicted political insurrection, yet I watched voters quietly enter voting booths, keeping their own counsel and making their judgement. Democracy is often quieter than commentary. We should trust citizens enough to give them argument rather than theatre and treat each other with respect as we do it, because democracy only survives when citizens believe that their participation matters. It survives when governments change peacefully, courts remain independent, critics are protected, losers accept results and winners accept limits.

I cannot give a proper account of my eight years here without speaking about August 2023. My life changed unjustly and irreparably. I was accused of something I did not do. The matter was rigorously and methodically investigated by Victoria Police, and I was cleared. Those are the facts, and I will not labour them further here. But anyone who has lived through a public allegation understands that an investigation may conclude while the consequences continue. Reputations do not heal at the speed of legal processes, and they are rarely restored, irrespective of the outcome. Some stood beside me, some reserved judgement and some judged hastily and unfairly. But the harder people went, the less they were attacking me and the more they were revealing themselves. What matters more than that, though, is what happened around that experience. Friends stayed. Family stayed. Colleagues across the political divide offered quiet gestures of support and comfort when things had gone horribly wrong, gestures I will remember forever.

Politics tempts us to judge people in the easy times, but character reveals itself when everything falls apart. When my life fell apart, Sharon stayed. Her professionalism, judgement and capacity to work through the hardest moments place her in elite company. She is not just the best electorate officer in the country; she was the difference between battling through and simply giving up. She has been a mentor, a guiding light, a moral compass, an adviser and a friend. There were days when she carried an office through circumstances no electorate officer should reasonably have been asked to carry. No amount of thanks will ever do her sacrifices justice, and I will forever be in her debt.

So too those who joined after some of the noise subsided. Jessica, an author of elite communications and someone who gave everything to the voluntary assisted dying debate and the careful consideration of a slew of amendments I believe will one day reach the statute book. Abdul worked tirelessly on that debate and helped navigate the Victorian Electoral Commission's complex and inconsistently administered funding regime. Adam brought a different political perspective and a determination to help those doing it toughest. Bay enlightened us with his quiet but determined advocacy for Burmese refugees. To everyone who worked with me, friend or foe: thank you for serving our communities. Outside the office, Jamie Bunn taught me to focus on what mattered and what I could control, and to keep my head up. Gus Carfi was always there, especially on days when the tears prevailed.

Public life attracts those for whom your name is useful; difficulty reveals those who value you when it is not. To the many friends who stayed when the going got tough: from the bottom of my heart, thank you. Newer friends have reminded me that kindness travels and life still holds good surprises. To my family: thank you for the sacrifices you made, the profound impacts on your time, your businesses, your privacy and your peace. Public life is never borne by the elected alone, especially when it becomes controversial and chaotic. My parents and my brothers and their families endured much that they never invited, and for that I am deeply sorry and eternally grateful for their love and support. To the mothers of my children, thank you for the patience and understanding you have shown me. I know there have been sacrifices along the way, and I am deeply grateful for everything you have done, everything you have given and, above all, for you being magnificent mothers. Our children are better for your love and steadfastness. And to my children, whatever else I have done or failed to do, being your dad is my most important and cherished role. When the political noise fades, I hope you judge these years not by the headlines but by whether I tried to leave the world a little kinder and a little fairer.

I never quite got a normal year in this job – learning the ropes in 2019 and then becoming front-page news, navigating the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, a re-election year in 2022 and then the horror of 2023 and the years following. For most of my parliamentary life I sat as a Labor member, and I am proud of much that the Labor government achieved in that time: the transformative infrastructure, the response to family violence, the equality reforms, the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and the willingness to use government actively rather than apologetically. I did not agree with every decision. Nobody who has thought seriously about government for eight years should. Loyalty is not pretending every decision by your side is right. Sometimes it means saying, 'This is not good enough.' Beyond Labor, I have been lucky to serve with members across this chamber whom I respect and members spanning the ideological breadth of the federal Parliament too. I particularly thank my neighbour and friend the member for Croydon. Many years ago he did me a great kindness during a tough period, and I shall never forget it. I am grateful to the many members from and beyond Labor who showed generosity when it carried consequence rather than reward. At times their support kept me standing. I will not embarrass you by naming you. You know who you are and I know too.

This term did not pan out as I hoped. That is the plain truth. The last three years have been the hardest of my life and tarnished what should otherwise have been the great honour of serving in this place. But tarnished is not erased. I have not always got everything right. I have sometimes been too certain, too impatient or too combative. But I also worked hard, tried to be useful and remained, by and large, faithful to the principles that brought me here. I am leaving Parliament without leaving public service.

There are houses to build, institutions to fix and community organisations to grow. There are people who still need someone to make a phone call, open a door or simply refuse to accept that nothing can be done. I stand ready to help any person in this Parliament or the next, or the one after that, regardless of party, to do something good, however small.

Eight years ago I spoke about love. At times since then I have wondered whether that was naive. Politics has shown me ambition and courage, kindness and cruelty, loyalty and betrayal. It has taught me that reputations can be destroyed in an evening and may never be rebuilt. It has taught me that staying through the storm matters so much more than showing up for the sunshine. And it has taught me that grace is not surrender. Yet I return to the same word, 'love' – not sentimental love, not the love of slogans, parties or political tribes, but the harder kind, the kind that asks us to care for people we do not know, the kind that requires us to provide a home to someone who cannot repay us, a hospital bed to someone whose name we will never learn and dignity to a person whose choices we may never understand, the kind that lets us argue furiously in this chamber and still recognise one another's equal worth when the bells stop ringing. Perhaps politics at its best is the attempt to give practical form to the proposition that other people's lives matter. I leave this place bruised but nonetheless grateful. I leave with my head held high. I leave believing more strongly than I did when I arrived that public life is worthwhile because people are worthwhile, that dignity matters, that service matters, that grace matters and that in the end, above all, love matters. I thank the house.

Members applauded.

Member for Macedon

Valedictory statement

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon) (18:20): The Macedon electorate encompasses the lands of the Wurundjeri, the Taungurung and the Dja Dja Wurrung peoples, and I pay my respects to their elders past and present. It includes places of profound cultural significance, including Wil-im-ee Moor-ring, the ancient greenstone axe quarry located just out of Lancefield, and Hanging Rock, sometimes known as Ngannelong, a meeting place for the people of the Kulin nations. I have been proud to serve in a government that accepted an invitation from the First Peoples of this state to undertake a journey of reconciliation and understanding, to embrace truth, to give voice to First Peoples and to enable self-determination. I am so proud that our Labor government stared down misinformation and fear to advance that journey and deliver Australia's first treaty. I was also humbled to appear before the Yoorrook Justice Commission in my capacity as Minister for Health and to be a signatory to the very first Aboriginal health and wellbeing partnership agreement.

In my first speech to this place I spoke about my determination to elevate the voices of women and girls and to ensure that their concerns were a focus of our Labor government. I am very proud to leave a Parliament in which women now take their place in equal numbers to men, thanks to the commitment of our Labor Party to get serious about women's representation and to the many stellar Labor women who have won the trust of their communities to serve in this place. This is a profound change from the Parliament that I first entered.

I have also been proud to serve in the cabinets of two exceptional Labor leaders: Premier Daniel Andrews and our second-ever female Premier, Premier Jacinta Allan, both of whom championed women's representation in their cabinets. Some of my constituents ask me why does this matter. I say a Parliament and a government that better reflects the community it serves is more likely to address the issues and concerns of those communities, including issues that have historically been ignored or minimised. Nowhere is that clearer than in two areas that have defined much of my time here: family violence and women's health.

Yesterday I was pleased to attend the launch of the See the Signs campaign, important work enabled by our government and led by Respect Victoria. This work is about raising awareness of coercive control and complements the important legislation that was being debated in this very chamber today.

Ten years on from the Royal Commission into Family Violence, it is time to reflect on the changes that have been delivered. We now have a much-improved service system. We have more empathetic and effective policing and a court system that is ready to hold perpetrators to account. It is easy to forget how radical the royal commission was considered at the time. As our Attorney-General noted yesterday, for the first time government was addressing behaviours that had been hiding in plain sight. Our biggest law and order issue was not happening on the streets but in the bedrooms and living rooms, the homes, of Victorian women and children. I also remember that at the time the opposition dismissed this royal commission as a lawyers picnic.

But changing laws and services was never going to be enough; we also had to change attitudes. In Macedon I was enormously proud to work with more than 30 local sporting clubs, CFAs, schools, businesses and community organisations through our electorate-wide Say No to Family Violence campaign. It was a grassroots campaign, and it mattered. We have achieved a great deal, but women are still dying at the hands of men who profess to love them, so the work must continue. It is incumbent on all political leaders to call out attitudes and behaviours that seek to minimise or normalise violence against women – comments such as Pauline Hanson's reprehensible description of domestic violence as a 'two-way street', as she sought to shift responsibility for violence back onto its victims. Leaders will always speak out and condemn these attitudes, while cowards will remain silent.

Serving as Minister for Health has been the greatest honour of my working life. I remember getting a call back in June 2022 from the Premier's chief of staff, and she said, 'The Premier would like to see you tomorrow morning in his office.' I knew what was happening – I knew that I was going to get a new portfolio – so I rang my mum and I told her that I was having a meeting with Dan the next morning, to which she said, 'I will pray that you don't get health.' While I have loved all of the portfolios in which I have served, including agriculture, regional development, women and medical research, the health portfolio and all the facets of that portfolio have been the greatest privilege, because we have one of the best health systems in the world and without doubt we have the most outstanding and dedicated health workforce.

I am particularly proud of what we have achieved in women's health, and I want to acknowledge the many health professionals and advocates who have worked alongside the government and our health services, including the members of my ministerial advisory council and lived experience advocates Kat Stanley and Fi Macrae. Having a caucus and a cabinet filled with women has absolutely changed the conversation. It means that menstruation and menopause are no longer taboo. It means women can talk about endometriosis, pelvic pain, prolapse and incontinence conditions that for generations have been shrouded in stigma and shame. And it means that governments can deliver more and better services. Our women's pain inquiry was absolutely groundbreaking and has led the way for national action. More than 13,000 women and girls came forward and told us their story. They said, 'We have suffered enough.'

At the heart of why this is so is what has rightly been described as medical misogyny. By this I do not mean individual doctors; I mean a medical system that historically has not prioritised women's bodies and women's health. Women have been prescribed the pill or antidepressants as cure-alls. We have been told to lose weight or to exercise more, that our pain is normal or that it is in our heads. The truth is that medical science still does not fully understand the impact of sex and gender on our health and wellbeing. That is why research matters, and it is why dedicated services matter. We have established 20 standalone women's health clinics, including one in Kyneton, and these are complemented by mobile and virtual services and a dedicated Aboriginal women's health service. We have delivered 20 sexual and reproductive health hubs to expand access to contraception and to medical and surgical abortion. Our commitment to a women's research institute is an important, vital next step and one that I look forward to a future Labor government delivering. These are hard-fought gains, and I sound this warning to any future government that seeks to wind them back or interfere with our rights to abortion care: Victorian women will fight to retain these services and their rights.

It is customary in valedictory speeches to say that serving in this place has been the greatest honour and privilege of a lifetime, and I understand that the public may treat these words with some cynicism. But I know, looking around this chamber, that you all know that this is true. As parliamentarians, people entrust us with their stories, often at the most difficult and painful times of their lives. I think of the women that I have met seeking to escape family violence; the father whose daughter was murdered by her husband; the victim-survivors of child sexual abuse, of incest and of rape; the mothers whose babies were taken through forced adoption; families who lost a loved one to suicide; women whose healthy ovaries were removed in medically unnecessary surgeries; parents supporting children with profound disabilities; families struggling with addiction; and as health minister, the families I met who had lost children and loved ones when our healthcare system did not deliver the care they had every right to expect. To all of you who entrusted me with those experiences, your stories mattered. I heard you, I believed you and I fought every day to make a difference.

I am proud to have played a part in working to reform the systems that people rely on every day, because Labor governments do not seek simply to right a wrong for the individual; we seek to change the system that allowed that wrong to occur in the first place. We believe in the power of government to serve people and to change lives for the better. We believe in the power of a strong economy to serve people, not the other way around.

When I look across Macedon I am enormously proud of what that belief in government has delivered. We have invested almost $90 million into our schools right across the electorate. Our three government secondary schools have been substantially rebuilt. We have built new primary schools in Kyneton and Gisborne and new kindergartens in Gisborne, Kyneton and Lancefield. We have invested in trades training, Head Start and free TAFE, giving more young people the opportunity to pursue apprenticeships and great careers. We know that free TAFE transforms lives, and I saw that as health minister when I met so many women who told me that they were going to do a diploma of nursing. It is something they had always wanted to do, and for many of them, they went on to further studies and to become registered nurses, because that is what Labor governments do. We create opportunities to change lives.

Our communities have also benefited from major investments in health in Kyneton and Daylesford and through the redevelopment of the Ballarat and Bendigo hospitals and our commitment to urgent and virtual care. The new Melton hospital will bring comprehensive hospital services much closer to people in and around Gisborne. The Macedon Ranges regional sports precinct, which is the largest public infrastructure project ever delivered in the Macedon Ranges, was made possible by more than $11 million committed by our government.

I am immensely proud of what we have achieved together, and as we all know, none of this work is done alone. I want to thank my electorate team, who have provided outstanding and empathetic support to constituents and have ensured that we have always strived to be the most effective advocates for our community that we can be. To Richard, Sharon, Tahli, Liam, Bella, Sue, Carolyn, Georgie, Marg and of course the incomparable Kate, a big thankyou. Thank you also to Chris, Lisa, Emma and Will, who worked in both my electorate and ministerial offices; to my ministerial staff, who supported me across my portfolios, Ben, Hannah, James, Robbie, Grace, Dana, Kushan, Andy, Tim, Srishti, Martin, Sam and Max; to my EA Vince; my driver Joe; Deb, my deputy chief of staff; and of course to Melissa Arch, my chief of staff throughout my more than five years as a minister. Archie and I first met as junior staffers to Lynne Kosky back in 1999. She is one of the very best in the business, and I thank her for her judgement, her loyalty, her friendship and her advice. To my media advisers Kieran, Harry, Isobel, Nadia and their teams, a big thankyou. We had so much fun and we worked very, very hard, always in the service of the people of Victoria.

We all know that politics is tough on families, so to Graham and Liv, I say thank you. Liv, I am sorry I missed your graduation. I hope that expensive bottle of champagne made some amends. I will always be grateful for your love and your support.

To the true believers across Macedon and every volunteer who has stood beside me through campaign after campaign, thank you. You are the heart and soul of our great Australian Labor Party. As someone who was getting around primary school with an 'It's time' badge pinned to my chest, serving our great labour movement in Parliament has been an incredible honour and beyond my wildest dreams. Once again, as my mother says, 'If only your father were here. Who'd have thought, a girl from Sandy Creek!' Anyway, there you are.

Bridget Noonan, can I thank you and the whole team and all of the parliamentary staff. Thank you for all of your support, particularly in my time as Leader of the House. Speaker, thank you also for your wisdom and guidance at all times.

It has been an absolute blast. This place has been a large part of my life, and I will miss it enormously. But it is time for a new face to fight for working people in the seat of Macedon. Our Labor candidate Annette Death will be a terrific local member. She is a good 20 years younger than me, so she is going to bring that right mix of energy and experience to the role, and I know that she looks forward to serving the people of Macedon. I hope for all Victorians that she will take her place in here as a hardworking member of a Carroll Labor government.

Thank you again to the people of Macedon for placing your trust in me over three terms. I can assure you that I have always done my very best. And to everyone in this chamber – colleagues, friends, staff, the opposition – thank you. I am going to miss all of you.

Members applauded.

The SPEAKER: I would like to acknowledge in the gallery the Honourable Tim Pallas, former member for Werribee and Treasurer.

James Newbury interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Brighton is warned.

Member for Bayswater

Valedictory statement

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (18:41): 'Better luck next time' was basically the message I took away from my name's brief appearance in the *Sunday Herald Sun* the day after the 2018 election. I was down by a few dozen votes the night of. Fast-forward a couple of weeks and I give you the accidental MP for Bayswater by a mere total of 296 votes. I could not believe it. After being preselected for the seat, just a month out from the poll, when I told my senior sergeant at Melbourne prosecutions, 'I'll see you in a month,' I was to become the state member for Bayswater at the age of 26, and I never saw that senior sergeant again. That began what was to be a wild ride for the next eight years, leading to you lovely people listening to me here this evening. And I can proudly report to the house that serving as the member for Bayswater has been undoubtedly the greatest professional privilege of my life.

I am grateful for the chance to address you all here in what is the people's house, a place whose ideals and what it represents will outlive each and every one of us. I intend to use this opportunity to reflect on my time here in this role and to thank a few people. I cannot promise any great lessons or advice, but I promise I will not get all prophetic on you and I will attempt to weave humility in. We could all do with a little more of that in here, I am sure.

Being first elected to state Parliament at the age of 26 was a lot to take in. There was no handbook, and for so many reasons, including my young age, I knew I had a lot to prove. In essence, I owed it to the people of the community that I have represented to do the work and to get the outcomes they deserved. Prior to entering Parliament I had worked as a police prosecutor and frontline member of Victoria Police and had been a local councillor. I had grown up in Dandenong and had a tough start to life in my childhood with my two brothers. I mention that because it is this adversity I faced which

shaped who I have become and has been a guiding star for me in this role, as I have always tried to remember where I have come from and what motivates me.

I have tried to take those experiences and turn them into positives, into action, into doing the right thing, into helping others and, in my mind, hopefully making a difference around the edges. Those values were reinforced in a profound way in 2016 when my mum passed away. My mother's passing in 2016 was a turning point in my life. It reinforced the belief that life is short and that we should not waste precious time. It was one of the reasons that motivated me to get into politics, and it has continued to shape my approach to service.

Being in politics and public office has also given me the incredible opportunities to work with our community and achieve things together that I am immensely proud of. It has given me so many opportunities to see the absolute best of people, and sometimes, yes, the worst. I have always approached the role and people with the mindset that I have never wanted to be a partisan warrior or disagree with people for the sake of it. I will have a conversation with anyone, regardless of their political leanings; in fact I believe you stand to learn a whole lot more from people who disagree with you, people who challenge you. I believe when opinions and ideas conflict, that is where you get growth.

I have always been a big believer that words carry weight, and in this place and in our roles we must always acknowledge that. There is a saying that it is 'better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and to remove all doubt'. It is something I have tried to live by. I did say 'try'. Not only do our words carry weight but so too our actions that stand as examples to the communities we represent. I would love to stand here and say I would hope this was a kinder place, but the adversarial nature of Parliament I get, and it does have its place.

We all have different viewpoints and a way of doing things that at times conflict, but I believe strongly that all of us are here for the right reasons. There is no doubt there is a personal cost that comes to being in this place, but kindness to each other is free and never a bad thing. As Theodore Roosevelt put it, the most practical kind of politics is the politics of decency.

There are of course times when disagreement and conflict are unavoidable, and it is a real test in that moment of who you are as to how you respond to it. Looking back, I need not look too hard to find the greatest example of that. The pandemic reached our shores in 2020. It was such a huge moment of course in modern human history, but to be just one year into a first term as a 27-year-old during a global pandemic was daunting. This was a period of serious instability and societal upheaval, and I knew however hard the day may have been that I was in a very fortunate position.

The days of COVID politics were unrelenting. I felt like I was constantly online and that a high-pressure, high-scrutiny job just went up a few notches. As a member of the government and local MP, I and all MPs became a central point of contact and of information dissemination and deciphering for thousands upon thousands of people. The decisions being made and the communication of those were having massive impacts on every single person.

I remember the thousands of conversations I had in reaching out to people to see how they were doing. I remember the stories of bravery and heroism. I remember the sacrifices made by so many. I remember my team and me doing everything we could to get back to people as quickly as we could and everything else in between that came with it. The pandemic really displayed the greatest of who we are. As silly as it may sound, it is the period I reflect on the most as a time where we showed what we are capable of, and the words and deeds of so many in our community shone brightly past all the chaos.

The pandemic also reminded us all, in case we needed it, of the nature of politics and news in the 21st century. It is 24/7, and the rise of social media has changed everything. It has changed how we engage on every level. It is a demanding job and one in which you know you will never please everyone, but that is its great challenge too. I will miss that, but I will not miss the social media, if I am being frank.

Above everything else, the gift I have been given these past eight years has meant I have had incredible opportunities, I believe, to be a force for good, to be an outlet for change. As all politicians will invariably do when we decide to pull up stumps, we tend to talk about some of the things we delivered and achieved. I do this not to big-note but to acknowledge the work of many people who made it all possible. I am only one person. The credit belongs to our community for pushing for many things and keeping me honest. Before I do cover a few things off, it is worth noting that politicians often get confused about what people value most. When I first started, I recall thinking how important it was to list the dollar figure attached to the projects as if that would somehow blow people's socks off. The longer I have been in, though, the more it has become clear that the value is much more than a dollar figure. It is about the outcomes and their impact on people's lives.

The first thing that comes to mind is the breakfast program I helped start in Boronia. Its cost compared to so many other things is not nothing, but it is not much. Over five years now it has changed so many lives. It has served a decent meal four to five days a week to people who need it, no questions asked and no judgement given. It has helped build friendships and connections before where there were few or none. It has helped calmly and carefully get people into housing and connected into services they need and that they had never even thought of reaching out to. It has given people the dignity of simple things like a haircut, and it is something I am incredible proud of.

In the last eight years we have also upgraded every single public school across the two iterations of my electorate. Personally, knowing the difference a good public education made to my life, it has been a privilege to have been able to support education locally from a capital and policy perspective. It has unashamedly been my number one priority, as education is indeed the great leveller in society. One thing I was particularly proud of was the Baywater education plan, only the state's eighth education plan, which I chaired in partnership with all the primary schools across Bayswater and Baywater North and Bayswater Secondary College. It has had a huge impact on outcomes across all those schools and in particular that of Bayswater Secondary, which is just kicking some serious goals – almost like a proud dad moment seeing how far that school has come.

I am heartened that we have expanded a local family violence prevention service into the City of Knox, helping support victims. I am proud that we have delivered safer roads, with new signalised intersections at McMahons Road in Ferntree Gully and Alchester Village in Boronia. I am stoked that we have supported our grassroots sporting clubs, like St Andrews Cricket Club, Boronia Hawks Football Netball Club, Bayswater Junior Football Club, Bayswater Bowls Club and so many more with new pavilions and facilities. And yes, I am super stoked that we created around 18 MCGs of new open space with the green heart of Knox along Blind Creek, which has been the largest investment in our local environment in a generation. We have also seen new facilities built at the much-loved Angliss Hospital and a new public aged care facility in Wantirna. Finally, work has kicked off on the new station for The Basin CFA, and we gave the great folk over at the Knox SES unit a new build as well.

But ,yes, the thing I am very excited about – and I will have to resist the urge to go into full members statement mode here – is the new Boronia station precinct upgrade. This took me years, and I cannot tell you how many conversations were had and how many times I heard 'no' or felt that I was getting laughed out of a room on this. But all of that is in the past, because ahead of us is a new central beating heart for a genuinely decent suburb for decent people deserving of a place they can be proud of.

Whilst the role of a local member is predominantly to get outcomes directly for your local community, I am also immensely honoured to be part of a team that has delivered the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System; doubled funding for disability inclusion in schools; made kinder free; delivered state-shaping infrastructure like the Metro Tunnel, the North East Link and the Suburban Rail Loop; invested tonnes more money into social housing; and led the way on climate change and investment in renewable energy. I could spend a long time on the achievements of this government, but suffice to say it has been a government of doing things, and it truly has been great to be part of it all.

The life of an MP is not just about being seen through the prism of deliverables but, critically, about how you represent your community in Parliament and how you engage on an everyday level. As a member I have spent my time being someone who has connected at every opportunity with community, particularly in the first term, given I was new and for the most part a bit of an unknown commodity. I knocked on thousands of doors, called thousands of people, held hundreds of street stalls and more. It was not a chore; it was a duty, and it made me a better member – I have no doubt about it. Listening to people was critical, as was not pretending to be someone that you were not.

Of course I would not be here if it were not for the faith shown in me by the wonderful people of Bayswater, Boronia, Ferntree Gully, The Basin, Wantirna and Wantirna South and previously Bayswater North, Heathmont, Kilsyth South and a tiny little part of Ringwood. I cannot begin to thank you enough for allowing me to work in the best job in the world. I cannot tell you how many times I have been blown away by the generosity of this community. It may sound like something you just say, but truly I do not think what I have been able to do these past eight years I will ever get to do again in the sense of the kind of fulfillment one gets in their professional life. That is not created through dollars in a budget outcome or in a CCU bulletin announcement but through the kindness of people and their willingness to work with you to do decent things.

I have also had the greatest of opportunities to get to know so many fantastic community organisations, schools and local businesses right across the area. We are so lucky to have such a strong community, one that cares and one that knows just how good Knox is. Thank you for being so kind, for your support and for simply being you.

While the spotlight often falls on the elected rep, everything that has been achieved has only been possible because of the dedication, passion and support of the amazing team I have had the privilege to work with. Thank you to every single person who has helped locals day in and day out, whom I have thoroughly enjoyed sharing this with. I would like to thank in particular Julie Buxton, Patrick Kelly, William Broadbent, James Gan, Adam Abramovich, Eve Cain-McAliece, Liam Pierides, Kylie Williams, Declan High, Thomas Broadbent, Jack Pallas and Kate Hallam for their significant contributions to the team, for making work fun and for their service to community – hear, hear!

I would like to further acknowledge Will, who was on the team for around five years and made me look presentable on social media, helped countless locals and has now gone onto great things – very proud of you, man. To Liam Pierides, who made the office a meme competition at times, thanks for your dedication and hard work in the crew. Thomas, Will's brother – what a guy – continued the trend of making me presentable on social media and is super talented in so many ways. You are going to achieve so much in life, mate. To Jack Pallas, the quiet achiever, thank you for everything these past three years and for your service to helping people when they need it.

And, yes, to Patrick Kelly. Nearly eight years we worked together, and with six months left you decided you could not take it anymore – no, mate; I am very proud of you. You have become one of my dearest friends. I simply would not be here without you, my man. You are genuinely in my view the best electorate officer, and the pleasure has been all mine. Thanks also for driving into the city with your partner Steff to watch George sleep in the car so I could race off and see Thomas be born late on New Year's Day. That is one for the ages.

I want to thank all of my colleagues in Parliament and your teams, and I wish you all the best into the future, some more than others – no, just kidding. To all the often-unsung heroes across this Parliament and the Department of Parliamentary Services: thank you a hundred times. I am looking at you, clerks. To the Hansard team, to the HR crew, to payroll, to property services, to the customer service team, to the legends in security, to the IT outfit, to member services, to the library, to the cleaners, to the maintenance team, to our wonderful catering team and to anyone I might have missed: thank you for making life easy for a somewhat difficult group of people – it is true. I want to thank all of the advisers past and present across ministerial offices and the Premier's office. You have been marvellous, and I simply could not have done my job without your patience and assistance these past years.

I want to take this moment to also thank the Premiers I have served under. First to Dan Andrews: thank you so much for believing in me, mate. To Jacinta Allan, a decent human and a wonderful Premier: thank you for supporting me and for your guidance. And of course to Ben Carroll, a great guy, a deep thinker and someone who has always given me his time: Victorians are lucky to have you as their Premier. And I of course want to wish Julie Buxton, the new Labor candidate for Bayswater, all the very best. She would make a superb member of Parliament if given the chance. And it goes without saying that I will of course be there working alongside Julie to see a re-elected Carroll Labor government in 2026.

Being a member of Parliament was admittedly a dream of mine, and I do feel like I am in the only room in Victoria where I will get a majority of the room judging me less for saying as such. It has been such a whirlwind, and at times it has felt like it has taken over my life. As time and life have gone on, it is clearer to me though that family is everything. I cannot tell you how lucky I am to have Natasha Russo as my wife and I, her husband. She is the smartest, funniest, kindest person I have ever known, and she is just as stubborn and opinionated as me, so it works perfectly. In all seriousness, she has never once questioned my life in politics, never tried to hold me back and always encouraged my passions because that is who she is. She is an incredible mother to our boys and the most supportive person I know and, luckily for me, I married her – great wedding, by the way – and life really changed. And it changed my perspective on the value of things when our little George came along. George had a bit of a bumpy journey into the world. Now nearly three, he has grown into the most beautiful little guy. He has the happiest disposition in life you have ever seen and has made us happy beyond words, and he has made us watch *Coco* and *The Grinch* at least 200 times apiece. Then our little Thomas was born on New Year's Day this year, a beautiful little rambunctious guy who sleeps like an angel. I count myself incredibly lucky, and not once have I regretted my decision to step away from politics to put my family front and centre in my life. So to my wife Natasha and my boys Thomas and George Taylor: if you guys are ever looking back at this – or now – I love you.

I want to now briefly reflect on a few things I will miss in this job. I will miss the key CCU lines in the morning. I will miss the free character assessments. I will miss the shouts of 'Hear, hear' and the confected outrage in this place that of course is just in my head. I will miss the pictures of the Parliament TVs with my bald spot showing that my staff have texted me numerous times – I am going to get more of those now, in the next couple of months. I will miss being able to call 22 999 and speaking to someone in IT who is almost certainly going to fix your problem on the spot. I will miss referring to people as 'my good friend and colleague', knowing the former was not always exactly true. I will miss the Speaker saying 'it has been a wideranging debate'. And I know you all will not miss me talking about Boronia station for, without a joke, probably the 800th time since I was elected.

But seriously, what I will actually miss is seeing the best of people using politics and policy to change our corner of the world. I will miss working with people in our community, like Penny Robinson, Denise Budge, Michael Smith, Brooke Cross, Liz Swan, Wayne Preston, Greg Hannon, Dwayne Paisley, Matt Millar and Shan Pillai, almost all of whom have joined us here this evening – hear, hear! You are not supposed to 'Hear, hear' yourself. I could list so many more. Thank you to each of you for being great people to work with. Gandalf the Grey once said, 'All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us.' In my first speech in Parliament I said that I would not let you down and that I would work hard every day. And I said:

> I am also aware of the reality that there are many who did not vote for me nor Labor. Be assured that I will be a member of Parliament who works for all of you. And I promise this: even if we cannot agree, I will listen.

I hope I have lived up to those words and those ideals. When all is said and done, I believe I have played my part and done so with conviction. Thank you, and go well, all.

Members applauded.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Portland District Health

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (19:03): (1799) My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is for the minister to come to Portland to meet with Portland District Health and the community about the funded plan needed to restore the essential services Portland has lost and secure the workforce required to keep them there. Portland is a healthcare desert. Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV) has identified Portland as one of 16 priority locations across rural Victoria, communities where workforce shortages, service access challenges and the community's need are most acute. This is not the opposition saying it. It is not political rhetoric. This is what the Victorian rural health workforce census findings showed, and what it exposed is alarming. Across rural Victoria the census identified staff shortages as the leading healthcare system issue. It identified long specialist wait times and mental health services as under-served. Alarmingly, it also found health professionals were considering leaving their rural healthcare roles because they felt unsupported and burnt out.

Portland's inclusion as one of the 16 priority communities should be a flashing red warning light for this government. People in Portland are not asking for gold-plated health care. They are not asking for brain surgery or heart transplants to be performed at their local hospital. They are asking for at least the basics. A tonsillectomy should be able to be performed locally. Basic ophthalmology services should be accessible. Podiatry should not be uncertain. Women should be able to have the confidence that when they become pregnant they can give birth at their local hospital. When somebody calls for an ambulance, they should be confident that one will actually be available. A child having to wait 2½ years to have their tonsils out, risking sepsis and even death, is simply unbelievable in 2026. Having no ENT specialists for several hours from Portland is unacceptable. How did we get to this point when these things can no longer be taken for granted? This was highlighted in the 2017 parliamentary inquiry, which warned the government what a failure to act on the looming crisis would look like. And here we are.

And then there is the Hillis report. Health care in Portland increasingly resembles a road where this government has removed one bridge after another and then tells the community the road is still open. After more than a decade of this Labor government, services have been allowed to erode while the people still working in the system carry an enormous burden. The RWAV report warns that recruitment alone will not solve this. It calls for sustainable careers, workforce support and practical solutions to retention. Minister, Portland has now been officially identified as one of Victoria's areas of greatest workforce pressure. Portland deserves more than another review. No more excuses. There is a problem. It deserves action.

Ballarat tourism

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (19:06): (1800) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, and the action I seek is that the minister visit my electorate of Wendouree to meet with stakeholders who are helping to grow Ballarat's visitor economy. Ballarat is one of Victoria's premier regional tourism destinations for good reason. There is so much to enjoy with our golden history and glorious 19th-century architecture, our beautiful Lake Wendouree and its iconic black swans, and our hospitality venues, which are exceptional. We are spoilt for choice with amazing dining venues like Babae, Dyers, Lola, the North Britain and Meigas, as well as local distilleries Kilderkin, Grainery Lane and Itinerant Spirits and local brewers Aunty Jacks, Red Duck and Hop Temple.

The Carroll Labor government continues to invest in attractions and events that draw visitors to our city and support local jobs. It would be remiss of me not to reference our iconic goldfields outdoor

museum, Sovereign Hill, and I am delighted to share that the Victorian government's Regional Tourism Investment Fund is supporting the expansion of the Sovereign Hill hotel precinct, with 22 new guest rooms, improved accessibility and enhanced guest facilities. This investment will increase capacity for holidaymakers, families, school groups and organised tours. This investment will enable more visitors to stay in Ballarat for longer and experience everything our region has to offer.

The Labor government is also supporting major events that bring thousands of visitors to our city. The Ballarat Marathon has quickly become a significant event on Victoria's sporting calendar, while the Ballarat International Foto Biennale continues to attract artists, photographers and visitors from across Australia and around the world. Ballarat also enjoyed the Always Live program earlier this year with Dan Sultan, Blusher, Hope D and Apples. It was a great day for live music that activated our city and strengthened our visitor economy. With the school holidays approaching, I invite and encourage all Victorians to make the trip to Ballarat, whether for a day visit by car or train or for a stay. You will be warmly welcomed. I look forward to welcoming the minister to Wendouree.

Public transport

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (19:08): (1801) My adjournment tonight is for the Minister for Public Transport, and the action that I am seeking is more support for passengers when buses replace trains, particularly at the East Pakenham station. When this happens we have a situation where passengers have to walk a long way from the train to the bus or vice versa. Last Saturday we had one elderly woman with a heavy bag and a walking stick who was making this journey. As she went past Public Transport Victoria staff, rather than being given a hand, she was told, 'Not too long to go now. Keep up.' When she got to the coach bay she tried three buses. All were full. She finally found a couple of seats on a bus behind the driver – having loaded her own bags, I might add – only to be told that those seats were reserved. She thought they would be reserved for priority passengers, those with a disability or seniors, but she was told they were not to be sat in.

The whole situation is poor. When buses are going to replace trains because of some works on the metro line, we have to have additional staff to help people on their journey – perhaps someone to assist the elderly passengers and the frail passengers getting from the train to the bus and vice versa. Put on some staff to help them load their bags onto the bus and vice versa. Put on some staff to tell them 'No, sorry, this bus is full. You've got to get onto the next one.' Just help people. These changes get put on with very, very short notice. They leave people having to move over to a bus when they did not realise that was going to happen, and they just do not have the support. So I say to the Minister for Public Transport: when these changes occur, please put on the appropriate staff to help the frail and elderly in our community get from A to B.

Ripon electorate roads

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (19:10): (1802) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is that the minister provide an update on when our state-managed roads across Ripon will be repaired. Ripon covers more than 10,000 square kilometres, and right across our electorate, many key roads have deteriorated to an unacceptable standard. The condition of our roads is consistently the number one issue raised with me by locals. Major routes, including the Sunraysia Highway, Pyrenees Highway, Western Highway, Calder Highway and Ballarat-Maryborough Road, all require significant attention, along with many other roads that connect our communities. For country Victorians, roads are essential infrastructure. People rely on them every day to get to work, take children to school, attend medical appointments, transport freight and stay connected to loved ones. That is why we need to see a stronger focus on road maintenance and renewal across Ripon. While temporary patching may provide a short-term fix, many roads now require more substantial and lasting repairs to bring them up to a safe and reliable standard. Our communities deserve confidence that the roads they depend on are being properly maintained, and I ask the minister to provide an update on when these much-needed works will be delivered.

Domestic rabbits

Chris CREWTHER (Mornington) (19:11): (1803) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Agriculture, and it is perhaps a unique topic but of importance given around 29,000 to 40,000 households have them and given there are over 53,000 to up to 93,000 of these pets in these households. I am talking about the topic of domestic rabbits. The action I seek is that the minister look into establishing an enforceable statewide framework for domestic rabbits, including consideration of their inclusion under the Domestic Animals Act 1994 and its regulations, after consulting rescuers, veterinarians, councils and animal welfare organisations.

Domestic rabbits are companion animals, not wild rabbits or disposable starter pets. Agriculture Victoria says that they need suitable housing, exercise, socialisation and diet and veterinary care and can live up to 15 years if well cared for. Yet the law still treats their welfare as an afterthought. Ministerial and departmental replies from 2023 until recently repeat the same answers: the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 protects rabbits, limited pet shop standards apply and individual complaints go to the RSPCA. Those statements may be true, but they do not answer the systemic problem. Dogs and cats are protected by cruelty laws and managed under the Domestic Animals Act because responsible ownership requires prevention, traceability and accountability. Rabbits are not. In 2023 the then minister said new animal care laws would include rabbits. In 2024 rabbit-specific regulations were still being considered. In 2026 the 1986 act remains in force.

I have been supporting a paper petition calling for domestic rabbits to be added to the Domestic Animals Act, launched by Nina, who is here in the chamber, and promoted very strongly to me and others by Jodie Smit in my electorate of Mornington. More than 2700 people have signed so far, well above the Legislative Council's 2000-signature threshold for a paper petition to qualify for debate, which they propose to lodge in the next parliamentary term. That is a clear call for change. Rescuers see the consequences: accidental litters, backyard breeding, dumping, neglect and surrender. Kelly's Rabbit Warren Rescue reported taking 199 rabbits from pounds in 2025 alone. Advocates report that many councils lack a formal surrender or rehoming pathway and instead refer residents to a small volunteer network, leaving rescuers to absorb veterinary, desexing and rehoming costs. Registered pet shops selling rabbits must meet mandatory care standards, but private and backyard sellers do not face the same code. There is no statewide registration, microchipping or breeder accountability scheme comparable to that for cats and dogs, making it harder to identify owners, deter dumping and prevent unwanted litters. I call for action.

Narrarrang Uniting Kindergarten Port Melbourne

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (19:15): (1804) My adjournment is for the Minister for Children. The action I seek is for the minister to visit the new Narrarrang kindergarten in Port Melbourne. The kindergarten has been built at the recently opened Narrarrang Primary School site as part of this government's $3.8 billion program to fund the building of kindergartens as part of our Best Start, Best Life reforms. Victoria is leading the nation through these reforms, saving families money on kindergarten and allowing parents to return to work or study. The Narrarrang kindergarten will support the physical and mental health of children in the local area during a critical time for their personal and social development. As we increase the number of free hours of three- and four-year-old kinder per week, these new kindergartens will play an even more significant role in the lives of young families, giving children who complete two years of kindergarten even more academic and cognitive benefits that will stay with them well into their schooling years. Additionally, building kindergartens at primary schools makes the transition to school easier for parents and children. As the area of Fishermans Bend continues to go through Australia's largest urban renewal program, I warmly invite the Minister for Children to come and see this new facility in my electorate, which will serve the community of an important growth area for years to come.

Avian influenza

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (19:16): (1805) Tonight I raise a matter for the new Minister for Environment. I ask the minister to urgently tackle the bird flu crisis by banning duck hunting, pausing the destruction of critical habitat in Victoria and reversing Victorian Labor's cuts to our environmental workforce. Tragically, a fur seal has just been found dead in South Australia, the first recorded fatality of an Australian mammal from bird flu. Right now Victoria has over 100 confirmed cases of bird flu, and I think everyone would agree that is just devastating. It feels pretty terrifying watching this news, and you can feel powerless seeing these cases spread from Portland to Western Port Bay and all the way inland to Mildura. I am really terrified for what it means for our native wildlife – birds and mammals – across the country, and I know so many other people are as well. Tragically, there is no cure for the virus, but there are things that governments can do to help wildlife become more resilient and also to recover. I want to talk about these, because we need governments to act now, and there is no time for delay.

First, we need to finally ban duck hunting and quail hunting in Victoria. Duck hunting puts extra pressure on native bird populations right when they do not need it. Banning this cruelty is one of the easiest and most effective things we could do now to support native bird populations. The Labor government could do it right now. In fact Victoria was to put an end to duck hunting, but Labor then backed down after pressure from the hunting and shooting lobby. Those excuses just do not fly in a bird flu pandemic. We need strong and healthy bird populations, and that means banning duck hunting.

Secondly, we need a genuine, funded national response to bird flu. A $200 million emergency fund is what organisations are calling for as the absolute minimum required to ensure wildlife carers, conservation organisations and scientists have the resources they need to respond rapidly and effectively. State and federal governments need to work together and start funding nature protection, but that also means undoing Labor's cuts to nature protection that we have seen in Victoria. Recently Labor cut hundreds of conservation and biodiversity staff. We have recently seen Zoos Victoria having to cut a hundred staff, right in the middle of a bird flu pandemic. Those cuts need to be reversed.

Finally, we need a moratorium on any projects that are destroying critical bird habitat. We know that healthy wetlands, breeding sites and landscapes are absolutely critical if populations are going to recover, so we need to pause any project that is costing these healthy habitats. We still have time to limit the damage from bird flu, but governments need to act fast. We need to ban duck hunting, pause Labor's war on our environment and pause the destruction of critical habitat that is happening right here in Victoria.

Disability inclusion

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (19:19): (1806) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to undertake an implementation review in the north-eastern Melbourne region of the rollout of our important disability inclusion reforms. I raise this adjournment matter specifically on behalf of Joanne Currao at Reservoir High School, on behalf of AEU delegates at that school and on behalf of James Cumming, Linda Lavelle, Nikol Faris and all of the team at Reservoir East Primary School. We are lucky to have a lot of great inclusive schools in our area, but the REPS team are particularly thoughtful and particularly experienced in this area, and I know that they are absolutely committed to all of their students, including students with disability. On their collective behalf I ask the minister to review three particular aspects of the disability inclusion profile (DIP) process.

The first is the administrative burden of that process. We have heard from school staff about the significant amount of admin that is required, often 30 or 40 hours across the school staff, across parents and across the allied health professionals involved, and there is a question about whether there may be ways to streamline or codify some of those evidence requirements. Secondly, we have heard about the transparency and the consistency of the assessment and moderation processes and just whether the final determinations really are resulting in outcomes that are clearly and consistently aligned with

students' demonstrated adjustment needs. Understandably, it can be frustrating if people feel that they are getting inconsistent or opaque assessment procedures, and it sort of feeds into that first point insofar as it adds to the workload if you cannot tell ahead of time whether you should invest in a particular DIP application or not.

Then finally, we would like to look, if possible, at whether the overall levels of funding are sufficient for inclusive education and the reasonable adjustments that have to be made for students with disability. I particularly ask that because we know that the workload associated with inclusive education does not fall evenly on all of our schools. In fact in a school like REPS they probably have a resource requirement that is four or five times higher than some of the other schools in our area. I do wonder if there may not at some stage almost need to be a tier 2½ that recognises the cumulative effect on those schools that are having to commit additional workload and additional resources to disability inclusion.

As we know, we as a government, and the minister, are absolutely committed to students with disability. We are committed to these reforms. They are important reforms that are making the system a lot better than the previous program for students with disability. But we know that in being committed to the reforms and committed to those students, we need to be committed to the school staff who are helping them day to day and supporting them in their learning objectives. My final ask is that, if the minister is able to set up an implementation review or a further review of the DI rollout, perhaps some of the fantastic staff that I have mentioned tonight could be involved and provide their input. I thank her for her consideration.

Victoria Police

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (19:22): (1807) My adjournment is to the Attorney-General, and the action I seek is for the Attorney-General to launch an investigation into how Sergeant James Fitzgerald and Constable Alexander Papanastassis ended up in court for charges of negligent manslaughter – two Victorian police officers going about their job protecting our community. This investigation is essential to guarantee that all officers who go out on duty every day will be protected and not end up in the same position. Some of the quotes from the court case that have come out from the magistrate, Magistrate Patrick Southey, that were recorded at the time were as follows. On the strength of the prosecution case:

> The evidence is so weak that the prospect of a conviction is minimal.

On the physical cause of death and restraint:

> It may be the manner in which Mr Briggs was restrained was the substantial and operative cause of death, but we'll never know.

On comparisons made to international cases, specifically George Floyd:

> It seems to me the parallels end there. There is no comparison to this case where … the police were doing the best they could. It was not a perfect job but the best they could do in all the circumstances.

On the nature of the incident and the criminal threshold:

> It was an unfortunate, tragic chain of events but in my view, it does not amount to criminal negligence.

Sad but true, this is not the first time we have had Victoria Police end up in a position where they had to go through court. In 2023 there was a senior constable who was following a police pursuit involving a drug-affected male. The senior constable involved in this matter believed he could have been seriously injured or killed if the offender's car was to crush him against the bull bar of his police vehicle. Police were charged with counts of conduct endangering life and serious injury, and the charges for that were dismissed too. There was not sufficient evidence on these charges or any other charges upon which a jury could convict.

These charges that go through impact the lives of these police officers and send a message to the community that we do not trust the Victoria Police. At a time when we need more police on the beat and we want more to apply for this job, it is so important that we in here, as legislators, ensure that we protect the Victoria Police that are on the front line. Of these two cases here, particularly the one which only resolved this week in the court, whilst it highlighted the fact the court system worked to make sure these people did not go through with the full trial, it also highlighted the fact that these police ended up, in my view, in the courts because it is trial by media.

We want to make sure that we are doing the right thing and everybody is treated evenly. Well, if it was treated evenly, when the Department of Public Prosecutions looked at this, like they would for any other person who was not a Victoria Police officer, they would not have taken this through the courts, because the magistrate was very clear in the ruling. The magistrate said there was simply not enough evidence and it should not have proceeded that far. These police officers may never return, and I say to them: thank you for your service, and I hope we can get this investigation up to clear your names.

Bellarine Arts Centre

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (19:25): (1808) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Creative Industries, and the action I seek is for the minister to visit the Bellarine and also visit the Bellarine Arts Centre, previously known as the Potato Shed, in Drysdale – and no, they do not sell potatoes. I was at the Bellarine Arts Centre only a fortnight ago to see Bellarine Secondary College do their performance of *High School Musical Jr*, the school production. It was a great night. I saw the final show, and the students performed their hearts out. They were singing incredibly and dancing. We were all tapping our toes, and I thought the students from years 7 to 12 were so brave to be on the stage of the Bellarine Arts Centre. I just want to congratulate the main cast members: Nora, Keegan, Roxy, Cori, Lily, Izabella, Sadie, Leteisha, Darcy, Isla, Macy, Daisy, Sophia, Madelynn and Misha. And to the other actors, dancers, singers, backstage production crew and teachers supporting the students: well done. It had me singing *We're All in This Together* all night. I could not get that out of my head.

The Bellarine community is growing, and with that growth there comes an increased demand for places, especially for the arts community, and for more than 25 years the Bellarine Arts Centre has been doing that. Since opening in 2001 the centre has become a much-loved cultural hub, but the reality is that the centre needs some love. It is an ageing facility, its spaces are limited and significant opportunities simply cannot be realised, and the City of Greater Geelong council is advocating for an ambitious redevelopment that would transform the Bellarine Arts Centre. This would create opportunities for local artists, performers and young people but also attract visitors to the Bellarine and support our local economy, our tourism economy and, as I have said, our creative arts. It would provide a place where a child could walk in for their first dance or a young person could discover a passion for music or theatre. We know that regional arts facilities can be more than just venues, though; they can be places of employment, education, tourism, connection and pride. With the Bellarine having such a strong creative community, I do believe we should be ambitious for this centre, and that is why I am asking the minister to visit the Bellarine and visit the Bellarine Arts Centre.

Responses

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Corrections, Minister for Victim Support, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Community Sport) (19:27): The member for South-West Coast raised a matter for the Minister for Health, and the action being sought is for the minister to come to Portland and meet with Portland District Health to discuss local services. The member for Wendouree had a matter for the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment. The action being sought was for the minister, and indeed all Victorians, to visit Wendouree and meet with local stakeholders who are helping to grow Ballarat's economy. The member for Gippsland East had a matter for the Minister for Public Transport. The action being sought was for the minister to provide more support for passengers when buses replace trains. The member for Ripon raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action being sought was for the minister to provide an update on state-managed road

repairs. The member for Mornington had a matter for the Minister for Agriculture. The action being sought was for the minister to implement a statewide framework for responsible ownership of domestic rabbits.

The member for Albert Park had a matter for the Minister for Children, and the action being sought was for the minister to visit the new kindergarten in Port Melbourne. The member for Melbourne had a matter for the Minister for Environment. The action being sought was for the minister to address the current bird flu outbreak by banning duck and quail hunting and being a part of a national response to the outbreak. The member for Preston had a matter for the Minister for Education, and the action being sought was for the minister to undertake an implementation review in the north-eastern Melbourne region of the rollout of our important disability inclusion reforms. The member for Berwick had a matter for the Attorney-General, and the action being sought was for the Attorney-General to launch an investigation into how two Victorian police officers, James Fitzgerald and Alexander Papanastassis, ended up in a criminal investigation. And the member for Bellarine had a matter for the Minister for Creative Industries. The action being sought was for the minister to visit her and to go to the Bellarine Arts Centre in her growing community, where the arts centre is a cultural hub. I will refer all of these matters to the appropriate ministers for action.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The house stands adjourned until tomorrow morning.

House adjourned 7:30 pm.