



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Tuesday 17 October 2023

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

Juliana Addison, Christine Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Paul Edbrooke, Wayne Farnham, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Paul Hamer, Michaela Settle, Meng Heang Tak and Jackson Taylor

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Jacinta Allan

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Ben Carroll

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

John Pesutto

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

David Southwick

Leader of the Nationals

Peter Walsh

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Mary-Anne Thomas

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury

Members of the Legislative Assembly
60th Parliament

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

¹ ALP until 5 August 2023

² Resigned 27 September 2023

³ Resigned 7 July 2023

⁴ Elected 3 October 2023

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

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

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (12:05): I move, by leave:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended today to immediately allow:

- (1) the Premier to move a motion about events in Israel and Gaza;
- (2) at the conclusion of the motion, unless otherwise ordered, the house to adjourn for 1 hour;
- (3) when the house returns after the adjournment, the order of business to be:

Question time

Formal business

Statements by members

Government business

Adjournment (7.00 pm).

Motion agreed to.

*Motions***Middle East conflict**

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (12:05): I move:

That this house:

- (1) unequivocally condemns the attacks on Israel by Hamas, which are the heinous acts of terrorists and have encompassed the targeting and murder of civilians, including women and children, the taking of hostages, and indiscriminate rocket fire;
- (2) stands with Israel and recognises its inherent right to defend itself;
- (3) condemns antisemitism and recognises that generations of Jewish people have been subjected to this hateful prejudice;
- (4) calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages;
- (5) recognises that Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people, nor their legitimate needs and aspirations;
- (6) acknowledges the devastating loss of Israeli and Palestinian life and that innocent civilians on all sides are suffering as a result of the attacks by Hamas and the subsequent conflict;
- (7) supports justice and freedom for Israelis and Palestinians alike;
- (8) acknowledges what has unfolded is deeply distressing for many in the Victorian community, close to the heart of many, and it is important that we maintain respect for each other here at home as people express their views;
- (9) condemns all forms of hate speech and violent extremist activity, including antisemitism and Islamophobia;
- (10) recognises an attack on any religion is an attack on all religions and that we all share a responsibility to unite, condemn and defeat such an attack on our common values and way of life; and
- (11) affirms in the strongest possible terms that hateful prejudice has no place in Victoria.

It is hard to imagine that only 10 days have passed since Hamas launched its unspeakable attacks on Israel – 10 days since thousands of young partygoers at a music festival, tens of thousands of people living in towns and kibbutzim and millions of Israelis were attacked and subjected to the most indescribable terror. While we have all read the reports, seen the videos and, some of us, heard

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firsthand of the horror of these cowardly attacks, none of us can imagine how awful it must have been to be going about your life one minute and the next to have screams, gunfire and rockets filling the air, to have family or friends abducted, murdered, to have to pretend to be dead in order to save yourself. It is simply inconceivable.

Last Monday, just days after those attacks started, representatives of the Rabbinical Council of Victoria joined me in my office, alongside the Deputy Premier and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, where we met, we talked and we prayed. I was honoured to stand with Victoria's Jewish community on Friday evening, along with many other colleagues in this place, as we came together to condemn unequivocally the terrorist attacks on Israel by Hamas. It was a deeply moving occasion. I thank the community for inviting me, many of whom are here today and many of whom I have spoken with in the past week. I would like to share part of the speech I gave at that vigil with the house today:

I'm honoured you have invited me ... and I'm deeply moved by the personal stories you have shared over the past week.

From speaking with the Rabbinical Council, to speaking to people on the street – so many people in this community have told me about the anxiety they feel for their family, and for their friends, and their homeland.

I've heard stories that have ended with good news: the missed calls that got returned, the text messages that said I'm okay.

... not everyone's story will end this way.

I read about a 12-year-old boy named Erez Kalderon.

He's around my daughter's age. Nice boy –

he and his family live in –

Kibbutz Nir Oz – which is a major grower of asparagus in Israel.

...

... all we know about Erez right now is that he's somewhere in Gaza.

So is his sister, his father, and his grandmother.

Their status is 'missing'.

And Kibbutz Nir Oz no longer stands.

One member of the family said, "It feels just like a horror movie that would never come true."

... whether they know an Erez or not ... perhaps every Jewish person on earth has contemplated that feeling, these past few days.

This horror movie, this unthinkable sequel.

Terrorism, revealed to us through ten-second videos.

We know too now that it was the single greatest loss of Jewish life since the Holocaust. I unequivocally condemn the terror and violence we have seen these past 10 days in Israel. I cannot begin to imagine the feeling of having to deal with this pain and sorrow I will never truly know but this community knows. As Premier of the state, I hear you and I feel your anguish. On behalf of the Victorian community, I offer you nothing less than our love, our care, our support and our friendship.

Victoria and Israel have always shared a deep connection. That friendship has a lot to do with similarities. It has a lot to do with our strong Jewish community. This is a friendship that will endure today, tomorrow and forever, because Israel will endure today, tomorrow and forever. We also know that the next few weeks will not be easy. The Jewish community are united by love, but I also know you continue to face the world's oldest form of hate. We will stand with you. Our government and our society do not tolerate racism and will never tolerate antisemitism. My door remains open to you and your leaders, and I am prepared to offer any support you need to stay safe on our streets, in your schools and in your homes, because every Victorian, no matter who they are, has that right. Everyone in Israel has that right too – the right to safety and security, the simple freedom to exist and the ordinary ability to live quietly and build something of one's own and not be fighting to survive. That simple

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private peace that all Australians enjoy is all Israelis want. It is the hope that Golda Meir described 50 years ago when she said:

We do not rejoice in victories. We rejoice when a new kind of cotton is grown ... when strawberries bloom in Israel.

I hope we will see the strawberries bloom in Israel next spring, and I hope we will see the asparagus grow again in Kibbutz Nir Oz. I know that the support that the Jewish community has been providing to the front in their homeland will make a difference in Israel, and I hope the community can feel the love, care and support we have for you and the community here in Victoria. These were the words that I gave last Friday evening, and as I said, I was joined by so many of my colleagues in this place.

But we know too that the pain, the grief and the anguish have not just been felt by the Jewish community or indeed the citizens of Israel. There are 2 million men, women and children in Gaza, all of whom too have an unalienable right to prosperity and peace. Hamas has a responsibility to deliver prosperity and peace, but they have not done that. They have consigned every single person to live in terror because they hate their neighbours' children more than they love their own. In Australia, we build bunkers in our homes in the event of the terrible tragedy of bushfire, not in the event of terrorists storming them and murdering us and our children. It goes without saying, for the removal of all doubt, any loss of life on either side of the border is an unspeakable tragedy.

I am grateful that for the most part here in Victoria, our tolerant, multicultural and multifaith society has been able to reckon with these events in a respectful way. Across our state, religious leaders and community leaders have engaged deeply with their communities in recognition that an attack on any religion is an attack on all religions. Victoria is always better when we come together as one. That is not in any way to diminish the actions – the unforgivable actions – of a tiny minority, or the horror that must be felt by many as they see a very small group of neo-Nazis terrorising people in our city.

On that point, I am pleased that in the last sitting week in this place we debated and passed the banning of the Nazi salute in Victoria – once again our state leading the nation. This week, without wanting to pre-empt or foreshadow what might happen in the Legislative Council, I want to affirm to the community here that should that bill pass the Parliament in the next two days, as we hope it does, we will aim to give the bill effect via royal assent without delay so that the law will be in place as soon as possible. That is something I have communicated directly to the member for Caulfield. We do not want to waste one single day in making the Nazi salute ban the law of our state.

What has transpired in the past days has been shocking, and we know that there will be many more challenging days and weeks to come. But as this Parliament unites in our condemnation of the terror that has been committed, we must also unite in a shared vision for the future – a future where every person, regardless of race, religion, background or upbringing, can live in peace and live safely and without fear. I commend the motion to the house.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (12:15): I am very proud to speak in support of this motion, which is an important testament to not only the Victorian people and our fantastic Jewish community but the nation and beyond, to say we will stand with Israel, we will stand with Victoria's Jewish community and the Jewish community right across our country as a mark of our support for the values that all human beings, no matter what their backgrounds, are entitled to receive. This is a frontline battle, a battle we must succeed in and a battle we must persistently pursue for all peoples. In this case it is our fantastic Jewish community and the people of Israel who need our strong support, and they are getting it here today in a united and bipartisan fashion.

To the Jewish community here in Victoria I say: you are not alone. You have an absolute right, like all Victorians and all peoples, to feel safe in our state and to publicly and freely express your faith and culture. I would also like to say on behalf of the Victorian Liberals and Nationals, joining with the government, we extend our deepest sympathies to the families of those who were brutally murdered or hurt just over a week ago.

Australia's relationship with Israel has been many decades in the making. We were there at its founding, and we have had a strong and unyielding friendship ever since, as we always will. In 1947 there was no Israel. Instead the Jewish people were scattered around the world, scarred and traumatised by industrial genocide carried out in extermination camps across Europe. That of course followed millennia of persecution and hate, and it was in this setting that Australia chaired the 1947 UN committee that voted in favour of establishing Israel. While Israel has become home to the Jewish people, the admirable goals expressed by Doc Evatt, then foreign minister, have unfortunately not been realised to their fullest extent, and we must continue to work to ensure that Israel can enjoy the security it was promised at its founding.

The 7 October attacks on innocent Israeli children, women and men was nothing more than an act of base barbarism. It revealed to the world the depths of Hamas's inhumanity and evil motives. We cannot shy away from understanding the brutal nature of these attacks. Let us remember this is not a dispute between sovereign nations and it was not just a border skirmish, it was an attack on a people and their character, a war of annihilation waged at a local level. In the Sufa kibbutz in southern Israel Hamas gunmen went house to house looking for Israelis to kill. In other parts militants of Hamas massacred young people attending a music festival. Civilians fleeing the violence were fired upon and executed in the streets after surrendering. Women were raped and stripped naked, dragged through the streets. Dismembered bodies were paraded for others to look on and in some cases cheer. We know that more than 1000 Israelis are dead and thousands more are wounded, and let us remember too that 7 October will for the people of Israel and Jewish people across the world be their September 11.

The tragedy of these events is not just the loss of life; it also includes the sadistic decision by Hamas terrorists to abduct innocent civilians – children, women and men – and take them as hostages, again using them for the most barbarous of purposes. Grotesque images are seared into our collective minds now, including that of a young girl with bloodied clothes being dragged by her hair from the boot into the side of a car, of Hamas militants holding young children and a baby in a pram, all to terrorise the world all over. These Hamas monsters will continue to use them as human shields. Hamas's attack on the people of Israel was unprovoked, it was unjust and it is totally unacceptable. Hamas has no desire for a peaceful solution to differences. They want to remove Israel from the map and drive people of Jewish faith into the sea – their own words. We, in joining with the government without reservation or qualification, condemn the reprehensible and indiscriminate attack on Israel by the terrorist organisation Hamas. Israel has a right to exist. Israel has a right to defend itself. Israel has a right to take such action to deter future attacks and acts of aggression on its people. Hamas is not only an enemy of Israel, it is an enemy of the people of Gaza. The world and the Palestinian people will be better off when Hamas is completely removed, root and branch.

Many Victorians have close ties to Israel and Palestine and may have friends and family who have tragically been caught up in this horrible conflict. However, the events abroad do not now and nor will they ever justify persecution or vilification here at home. It has been deeply shocking to see some of our fellow Australians publicly celebrate Hamas's attack on Israel and the slaughter of innocent Israeli children, women and men. Others chanted antisemitic slogans during a rally in front of the Sydney Opera House on Monday 9 October, words that we should never hear in our country or anywhere else in the civilised world, words that have been rightly condemned by both sides of politics. We explicitly condemn the vile, antisemitic, terror-endorsing rhetoric heard at these protests.

Let me say again to our Jewish community here in Victoria: you are not alone; we stand with you. You have an absolute right, like all people, to feel safe in our state and to freely express that faith and culture I spoke of. Victoria is home to the largest Israeli-born community in Australia. Since becoming opposition leader and Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs it has been my great pleasure to meet with multicultural groups across our great state, principal among them Victoria's Jewish community. I have done that alongside the member for Caulfield, a titan of our Jewish community and a great personal friend. The passion and resilience of Victoria's Jewish community in the face of this adversity has been deeply moving, including last week when I visited the Beth Weizmann Jewish Community

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Centre and heard amazing stories of generosity, resilience and unyielding determination to secure peace for the people of Israel and, by extension, people across the region, because it is Israel's security that is the key to that.

When I was there I saw outpourings of support from people right across our state, Jew and non-Jew, all coming together in support of this cause. Despite this, however, there is a high level of anxiety amongst members of our Jewish community. We have heard stories about parents concerned about sending their children to school wearing their Jewish school uniforms. They are concerned that their faith and culture have made them targets. Many voiced concerns about attending the United with Israel rally in Caulfield Park last Friday, at which I was very honoured to speak, organised by Jewish community organisations. Despite this anxiety from some, the community turned out in their thousands, and it was a great privilege to join them and so many who share in the cause of peace. Hurt but not broken, as strong as ever, our Jewish community in Victoria stood up and said forcefully to those who look to cause terror, 'We are not afraid; we will not bend to their will'. I would like to take a moment to thank the Premier and the government, and Victoria Police, for being able to work together in this important endeavour.

With Israel undertaking military operations in Gaza in response to Hamas's blatant acts of terrorism, it is likely we will tragically see further civilian casualties. As Hamas has taken Israeli civilians hostage, they effectively hold the Palestinian people in Gaza hostage. These civilians bear the consequences of Hamas's decision to hide their military infrastructure under residential homes, medical clinics and other facilities that communities depend upon. We know Israel will do everything it can and is doing everything it can to minimise casualties and forewarn civilians of actions necessary to bring Hamas to its rightful end. There is no moral equivalence in the actions that are necessary to secure Israel's borders and its people and Hamas's terrorism.

I join with the government in supporting this motion and join in the bipartisan efforts we will need to maintain in the days and weeks ahead. This endeavour is very important, as I said, not just for Victoria's Jewish community and Jewish people all across the world; if Hamas's modus operandi is to become an accepted means of pursuing political ends, then no-one is safe. No-one is free. No-one can be protected. So this statement by this house today has importance beyond our immediate surrounds. No matter what people's backgrounds, no matter what their faith, no matter what their religion, no matter who they love or who they may worship, if anyone at all, this battle is important for all of us. We must stand for an international order where people can rely on civility and basic humanity, and if that is to be lost and forfeited to terrorists like Hamas, then we all stand to lose more than we could imagine. I support the motion.

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for Medical Research) (12:26): I join the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition on this important condolence motion. We stand here in this chamber under very sad circumstances. Through this motion and these contributions we seek to send a message – a message of empathy, of solidarity, of compassion and of sorrow, a message that we have seen, heard and been told over the last 10 days since terrorist group Hamas launched an assault on southern Israel that has shaken the world to its core. We have seen the deaths of many innocent people – women, children, the elderly, babies. The death of any innocent civilian is a tragedy, whether they be Israeli or Palestinian, whether they be Jewish, Muslim or Christian. Through this motion we mourn every one of them. We send our deepest sympathies to their loved ones.

But we also acknowledge that the events of these past days began with a choice – a choice by Hamas, an entity which Australia recognises as a terrorist organisation – to murder innocent civilians. As Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said in the federal Parliament yesterday:

... the evil committed by Hamas in Israel has chilled every Australian heart.

This was not an act of war against the army of an enemy. It was a slaughter of innocent people. It was an act of terror. Underneath the death tolls we have heard stories of unimaginable horror, of vile barbarity, of crimes designed to desensitise and dehumanise. We owe it to the victims to bear witness

so that we can unite against terror and do everything we can to ensure this is never repeated. We owe it to the 260 young revellers murdered at a music festival, dozens abducted as hostages, unarmed civilians who just wanted to have fun, young people at the time of their lives coming together to dance in peace to celebrate music and unity. Instead, Hamas made it the deadliest concert attack in history. While the insurgents were attacking the festival, Hamas militants were also infiltrating kibbutzim in the north and in the south. From house to house, innocent civilians would answer a knock at the door only to be gunned down. Parents murdered in front of their children, children murdered in front of their parents, innocent people seeking refuge in safe rooms only to be burnt alive, the kidnapping of the young and the elderly – it defies comprehension. There can be no excuse for these actions. There can be no mitigating circumstances. There is no moral equivalence. There should be zero attempt to justify this evil. These were evil acts by a terrorist organisation – an organisation which had its founding charter and mission statement to obliterate Israel, to fight Jews and kill them; an organisation which on Saturday 7 October, the day of the Jewish holiday of Simhath Torah, inflicted a day in which more Jewish people died than on any other day since the Holocaust. The Victorian government condemns it. The Australian government condemns it. People of goodwill from around the world condemn it.

We recognise too that Hamas puts Palestinian lives at risk every day. The Palestinian people deserve peace and security. They deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. They have suffered immensely in modern history, and instead of easing their suffering, Hamas continues to compound it. The scenes we are witnessing in the Middle East are deeply distressing. They break my heart and the hearts of all Victorians, especially those in our Jewish and Palestinian communities. To our local Jewish people in Victoria: I stand in support and solidarity with you.

In these challenging times many Victorians have lost loved ones and are concerned for the safety and wellbeing of their families overseas. It is our collective responsibility as members of this Assembly to ensure that our communities feel safe, secure and supported. As individuals and leaders we must stand together against the rising tide of hate and safeguard the harmony of our multicultural society. True leadership shines during moments of adversity, when personal differences are set aside for the greater good of the entire community. This attack from terrorist organisation Hamas has led to suffering, the loss of innocent civilian lives and widescale devastation. We must recognise that tragic loss of life and the hurt being felt by communities right across our world. Last Monday night I was honoured and humbled to speak on behalf of the Victorian people at a Jewish community service in solidarity with the victims of terror. But more important than the privilege of being able to send our support was the opportunity to listen – to listen to local community members and leaders feeling anguish and heartbreak for their friends and families overseas, to listen to Rinat, an Israeli who lived in Australia for several years with her family. She Zoomed in to tell us about the tragic loss of so many members of her local community on a kibbutz in southern Israel. Her words were quite chilling. On Friday I had the privilege of joining the Premier and other colleagues, both state and federal, at Caulfield Park for a vigil where we once again heard stories of heartbreak and terror. But we also heard stories of hope for peace, for safety and for security.

When I visited Israel in March this year I witnessed firsthand the entrepreneurial spirit and warmth of the Israeli people. Victoria is the only state in Australia with a government business office in Tel Aviv. Last week I sent a message to the staff at the business office that I am thinking of them. They shared with me the realities of what is happening right now, at this very minute. One of them, one of our public servants, gave birth only seven weeks ago to her second child, a beautiful boy. Now she is home alone protecting her two children while her husband is on active duty on the ground dealing with some of the most horrific scenarios. She said to me:

My heart is broken and it is unfathomable to think of what has occurred here.

It is as if we woke up in the middle of a horror movie.

Spending time with the Jewish community of Melbourne over the past couple of weeks has highlighted to me that everyone knows someone caught up in this tragedy in Israel. After the vigil on Friday with

the Premier, I went and visited some local families and had a Shabbat dinner with them. We had prayers, we sang songs, we had challah bread and we shared wonderful stories. The stories they shared with me were about family and friends dealing with ordeals, but they were not stories that were all negative. These were positive people celebrating life and not death. They were shining a light in the darkest recesses of evil, staring it down, getting on with life and not letting it consume them.

The ties between Victoria's Jewish community at home and the Jewish state in Israel are incredibly strong, and the ties between our state of Victoria and the state of Israel are equally strong. We know that when conflict breaks out in Israel and Palestine it heightens the risk of antisemitism and Islamophobia in Australia. The actions of neo-Nazis over the weekend who approached train passengers to inquire about their Jewish identity must be unequivocally condemned. Such behaviour cannot be tolerated in Australia in the year 2023. We reject it as strongly and as forcefully as we reject all forms of racism, of vilification and of hate against others on the basis of their race, their religion or ethnic origin.

We know that the coming weeks will continue to be difficult for all who personally are affected by this generational conflict. We pray the hostages will make it home safely. We pray the innocent civilians will endure and survive the bloodshed. We pray that this war ends soon and that it will be the last we ever see in the region. We pray that there is no more terror. We pray there is a path forward for Israelis and Palestinians to coexist side by side in peace and security. I acknowledge that this never felt so far from reality, but we do realise from our belief that peace is the best way forward. Today and always, Victoria stands with our friends in Israel. Victoria stands with our Jewish community. Victoria stands with victims of terror and war. Most importantly, Victoria stands for peace. Shalom. Salaam.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (12:34): I rise to speak on the motion moved by the Premier and supported by the Leader of the Opposition. Can I say, on behalf the Nationals, that we utterly condemn the attack on Israel by the terrorist organisation called Hamas. Hamas is the enemy of all peace-loving Palestinian people and all Jewish people, and there should no longer be any sympathisers for these murderous terrorists who try to call themselves freedom fighters. Despite what some may say, that the debate should be nuanced, you cannot nuance terrorism. They are terrorists, they are murderers and what they have done is abhorrent to every peace-loving person in the world. For those that say the debate should be nuanced, can I say it cannot be – they are all terrorists, and what they have done is horrendous. Hamas's charter calls for the eradication of all Jews worldwide. If for nothing else, that should stand them condemned, even without the events that have happened over the last 10 days.

The attack was unprovoked, it was an act of brutality and it has shocked the world. To see Israeli babies slaughtered, to see Israeli babies beheaded and to see entire families murdered inside their homes is just abhorrent, and it cannot be supported by anyone in the world. To see women raped, stripped naked and dragged through the streets is just horrendous. We all have families, we all have children, and we just cannot imagine how bad that would be for those people that have been affected in Israel and those in Victoria and in Australia who have relatives and friends in Israel and are worried for their safekeeping.

The attack on Israel is an unequivocal reminder as to why Hamas is designated a terrorist organisation across the Western world. To use Israeli hostages and their own Palestinian civilians as human shields is a further reminder of why they are such a dangerous terrorist organisation. How someone could use an innocent civilian to protect themselves I just cannot imagine. In blocking Palestinians from fleeing Gaza and using them as human shields it is Hamas who is forcing Palestinian civilians to pay such a heavy price, it is not Israel defending itself. As I said, there should no longer be any sympathisers for Hamas anywhere in the world.

The fact that there have been 1100 Israelis killed, nearly 300 soldiers at this stage that have tragically lost their lives and 199 people abducted and used effectively as human shields and as negotiating tools is just so wrong. There have been more than 6000 rockets fired on Israel over that particular time. These are things that we just cannot comprehend in the peace-loving state that we live in here in

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Victoria, and we are so thankful for what we do have here in Victoria. I come back to the fact that Hamas is blocking their own citizens from fleeing south. I think it is just abhorrent what they would do to their own citizens in this particular case.

We unreservedly support Israel's right to defend itself and protect Israeli citizens and the Jewish people from further brutal attacks. Israel is a longstanding ally of Australia and Victoria and a dedicated partner with us as a country. Our prayers go out to not only the Israeli Jewish community here in Victoria but particularly the Israeli community and what they will face over coming weeks. We see it on the news, but they actually have to live it. I think it is hard to comprehend those particular situations into the future.

Edmund Burke had the saying 'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing.' We commend the Israeli government, the Israeli people and the Israeli armed forces for being the good people that are actually standing up to evil. We know the sacrifices that they will make and the sacrifices that the population of Israel will make through this ongoing conflict, but it has to be done to stop evil people prospering. That is the tragedy of what is happening in this particular part of the world at the moment.

As I said, our prayers go out to the Jewish community here in Victoria and the Jewish community in Israel, and we wish them the best for whatever happens in the future. But please, let us make sure that evil does not prosper anymore.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (12:38): I rise today in this place to condemn the horrific terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas in Israel on 7 October and stand with Israel and those who have been affected by this tragedy. I mourn those whose lives were ended so violently. I pray for those whose whereabouts remain unknown. I call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages – hostages that include children, women and the elderly who were taken and abducted from their homes. I grieve with the families in Australia whose loved ones have been so severely impacted by this incident, and I offer my condolences to all those who have been touched by this tragic event.

At the outset I want to say thank you for and acknowledge the tremendous support provided to me and the broader Jewish community by the Premier, Deputy Premier and my colleagues through what has been a very difficult week. I would also like to acknowledge the Leader of the Opposition and his team for the bipartisanship that they have shown and particularly acknowledge the efforts of my friend and fellow co-chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Israel, the member for Caulfield, who has so many people in his local community directly affected by this tragedy.

The 7th of October was meant to be a day of great celebration in Israel, the annual festival of Simhath Torah, which marks the completion of the reading of the Jewish Torah and is traditionally marked in many communities with a day to celebrate Jewish identity. However, it ended with the death of more Jews in a single day since the Holocaust. Looking back to the time before the Holocaust and all the terrible pogroms and expulsions that have been committed against the Jewish people over the millennia, there have been few days in Jewish history that have had such a tragic end. There can never be any excuse or justification for the murder, torture and abduction of innocent civilians. There can never be any equivocation that somehow the Jews of Israel are deserving of this treatment simply because of their nationality and their religious beliefs. We cannot be accepting of different levels of brutality and terrorism based on the cause it purports to support, and it is the right if not the duty of every state to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks such as those we saw on 7 October.

The past week has taken a great personal emotional toll, and while the initial shock has subsided, my overwhelming feeling has been one of sadness – my sadness for the people of Israel who were victims of these terrible acts of violence, my sadness for those who were taken hostage and whose whereabouts remain unknown, my sadness for all innocent lives that have been taken in this conflict that has lasted too long and my sadness for all the innocent lives that may be lost in future rounds of the conflict.

I also want to talk about my sadness for the Jewish community experience in Melbourne over the past few days. Many families are grieving, but the thing that leaves me raw is the extra precautions that members of the community must take to ensure that they and their families are kept safe. At a community level, events have needed to be held behind closed doors with venue information only provided at late notice. With the tremendous support of Victoria Police and the Community Security Group a more open and public show of mourning could only occur with everyone contained within a secure fence surrounded by our police force. I understand and fully support the need for safe protection, but that even Melbourne, one of the most successful multicultural places on earth, requires Jews to be kept behind barricades to hold a mourning vigil lest they be targeted themselves saddens me greatly.

The freedom to peacefully protest is an important and cherished right for Australians, but the grotesque displays of antisemitism and antisemitic vilification that we saw at a rally in Sydney last week and the threatening behaviour of Nazi thugs roaming our trains on the weekend searching for Jews bring shivers to me and many Jewish Australians in scenes that I could never have believed we would see in Australia. There is no room for any antisemitism in Australia, just as there is no room for any form of vilification against any people regardless of their race, colour or creed.

At an individual level many families are feeling vulnerable at this time. Some Jewish schools have asked their students to not wear their school uniform or not wear the uniform when they are in public. Jewish parents of children at state and independent schools are quietly removing signs of Jewish identity that the children may display for fear of being targeted simply for being Jewish, and some Jewish families have felt abandoned by their usually firm friends who cannot bring themselves to check in on their Jewish friends because of their differences or even perceived differences of opinion on Israeli politics.

Finally, I feel sad that the hope for a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians feels further away than ever before. Thirty years ago was a time of great optimism. In September 1993 two historic enemies, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin met on the White House lawn to sign the Oslo accords. The normalisation of relations between Jordan and Israel followed, and it appeared that a new dawn was breaking. But there have always been enemies to peace, and Hamas has always been an enemy of peace. Hamas rejected the Oslo accords, celebrated Rabin's death and has been committed to the destruction of Israel. But let us not let this horrific event keep the voices of peace silent. In the words of the late King Hussein:

Let our voices rise high to speak of our commitment to peace for all times to come. And let us tell those who live in darkness, who are the enemies of light ... this is where we stand.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:45): Am echad, lev echad – one people, one heart. When one of us is attacked, we all bleed. Our community is broken, the Jewish community is broken, but we stand together as we need to ensure terror does not win, terrorism does not win, terrorists do not win.

I wanted to begin by acknowledging the Premier, the opposition leader and all of my colleagues that have reached out to both the member for Box Hill and me and expressed their good wishes at this really, really tough time. I wanted to acknowledge many of those that are in the chamber today, and I am going to do it now before I get into the details so I have got a clear head. If I could recognise the member for Macnamara as well, Josh Burns; the member for Box Hill, my follow convener of the Victorian Parliamentary Friends of Israel; the Community Security Group, which has done an amazing job just keeping the community here in Melbourne safe; the Zionist Federation of Australia; the Jewish Community Council of Victoria; Zionism Victoria; Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council; the Jewish National Fund; the United Israel Appeal; the Australasian Union of Jewish Students; the Australian Zionist Youth Council; Habayit, which has done an amazing job for Israelis that are living here; the Rabbinical Council of Victoria; the Union for Progressive Judaism; Hamerkaz; and the broader Jewish community. I know I have missed some, but everybody here stands united.

Saturday 7 October will never be the same. It will be a date that we will never, ever forget. September 11 is effectively a date that we do not forget, and 7 October is the Jewish community's September 11. We have heard what Hamas did at 6:30 am when sirens were sounded near the Gaza border. In areas like Sderot a lot of kibbutzim would have heard those sirens. Thinking it was rocket fire, they would go into safe rooms, thinking more rockets were going to be shelled on their homes, not knowing the horrific things that were going to confront each and every one of them, because it was something that we simply never, ever thought was possible. Many have asked what has changed in terms of Hamas. Why now? Nothing has changed. Hamas, as many have said, are an evil regime. Their doctrine is to kill Jews, annihilate Jews, no matter who they are, no matter what their background is. That is what they are.

Unfortunately Israel was asleep when this happened. Now Israel has woken, and the Israeli government must do whatever it can to protect itself. It has an obligation to protect itself, just like we would have an obligation if we had a similar attack happen here in Australia, so to any questioning about what is happening now, I just say this is a terrorist attack. We have 199 hostages that are still being held by those terrorists. We must call on the whole world, no matter who they are, to bring those hostages home. They must come home. We need them home – no negotiation, no terms. Just bring them – babies, children and women – home. When Hamas killed those 260 people at the music festival and went into kibbutzim they did not distinguish between a sympathiser, a non-sympathiser, a woman, a child or who you were, religious or not religious. If you were a Jew, you were killed. You were raped. You were murdered. You were taken hostage. You were killed.

Keryn, who is here today, had family in one of those kibbutzim, Kibbutz Kfar Aza. By a miracle her family was saved, but hundreds were attacked – 40 we know of were killed. For 16 hours her family had to hide in that room waiting for the soldiers to come and save them. They are just too familiar, the stories. That kibbutz spent a lifetime working with Palestinians, working together across the border to ensure they worked on ways to support them with agriculture, with health. The former mayor of that area, mayor Ofir, is dead. He dedicated a decade of his life to work hand in hand for peace. The irony of all of this is those people in the kibbutzim that were targeted were the very people that were living there to work with peace. Their whole life was about peace, and the first thing that these murderers did was target the very people that support peace.

So there is no question about what we are talking about today. It is about terrorism and it is about a group, Hamas, that use innocent Palestinians as human shields – innocent Palestinians that have also been murdered. We all value human life, and that is why this motion is so important – because it is about valuing human life. It is the difference between one lot of people and another lot of people, like the Premier has eloquently said. Israelis value human life. Hamas takes human life. Hamas has one doctrine – to kill, to destroy and to do whatever it can to oppress people, for one aim. They do not use the money that they get from the world to feed people, to keep them healthy. They use it to build tunnels, for concrete. They take water pipes and they use them as rockets. That is what Hamas does. That is why Israel needs to do what it has to do. This is not about Israel. This is not about the Jewish community. This is about all of us. It is about the freedoms that we all absolutely cherish. President Biden so eloquently said that this is an attack on all of us – and that is why we have got to stay strong.

The member for Box Hill and others have stated the flow-on effect of what we have seen in this horrible war being portrayed here in Australia. Only 24 hours after, we saw people supporting Hamas saying the horrific words 'Gas the Jews'. We remember this horror movie. We remember it from the Holocaust. It is happening again. We saw the Nazis who were parading up and down a train trying to identify Jews. Someone pulls out a blue and white handkerchief, and they are asked if they are Jewish. That is not the Australia I know. That is not what we need. I join with the Premier in bringing those laws as quickly as we can to hold those people to account, to take off their masks – these gutless cowards – to take off their balaclavas and put handcuffs on them, to lock them up. Because at the moment we see so many people that have been targeted innocently in fear.

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The Jewish community in Melbourne has been in fear. We mentioned about the rally which the Premier and the opposition leader spoke at. I had so many calls, as did others – strong Jews, people actually who were former Israel defence forces soldiers – ringing and saying, is it safe to attend? We have got principals having edicts saying ‘Don’t wear school uniforms’ in fear of attacks on the way to and from school, kids staying away from school. That is not what we need right now. My message to everybody, knowing the work that Victoria Police does, is that the Jewish community are safe. We will be safe, and people need to go about their lives, because no matter who you are, no matter what religion you practise, no matter where you come from, we are as one.

The Nazis tried to separate people off according to their race, and as the Holocaust museum use as part of everything they do, there is only one race, and that is the human race. Do not let people try to divide and conquer. Do not let Hamas try and target and say ‘You are a Jew; you are killed’. No, we stand together – with the Palestinians, with the Jews, with the Muslims, with the Christians, with whoever you are – as one, as one race, to overcome evil.

There are two things that I want to finish with: firstly, a letter which I want to read from Rochel Bendetsky, who is in the gallery today, who is a 14-year-old girl from Beth Rivkah – a Beth Rivkah student. I want to give this from her eyes.

This war has gotten to a point where it’s not about Israel, it’s about Jews, all Jews of the world, which neo-Nazis are wanting to wipe out. The Holocaust was meant to be “never again”?

WAKE UP!

It’s happening right before our eyes. history repeats itself. As an Australian Jew who has no genetic connection to Israel or the war, is wanted dead by people protesting about the war?

No, these people have been waiting for this moment to spread their baseless hatred towards Jews when neutral people are gullible enough to believe them.

My heart goes out to all my innocent brothers and sisters and Israel, and I’m praying for their survival. However, I, a Jew in Australia, as long as the rest of the 8 million Jews not living in Israel are targeted with overwhelming amounts of hate towards our religion, dm’s being sent to me about my race?

Who are the people being racist and inhumane? not us, it’s them.

But, am I proud to be a Jew even after all these events? 100%.

I will be supporting my brothers and sisters UNTIL THE DAY I DIE. Even though times are rough and it’s easy to just shut your eyes on this blatant antisemitism, we must not let them get the best of Us.

WE ARE STRONG. WE HAVE WON BEFORE AND WILL AGAIN. AM YISRAEL CHAI

Finally, my colleague and good friend Josh Burns, who has been wonderful in supporting the community, as we know, during this time, in his conclusion used words which I am going to use as well. I am very proud to wear my yarmulke today to identify as being Jewish, as we should all be. Jews should not be afraid and hide during these times. You say the mourner’s Kaddish when you have lost a loved one. These are the words that you say, which are all about peace:

Oseh Shalom Bimromav, Hu ya’aseh Shalom Aleinu ve’al Kol Yisrael, ve’imru Amen.

Let there be peace. Shalom.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (12:57): I do rise in support of this motion, and I will commence by unequivocally condemning the attacks on Israel by Hamas. Terrorism of course cannot be vindicated under any circumstances and hate clearly surpassed reason. To see the sheer speed and scale of destruction is nauseating and devastating. My heart goes out to all those who have been directly impacted and also to our Victorian Jewish community, who no doubt have been absolutely devastated by the impact of this terrible assault on their community.

It really has been wonderful to see the personal stories shared, as upsetting and as impactful as they are. You do feel deeply moved. I think it is really important that those stories are shared from those who are suffering. Inevitably there is an ongoing trauma from all that has been experienced and a diabolical domino effect. On that note, I did want to acknowledge the devastating loss of Israeli and

Palestinian life and that innocent civilians on all sides are suffering. Hamas is absolutely accountable for the evil that they have been committing and continue to commit. This is resulting in a deepening humanitarian crisis which is just excruciating to watch, and I can only imagine what those who are experiencing this in Israel and Palestine respectively are feeling.

I have visited both in the past. I did a tour of Israel and Palestine, and I remember going into some of the bomb shelters, because when you go to Sderot you are warned that you have to be ready to run in the event of rocket fire. I did hear on the radio an Israeli commenting that it was one thing to prepare for an air raid but another thing to prepare for a ground assault. They were not prepared for that because the unthinkable happened, and I can only imagine how deeply frightening that must have been, and dehumanising – deeply dehumanising. This is what happens when hatred takes hold. I know so many here in our Victorian Jewish community are hurting deeply, and of course the Palestinians who live here as well. It is deeply distressing to see such pain and suffering, and I think it does engender a sense of helplessness, because collectively here we would all love to see this resolved as quickly as possible. Daughters, sisters, sons, cousins, colleagues, friends – a grandmother taken hostage; what is going on? I mean, this is unfathomable, and as humans we cannot reason through that. We are not meant to be able to reason through that, because that is simply inhuman behaviour. And again, when we allow hate to triumph over reason, this is what happens.

Having said that, it has been really inspiring to see community members coming together in such a beautiful way and sharing love and support and kindness. I have been to a number of vigils, and they were all deeply honouring experiences. I did want to speak to the rally on Friday in particular, and I know that many colleagues here on both sides, the Premier and Deputy Premier and others, were there. It was just wonderful again to see those heartfelt stories being shared. They must be shared. The truth must be shared broadly and widely. We have to know the facts; we have to know what is going on. It is the only way. We have to acknowledge the truth to create a better future. There were beautiful, soulful songs; prayers; the lighting of candles; and love and support. It was pleasing to see multifaith representation there as well, fundamentally praying for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. I am really proud of the beautiful multicultural community we have, and I think now more than ever we have to continue with that shared respect and love for each other – and I say love; it does have to stem from love. And to the member for Caulfield's point that we are all one: we absolutely are, and the minute we start seeing the 'other', that is where things do not unfold as they should.

On that note, I will say, just to reiterate: there is absolutely no place for antisemitism of any kind, hate speech, violent extremism or Islamophobia. No good will come. It never has and it never will when we vilify another. No-one wins from that, and clearly no-one is winning in this situation, absolutely no-one. But the indomitable human spirit is something that gives me hope on a personal level, and I hope collectively as well, and to see the resilience of those directly impacted is truly magical. It is funny, I was thinking – it is not funny, but I follow an Israeli cook on Instagram, and she shares these beautiful recipes. Anyway, I happened to be flicking through and I saw that there she was, leading all these people packing rations. She had immediately flipped to help her local community, and I thought, yes, this is exactly what we need to see. We need to see the best of human behaviour and to shun the worst that we have seen in recent days.

I know that it does shake us all to the core to see human beings descend to the level that we have seen with what Hamas has undertaken and is continuing to undertake. It does shake us, because it unfortunately causes doubt about the world in which we live, but we must not let that doubt seep in. We must remember the collective strength of goodwill and kindness and I think just continue to work together. I know that, having been to the events that I have been to and having seen the incredible resilience in spite of such horror – seeing the love and the care and the support. We are here for you – I just want you to know that we are unequivocally here for you.

Every Victorian deserves to be safe. Further to your point, member for Caulfield, I do not want anyone to feel they cannot wear their uniform or their kippah or cannot be absolutely who they are. Everyone should be able to be absolutely who they are in our beautiful state of Victoria every day.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (13:05): Almost 100 years ago an Israeli poet immortalised two words: ‘Never again’. The phrase was a call cry to Israelis at the fall of the ancient kingdom of Masada. The poem and those words commemorated the Jewish struggle against the darkest adversity. Only two decades later the Jewish people would suffer the darkest stain on our global history, and as they did, those two words were used again. Liberators of concentration camps found survivors with handwritten signs, with those two same words written on the signage: ‘Never again’. Many Holocaust survivors today still speak of their responsibility to pass on the atrocity they witnessed in an effort to prevent future genocide. It is why survivors and Jewish people more broadly use those two words to this day. As one survivor wrote, ‘It is a prayer, a promise, a vow.’ Two simple words carry the voices of Jews and millions who were murdered. Those two words have haunted me for 10 days, because 10 days ago we witnessed the worst act of atrocity borne upon the Jewish people since the Holocaust, a coordinated Hamas terrorist attack on the most vulnerable Israelis.

In many cases the communities that were targeted had been the first to show compassion towards Palestinians. It was an attack that saw people hiding in their homes, scrambling to survive, children and the elderly slaughtered – atrocities committed in a way reminiscent of the horrors of the Holocaust. There are reports of Israelis like 90-year-old Gina, a Holocaust survivor who had survived the Nazi atrocities only to be shot in her head in her lounge room last Saturday after terrorists attacked her kibbutz. As we know, the most unspeakable evil attacks last Saturday were committed on babies and on children. On behalf of my community, I say the relationship between Australia and Israel is deep – we are family. An attack on Israel is an attack on our country. An attack on you is an attack on me.

The attack last Saturday saw 1300 Israelis massacred and 3300 injured. Mothers, fathers, grandparents and children were shot point-blank, burned alive or abused and then murdered by the terrorist organisation Hamas. Of those that were not murdered, almost 200 were kidnapped and taken to Gaza to a fate we cannot imagine – a fate spoken of by Israeli father Thomas, who said he felt blessed on finding out that his eight-year-old daughter had not been kidnapped but that she had died. As a parent myself, his words will stay with me. Many will have seen footage of the terrorists parading two kidnapped babies yesterday. I am sure I speak for every member in this place when I call for the release of all hostages. The world community is praying for the safe return of those children to their families and of all hostages to their homes.

As we come to terms with the atrocities committed 10 days ago, we must accept that those crimes were not just committed on Israelis, they were atrocities targeted at Jews. That is why the words ‘Never again’ haunt me. The crimes of 10 days ago committed on the Jewish people are crimes that repeat those crimes we hoped we would never see again, crimes that are rooted in unspeakable evil – the evil of denying Jews a right to exist, evil that aims to instil fear in a good people. The truth is that antisemitism is a deep-rooted disease. It is a disease that exists in all parts of the world, but at its most deadly it was in the hearts of the terrorist attackers on 7 October, just as it is in the hearts of the Hamas movement, which calls for the eradication of all Jews.

We must accept that the disease of antisemitism is not confined to the Middle East. In recent days we saw it in Melbourne at our iconic Flinders Street station, where a troop of black-hooded militants marched onto a train and demanded to know whether passengers were Jewish. We saw it most openly on the steps of our country’s most iconic building, the Sydney Opera House, where rallyers called for the gassing of the Jews.

Our world needs to be reminded of the words ‘Never again’ as much today as they ever have been, because the disease that is antisemitism is spreading. It is spread every time an activist chants ‘From the river to the sea’, a chant that calls for the eradication of Israel. Make no mistake, antisemitism is founded in hate – hate in the heart of Hamas and hate at the heart of Nazism. We must all stand against that hate. We must stand with Israel in its mission to act on Hamas. Hamas are terrorist cowards who are refusing to let Palestinian civilians evacuate; cowards who have built tunnel systems under Gaza, underneath their own civilian buildings and homes; and cowards who are using their own people as

human shields. Israel will never be safe while Hamas exists, peace-loving Palestinians will not be safe while Hamas exists and our world will not be safe whilst the terrorist organisation Hamas exists.

The peace-loving people of both Israel and Gaza are victims of the evil, hate-filled terrorist organisation Hamas. In the names of all victims, we cannot be silent. And if we are to honour the profound words ‘Never again’ and honour the millions of Jews murdered, we must not be silent. I stand with Israel, and I share the grief of the Jewish community at this time. Acts of atrocity must not stand – 80 years ago, 10 days ago or any other day: never again.

Sam HIBBINS (Prahran) (13:13): I rise to speak on behalf of the Victorian Greens to the motion put forward by the Premier. Ten days ago we all watched – the world watched – in horror at the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel, which saw innocent unarmed Israeli citizens killed and taken hostage, people attacked in their homes and children and families killed. What was particularly shocking was the massacre at the Supernova music festival, a rave party with young people – some of them peace activists, coming together, as so many young people around the world do, in what is a global community: the dance music industry – targeted, with hundreds killed. Overall it was the biggest loss of Jewish life in a day since the Holocaust. Whether they are seen on their own or in a wider context, these events are shocking, they are unjustifiable and they are to be condemned without qualification. We join with the calls for the unconditional release of hostages taken by Hamas.

We are also now watching a humanitarian catastrophe unfold in Palestine, with water, food and power being denied to civilians; mass displacement; hospitals on the brink of shutdown; sick and injured unable to evacuate at risk of death; and attacks by the Israel military claiming the lives of Palestinian civilians. We call for a ceasefire. We call for an end to the war in Gaza so the lives of even more civilians are not claimed.

At home I know this conflict is of grave concern to so many here in Victoria, particularly those who have families, friends or compatriots in Israel and in Palestine. We are deeply disturbed by the vile acts of antisemitism, of bigotry and of hate that have occurred recently – particularly by a report of one occurring in my own electorate. There is no place for this. We pride ourselves on being a tolerant multicultural state, but this demonstrates the need for this sort of hate and extremism to be tackled head-on here in Victoria with bold, multifaceted and immediate action, something that we the Greens have been very vocal on.

Now to the motion before us. We do recognise that this is a sensitive time, and we are disappointed that the government did not adhere to what it originally told us, which was that this would be a shorter motion and allow contributions to speak for themselves and that we would be provided with a copy last week. Indeed we were only provided with a copy last night. With that said, we are supportive of the vast majority of this motion. But where the Greens disagree with this motion is that Israel’s right to defend itself must be within the parameters of international humanitarian law, which we do not believe is being adhered to in the current conflict. As a party with peace and non-violence as one of its core pillars, I move the following amendment, consistent with my federal colleagues and other Greens around Australia, and I ask that that amendment be circulated in my name:

That paragraph (2) be omitted and replaced with the following paragraph:

‘(2) condemns war crimes perpetrated by the state of Israel, including the bombing of Palestinian civilians and calls for an immediate ceasefire between all parties and an end to the war on Gaza, recognising also that for there be peace there must be an end to the state of Israel’s illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories;’.

Whilst we may have differences on this motion, when I think of the community more broadly here in Victoria – Jewish and Muslim communities – and in Australia and indeed the international community I honestly see more that unites us than divides us; that there is the right for Israeli and Palestinian people to live in peace and security but the need for all people to have their inalienable human rights upheld; that international humanitarian law must be followed in any conflict, including laws against targeting of civilians and against collective punishment; that governments must recommit to long-

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lasting peace for Israel and Palestine and that that can only be achieved through an end to occupation and the creation of a viable and democratic independent Palestinian state; and that antisemitism, Islamophobia or any form of bigotry have no place in this country or anywhere for that matter. I call on Parliament to uphold these values, and the Greens would support through leave or any other means a moment's silence for all victims.

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the motion.

Members supporting the member for Prahran's amendment should vote no.

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (77): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Chris Crewther, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Wayne Farnham, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, David Hodgett, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Tim McCurdy, Steve McGhie, Cindy McLeish, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, John Pesutto, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Michaela Settle, David Southwick, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallenge, Emma Vulin, Peter Walsh, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson, Jess Wilson

Noes (4): Gabrielle de Vietri, Sam Hibbins, Tim Read, Ellen Sandell

Question agreed to.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (77): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Chris Crewther, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Wayne Farnham, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, David Hodgett, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Tim McCurdy, Steve McGhie, Cindy McLeish, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, John Pesutto, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Michaela Settle, David Southwick, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallenge, Emma Vulin, Peter Walsh, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson, Jess Wilson

Noes (4): Gabrielle de Vietri, Sam Hibbins, Tim Read, Ellen Sandell

Motion agreed to.

Jacinta Allan: By way of a point of order, Speaker, every contributor to today's motion grieved. Every speaker grieved for the loss of life – Palestinian and Israeli loss of life. Every speaker spoke to that distressing fact and spoke of grief in our community. I would hope, Speaker, that members could be invited to stand for a moment of silent reflection, reflecting on that loss of life, Israeli and Palestinian alike.

The SPEAKER: I invite members to stand for a moment's silence and quiet reflection.

Members stood in their places.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (13:28): I move:

That, as a further mark of support, sympathy and respect, the house now adjourns until 2:30 pm.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 1:29 pm.

The SPEAKER took the chair at 2:31 pm.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Commonwealth Games

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:32): My question is to the Premier. The Premier advised the house that the cost blowouts for the Commonwealth Games only became apparent to her in the weeks leading up to the cancellation of the games on 18 July. The Premier last Tuesday admitted she knew about cost blowouts in March 2023. Why did the Premier mislead the house and Victorians by saying that she first found out about cost blowouts in the weeks leading up to 18 July, when she has now admitted that she knew in March?

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that if he wants to accuse the Premier of misleading the house, he needs to do so by way of a substantive motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! A substantive motion is when it is deliberately misleading the house. The Leader of the Opposition did not say the word ‘deliberately’.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:33): I am going to give the answer to this question as I have given the answer on every question in relation to these matters. What I have said in this place and what I said last week and at press conferences is that as the government was working through how best to deliver the games consistent with the agreement that was signed with the Commonwealth Games Federation, we were looking at a range of options. I have said that in this house previously on a number of occasions. As those estimates were becoming actuals, we asked officials to look at a range of options and to seek further advice. Also, it was becoming apparent in the weeks leading up to the games that as the costs were coming in at between \$6 billion and \$7 billion it was becoming all about cost and not about benefit, which was the reason why we agreed to host the games in the first place, which is why the decision was taken that that amount of money for a 12-day sporting event was too much, particularly when there was the opportunity to instead invest in housing – a billion dollars in regional housing – community sport and tourism and major events. This is the answer I have consistently given to each and every question that has been put to me on this matter.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this question is about the Premier’s two versions of events and being caught out with those two versions of events, and I would ask you to bring the Premier back to that question.

The SPEAKER: The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked. The Premier has concluded her answer.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:34): The Premier told Parliament on 13 June that ‘tremendous progress’ was being made on the Commonwealth Games when she was aware that she had already made a submission to increase the Commonwealth Games budget to over \$4 billion. Will the Premier do the right thing and correct her misleading evidence?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:35): I stand by the evidence that I gave to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee on 13 June. I answered every question that was put to me at that committee. I answered those questions directly. In terms of the progress, we were making progress, as I have said previously. We were working on how to best deliver the games consistent with the

agreement that had been signed with the Commonwealth Games Federation on how to deliver a regional games model. That is the work that we were doing at the time. As we have advised previously, it became all about the cost and not about the benefit – a position where previously the Leader of the Opposition said he would do exactly the same thing, a position he agreed with. He might be changing his views. We have consistently made it very clear that the reason why we agreed in the first place was to bring legacy benefits to regional communities, and that is what we are now focused on.

Ministers statements: flood recovery

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:36): Twelve months ago Victoria experienced one of the worst flooding disasters our state has ever seen. We saw people’s homes destroyed, whole towns under water, crops wiped out and roads severely damaged. This week we mark one year on from that really difficult and terrible event for many of our communities. Whilst we saw the floodwaters recede and they are now long gone, we know that the long road to recovery is underway.

Last week, along with the Minister for Emergency Services, I was very pleased to visit Rochester to officially open the new dedicated community recovery hub. We know Rochester was in many ways the epicentre of the flooding events in that part of northern Victoria, a community that was particularly devastated by those significant floods. The community recovery centre is a one-stop shop for services like Anglicare, Emergency Recovery Victoria and Bendigo Community Health to directly deliver services in the local community. They are services that the community need like mental health services, financial advice and also, as that building recovery process continues, building and planning support.

We know that hubs like this are a place where the community can come together to, importantly, check in on each other to see if people are going okay, because we know that it is a long recovery journey. Everyone’s journey is different, and the community are there to support one another as their community rebuilds. That is why the Victorian and federal governments jointly supported the establishment of the hub, and support continues to be provided across flood-affected communities. As I said, we are 12 months on from that flooding event. The floodwaters have receded, but that long recovery journey continues, and the government will continue to support flood-affected communities along the way.

Commonwealth Games

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:38): My question is to the Premier. The Department of Treasury and Finance Secretary gave evidence at last week’s hearings that the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions provided an increased \$4.2 billion budget submission to host the Commonwealth Games prior to the now Premier appearing before a parliamentary committee. Why didn’t the Premier inform Parliament about her Commonwealth Games budget blowouts?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:39): As I said in my previous answer, I stand by the evidence I gave to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. We were working through how best to deliver the games in line with the agreement with the Commonwealth Games Federation. No final decisions had been made. We were still working through the cost estimates that were coming through. When the final decision was made on 17 July and announced pretty much straightaway early on the morning of 18 July, that was on the basis of the figures coming in at that between \$6 million to \$7 billion range, which was just too much for a 12-day sporting event, particularly when one of the most critical issues for regional Victorians at this point in time is the building of more homes for regional communities.

Peter Walsh: On a point of order, Speaker, I would ask you to bring the Premier back to actually answering the question from the Leader of the Opposition about why she did not inform the Parliament of the Commonwealth Games blowouts given she had already put a budget bid in for increased funding.

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

Jacinta ALLAN: Thank you, Speaker. I repeat for the benefit of the Leader of the National Party that no final decision had been made. We were still getting advice from officials. That is consistent with evidence that was given by the departments last week at the hearings that have been held, and we were looking at how to get further advice from officials. When it became clear, and we have said this consistently, that it was emerging that the cost of the games was between \$6 billion and \$7 billion, we made the decision. We made the decision on 17 July. We announced it on 18 July. On 18 or 19 July the Leader of the Opposition said he would have done exactly the same thing should he have been in that position. I stand by the evidence I have given to that committee.

Peter Walsh: On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance again, the Premier may keep giving the same answer she is giving, but she is not actually answering –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Nationals has the right to raise his point of order in silence.

Peter Walsh: So on the issue of relevance, Speaker, the Premier may continue to put the same words out every time. She is not actually addressing the question that the –

Darren Cheeseman interjected.

Peter Walsh: The point of order is that the Premier is not addressing the issues that –

Members interjecting.

Peter Walsh: Through the Chair, Speaker, can I remind the member for South Barwon –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Assistant Treasurer will come to order!

Peter Walsh: On the issue of relevance, can you bring the Premier back to answering the question that the Leader of the Opposition actually asked and not continuing to give a misinformation answer.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Nationals, I would ask members to make their points of order in a succinct manner. The Premier has concluded her answer.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:42): On 13 June 2023 the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Treasury and Finance informed then Premier Andrews that they would not support the then Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery's \$4.2 billion budget submission. On what date did the now Premier first provide the increased budget submission to these departments?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:42): As has been previously advised, the Auditor-General is looking at all these matters in terms of the budget processes and the decisions that were made around the process as we were working through. We have said this clearly. We have said this in this house, we have said it publicly as well, in the months leading up to working through the decision that was made estimates were being turned into actuals. We were working through market-sounding processes –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question asked the Premier for a date. The Premier has not come anywhere near providing that date.

The SPEAKER: The Premier is being relevant to the question. I would ask the Premier to resume her answer.

Jacinta ALLAN: As the Treasurer is often wont to remind me, when decisions are made, decisions are announced, and the final decision was made by the government on 17 July and announced the very next day.

Ministers statements: Suburban Rail Loop

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:43): I rise to update the house on the magnificent program the Allan Labor government is making in delivering the Suburban Rail Loop. SRL will not only take more than 600,000 cars off our roads every day, make some of our most important universities and TAFEs accessible and connect every major rail line, it will also fundamentally reshape the way our city grows by delivering more high-quality affordable housing choices closer to jobs, schools and services. It is a massive task, and we are well and truly getting on with it.

As the member for Box Hill knows, works are cracking on in relation to relocating the 109 tram terminus on Whitehorse Road so that we can keep trams running during construction of the new Box Hill SRL station. Crews are working around the clock to lay new track, complete the new platform and install new lighting. The member for Ashwood has been out recently inspecting the site establishment works at Sinnott Street Reserve in Burwood. Tunnel access shaft works are underway and will continue until late 2025. A critical aspect of this city-shaping project is its role in reshaping the way our city grows. The neighbourhoods around the new SRL East stations will be magnets for activity and investment, attracting more people, businesses and jobs closer to home, along with new and diverse housing options.

In August we released a discussion paper to kickstart the conversation about how these communities can accommodate growth. Since then we have been running community forums, pop-up sessions and listening posts. The SRL Authority has been at Box Hill Central, at the Glen, at DFO Moorabbin and at the Burwood Brickworks talking to people about their aspirations for their communities. Later this year we will reflect all that community feedback in the precinct vision statements to continue the discussion.

The SRL will deliver thousands of new homes in well-serviced communities close to jobs and a world-class public transport system – and every one of those homes, every one of those jobs and every metre of that track have been opposed by the do-nothing rabble opposite. The SRL is a long-term project that requires vision and ambition, which can be hard to understand when your only vision is to get through your next party room meeting.

Commonwealth Games

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:46): My question is to the Premier. Victoria 2026 chair Peggy O’Neal told the select committee last week that the Premier had not informed her that lawyers had been called in to cancel the games when the Premier met with her on 19 June. Why did the Premier not come clean and inform Ms O’Neal of the truth about the lawyers being called in to cancel the games?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:46): Firstly, can I put on record my appreciation for the work that Peggy O’Neal and the organising committee undertook. The government very much appreciates the work that they did during their time as part of the organising committee. Can I, however, correct what the Leader of the Opposition has said around his representation of lawyers being called in to ‘cancel’ the games. There was advice being sought at that point in time. As I have said clearly on a number of occasions before in this place, there was advice being sought on a range of options, and on 14 June I was advised that the then Premier was seeking legal advice around what not proceeding with the games would look like. Lawyers were not called in to cancel the games; lawyers were called in to give advice. That is what lawyers do. You would have thought the lawyer over here – you would have thought the chief lawyer –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will be heard in silence.

Jacinta ALLAN: I would have thought someone who was a lawyer would know that lawyers are asked to give advice. That is exactly what the lawyers were asked for, and that is the –

Peter Walsh: On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance, I would ask you to bring the Premier back to answering the question from the Leader of the Opposition as to why she did not show Ms O’Neal the respect of telling her that lawyers had been engaged.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Jacinta ALLAN: No, that was not the question. That was not the question that was asked. You might try and mop up the Leader of the Opposition’s sloppy performance, but that was not the question that was asked. The question that was asked was on the calling in of lawyers to cancel the games, and as I have pointed out to the Leader of the Opposition, lawyers were being asked to give advice – give advice – which is their job. That advice was received. Government considered the options before it, which included the fact that it was going to cost between \$6 billion and \$7 billion for a 12-day sporting event, which was why we made the decision to not proceed with the games. It was all about cost and not about the benefit.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Premier was asked why she kept Ms O’Neal in the dark, and I would ask you –

Members interjecting.

James Newbury: Yes, she was. I would ask you to bring her back to that question.

The SPEAKER: The Premier was being relevant. The Premier has concluded her answer.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:49): Given the Premier has just advised the house that lawyers were brought in to advise on a range of options, will the Premier now table and make available to all members of the house that legal advice?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:49): Is the Leader of the Opposition wanting to share his legal advice? How is Moira going?

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN: Oh, really? Turn around. Turn around.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The house will come to order. Through the Chair, Leader of the Nationals.

Peter Walsh: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is now debating the question. I would ask you to bring her back to actually answering the question that the Leader of the Opposition asked.

The SPEAKER: The Premier to come back to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: As part of considering options, those options and the advice that was received by government came from departments and officials. Advice was also sought from lawyers, as you would expect as government goes through a decision-making process. We announced that decision, and we are getting on with delivering \$2 billion in new homes, in community sporting infrastructure and in supporting our great tourism and major events industry in regional Victoria.

Ministers statements: Solar Homes program

Lily D’AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:51): I rise to update the house about how the Allan

Labor government is not only building more homes for Victorians but making homes more comfortable to live in and cheaper to run through our \$1.3 billion Solar Homes program; 260,000 households have already taken up a rebate through Solar Victoria, and we are not stopping there. Recently I announced a range of new expansions to the program and eligibility criteria. That means 10,000 more Victorian households each year will be eligible to get the rebate right across the state. We are doing this by increasing the household income threshold to \$210,000, along with allowing early adopters with aging panels and those who have accessed a rebate previously to now get a further rebate and continue saving with solar if they have moved house. We are continuing to support renters also, announcing a \$16 million partnership with the federal government to deliver solar to 5000 apartment dwellers over the next two years. Only Victoria offers a solar program for renters in Australia, and this new program for apartments will make solar more accessible.

This government's housing statement has committed to building 800,000 new homes in the next decade, and we are making it easier for them, forever, to be able to electrify and go with solar. Expressions of interest are flooding in for our \$10 million residential electrifications grants program, which will support the innovative mass installation of solar panels and heat pumps in newly built homes. We know that going all electric in a new home saves on average \$1000 on your energy bill every year, and if you install solar, it will save you \$2200 on your bills every year. Only Labor is delivering real cost-of-living relief – *(Time expired)*

Commonwealth Games

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:53): My question is to the Premier. Yesterday the Deputy Premier said the Victorian government stood ready to provide advice and support to the Gold Coast should it be successful in hosting the 2026 Commonwealth Games. Did the Deputy Premier discuss this offer of support with the Premier prior to making his comments?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: If the Leader of the Nationals wants to be removed from the chamber, continue talking while I am on my feet.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:53): It probably is fair to say the Leader of the Opposition does not know a lot about collegiality, working with colleagues and having a chat. It is probably fair to say it is not something he experiences all that often. They probably do not pick up the phone. I am sure Brad does not pick up the phone and say, 'Now, John, I have an idea for you'. I do not think that happens too often.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members to call other members by their correct titles.

Peter Walsh: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question again. I ask you to bring her back to answering the question that the Leader of the Opposition asked about whether the Deputy Premier actually asked for permission to say what he said.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Nationals knows not to repeat the question.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition! The member for Berwick can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Berwick withdrew from chamber.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Assistant Treasurer! The Premier, without assistance.

Jacinta ALLAN: Thank you, Speaker. What the Gold Coast does is really a matter for the Gold Coast, and there is a process –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for South-West Coast!

Jacinta ALLAN: Obviously they are engaged in a process. I do not know how much support it has necessarily from the broader Queensland community, but time will tell. In the meantime, what we will continue to focus on on this side of the house, and with our friends over there as well, is delivering the \$2 billion package for regional Victoria. We will continue to deliver the Suburban Rail Loop. We will continue to bring back the SEC. We will continue to support our tourism and major events. We will continue to focus on what matters for Victorians.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:56): The CEO of Visit Victoria told the select committee last week that not only did cancelling the games not damage Victoria’s reputation, it actually enhanced it. Will the government’s advice to the Gold Coast be that if you cannot manage your budget, you can cancel the games and still enhance your reputation?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:56): I will say this about the CEO of Visit Victoria Brendan McClements: he is an outstanding individual who works incredibly hard every single day to secure major events for this state, and he has been incredibly successful at securing a range of major events that underpin our terrific hospitality and tourism industries in this state. I will also say this about the CEO of Visit Victoria: he is the one that we will turn to for our expert advice. Just as we ask the expert engineers on how to best remove level crossings, we will ask our experts in the major events industry how best to support the major events industry in this state.

Ministers statements: rental support

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (14:57): We know it is harder than ever at the moment to be able to afford a home, and we know that more Victorians are renting than ever before. While here in Victoria we have the strongest rental protections in the country, we know that there is always more to do. That is why the Allan Labor government is expanding protections for renters and boosting housing stock, and through that also affordability. As the fastest growing state, and knowing that demand for rentals is growing, we are taking bold and decisive action to benefit renters now and long into the future. We have already delivered 130 rental reforms, and there are more to come.

We know that when you are moving house costs can add up quickly; we have all experienced it. That is why we are introducing a new portable rental bond scheme, because every dollar counts. Not only will this ensure that renters are not required to pay a new bond every time they move, it will also streamline the administrative processes for agents and property managers. We will also provide renters with more security and certainty over their leases by restricting rent increases between successive fixed-term leases. This will reduce the incentive for landlords to churn through renters in order to secure a rent rise, and it will provide renters with more certainty over their living arrangements, which we know is so very important. This is about doing what is right, it is about doing what is fair and it is about doing what we know makes a real and meaningful difference to the lives of Victorian renters. We are getting on with making a difference and making renting fairer while those opposite stand in the way of fair access to housing, as they have done for many, many years. They stood in the way of those 130 rental reforms. They are standing against renters again in 2023 – talk about being out of touch. So while they focus on making life harder for renters, we will get on and deliver for all Victorians.

Commonwealth Games

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:59): My question is to the Premier. Following the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games, the government released a document that blamed the Office of the Commonwealth Games for additional cost blowouts of more than \$2 billion. The former CEO gave evidence to the select committee last week that he had never seen that figure before, stating:

... that is not a number that I had awareness of.

If the \$2 billion in additional costs were not from the Premier's department or from the Department of Treasury and Finance or the Office of the Commonwealth Games, did the government just make this number up?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (15:00): First and foremost, the question that described it as 'blaming' the Office of the Commonwealth Games is wrong in the contribution from the Leader of the –

John Pesutto interjected.

Jacinta ALLAN: I don't know, ask your colleagues what they're calling you. Don't ask me.

The SPEAKER: Order! Through the Chair, Premier.

Jacinta ALLAN: As has been said on a number of occasions, as estimates were becoming actuals we were going through market processes – there were something like 1200 different procurement decisions that needed to be made in terms of looking at how to best deliver the games. We were getting advice from officials, we were getting feedback from the market process, and as those estimates were becoming actuals, as we were getting further and further through, particularly in the weeks leading up to the decision, the \$6 billion to \$7 billion figure became far too much to deliver a 12-day sporting event. This is something the Leader of the Opposition has previously said he supported and that he would do the same. We are focusing right now on delivering the regional package for regional communities.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the question asked whether the \$2 billion figure was just made up. Can the Premier come back to that question, please?

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

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (15:02): Will the Premier provide a detailed breakdown of the \$2 billion in additional actual costs?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (15:02): I really do thank the Leader of the Opposition for this question, because this goes to the reason why we made the decision to not proceed with a 12-day sporting event that was going to cost between \$6 billion and \$7 billion – because it was too much. We actually did not spend that money because it was too much for a 12-day sporting event, particularly when we could have the opportunity to instead invest in the reasons why we agreed to host the games in the first place – to invest in regional housing, to invest in community sport, tourism and major events and to support the legacy benefits for regional communities. That is why we are focused on –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was very simple; it just asked for a breakdown of the \$2 billion.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have reminded members throughout question time previously that I cannot tell the minister or the Premier how to answer a question. The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked. The Premier has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: planning policy

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for the Suburbs) (15:03): I am delighted to update the house on the delivery of the Allan Labor government's big, bold agenda for planning reform announced in last month's housing statement. We are getting on with the job of making good decisions faster, and a key component of this work is increasing housing choice in activity centres, because when you locate more homes in activity centres, everybody wins. More people can live close to jobs and transport, and more people living in activity centres means more enlivened and thriving neighbourhoods, more opportunities for local businesses to grow and a better

quality of life for all residents. The activity centre program will deliver more than 60,000 homes across 10 activity centres, with new harmonised planning controls in each centre.

Since last month's housing statement I have already met with nine councils and the Municipal Association of Victoria. Speaker, do you know what they are saying? These councils are excited and enthusiastic to partner with us to deliver more homes and more housing choice, making good decisions faster in their activity centres. Over the coming months I will be having even more conversations with councils and communities. I will be asking communities what they love about their neighbourhoods and how best they can meet future local needs, because whilst I am the Minister for Planning, I am also Minister for the Suburbs.

The suburbs are the places we live, the places we work and shop and play sport and socialise and walk the dog, the places we love, the places we call home. As Minister for the Suburbs my focus will be working across government to deliver thriving, connected suburbs and communities for all Victorians. This work will be about sharing the places we love, with all of us working together to make these places the best they can be. We are long past the point of asking 'Do we grow?'; this is all about how we can grow best. And those opposite might take heed – it is time to grow up. The Allan Labor government has a plan to deliver 800,000 homes.

The SPEAKER: Can I acknowledge in the gallery former minister the Honourable John Pandazopoulos.

Sam Groth: On a point of order, Speaker, I have a number of unanswered questions. Constituency question 214 for the Minister for Housing was due in July, constituency question 234 for the Premier was due on 31 August, adjournment 255 for the Premier was due on 31 August and constituency question number 314 for the Minister for Environment was due on 30 September.

Bridget Vallance: On a point of order, Speaker, I have a number of matters that have been unanswered. Adjournment 299 on the local history grants was asked on 16 August to the then Premier and nearly five weeks later is still not answered. Constituency question 312 on a very important issue, elder abuse, has failed to be answered by the Minister for Ageing. That was asked on 31 August, and I would appreciate answers for my constituents.

Constituency questions

Kew electorate

Jess WILSON (Kew) (15:07): (350) My constituency question is for the Minister for Environment. What consultation has Parks Victoria – noting that the chair of Parks Victoria is in the gallery right now – or the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action conducted before its decision to close Dickinson Reserve playground in Kew? My constituents have had to chase Parks Victoria for information about the future of this popular local playground and have now been told by Parks Victoria that it will be removed entirely and not replaced. Given the closest playgrounds to Dickinson Reserve are over 1 kilometre away, this leaves many local families without a walkable playground facility. As one local mum said:

When you have a toddler on a trike and a baby in a pram, you can only walk so far to a playground.

This is what Dickinson Reserve playground offers many young families in the Studley Park area of Kew. It is important that communities are always given the opportunity to provide decision-makers with feedback about decisions that affect them, and I will be disappointed if Parks Victoria have not attempted to hear from residents about how the closure of this playground will impact them. I hope we can work together to ensure Dickinson park playground is preserved and replaced.

Bayswater electorate

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (15:08): (351) It is back. We promised to bring back the container deposit scheme, and we are getting on with doing just that. I have already had a bunch of excited Knox locals let me know how keen they are for this one. It is fair to say they are as stoked as I am with this one, because not only is there a bit of money back in locals' back pockets, it is a great outcome for our environment too. So my constituency question is to the Minister for Environment: I ask the minister to update my community on what benefits locals in Knox will see from the brand new CDS. We have heard locals loud and clear – they want their container deposit scheme. And it is so close now. Mark it in your calendars: 1 November. Very soon it will be up and running and you can start collecting and getting refunds. I am proud to be part of the Allan Labor government, which is transforming the way we think about waste, developing a true circular economy not just to ensure that less waste ends up in landfill in our natural environment but creating thousands of good jobs in the process. And the container deposit scheme is a big part of this plan. It is a win–win.

Shepparton electorate

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (15:09): (352) My question is to the Minister for Housing in the other place, and the information I seek is: when will we see the rollout of the Victorian housing statement, which pledges to build 800,000 new homes over the next decade to boost housing supply and affordability in regional and rural Victoria? My electorate has one of the highest rates of homelessness across the state. The waitlist for social housing was at 2659 at the end of 2022, and that number continues to grow. The devastation of the October 2022 floods displaced many people from their homes. This has left a reduced housing rental stock, leaving many people homeless. The housing statement also mentions cutting the red tape and working closely with local councils, which needs to happen to ensure a faster delivery of housing.

Northcote electorate

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (15:10): (353) My question is to the Minister for Housing, and I ask: how will the reforms in the *Victorian Housing Statement* ease housing pressure in the electorate of Northcote? The reality of housing stress in the inner north is acute, and I have spoken to many people who are living in extremely tenuous circumstances. That includes those living on the housing register, in rentals and with mortgages, and sadly, we have seen homelessness increase in our community. Housing supply is a major barrier to getting more people into safe and secure homes, and it has been especially frustrating to see land sitting vacant across our suburbs which could be activated rather than asset-banked by developers. Our government recognises the gravity of the housing crisis and the need for a response that matches the scale of the task at hand. We are streamlining planning, limiting rent increases, expanding social housing, making it easier to build a granny flat and taxing long-term land banking. In the inner north the work to deliver more homes must be cleverly planned to also meet our need for more services, open spaces, sustainability and the preservation of our unique northside character.

Nepean electorate

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (15:11): (354) My question is to the Minister for Environment. Residents in Portsea and more broadly the southern peninsula have repeatedly and consistently raised the issue of Portsea beach with me throughout last year's election campaign and into this term. Recently I was contacted by local resident Andrew who raised his serious concerns about the lack of government action on this major local environmental issue. Andrew summed up the feeling of many local constituents in his disappointment that Portsea front bench, once the pride of the peninsula, has been allowed to degrade so much.

James Newbury interjected.

Sam GROTH: And as the member for Brighton just said, it does not actually exist. During the election campaign the Liberal and National coalition committed \$10 million to studies and planning to address real solutions for this environmental catastrophe. What additional action will the government take to address the issue of the ongoing environmental damage at Portsea beach?

Preston electorate

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (15:12): (355) My question is also for the Minister for Environment, and my question is, what is the approximate level of tree canopy cover for the following suburbs: Reservoir, Preston, Thornbury, Northcote, Ivanhoe, Kew, Balwyn, Toorak, Camberwell and Canterbury? Our government recognises the importance of vegetation and trees to the urban environment. They reduce heat, they improve biodiversity and they provide amenity. For various historical and geographic reasons there has tended to be a lot more greenery in the east than there has been in the north and the west, but there is no reason for that inequality to continue, and indeed this government has been addressing it through our Trees for the West program, our suburban revitalisation initiatives and our Living Local initiatives. We look forward in Preston and Reservoir to working with the new minister to understand why different areas have different levels of tree cover and what further steps can be taken to improve the natural environment in Reservoir and Preston.

Melbourne electorate

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (15:13): (356) My question is to the new Minister for Public and Active Transport. Harrison Watt is a local who has recently launched a petition for protected bike lanes on Johnston Street, a major road connecting Kew to Carlton in my electorate. Harrison's petition has amassed over 1000 signatures in just a few weeks, because although Labor have flagged Johnston Street as a strategic cycling corridor in their principal bicycle network, it is incredibly dangerous and there are no dedicated bike lanes. Instead this busy road has multiple speed limits, inconsistent clearways, a really high risk of people riding their bikes being doored by cars and a high risk of accidents with buses. One of the petition signers told us, 'The only two bike accidents I have ever had have both been on Johnston Street, and I ended up in hospital for one of them.' So my question is: will the minister meet with Harrison to discuss his petition and the ask to create separated bike lanes and safe bike lanes on Johnston Street?

Hastings electorate

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (15:14): (357) My question is for the Minister for Veterans. In my time as the member for Hastings I have had the privilege of meeting with and listening to veterans across my electorate. This includes at HMAS *Cerberus* and the Frankston Naval Memorial Club. They are interested in the upcoming opening of the veterans capital works and restoring war memorials grant programs. I ask the minister: who can apply for grants and what projects will be covered? The Frankston Naval Memorial Club are an active and growing veterans group who do critical work supporting veterans and their families. They have told me about the need for their facilities to grow as they grow. I know they and other veterans and ex-service organisations will be eager to hear about the upcoming opening of veterans grant programs. Veterans have given so much to our state and our nation. I want to acknowledge the service and sacrifice of our veterans, and I thank them for their service and thank the families and friends who support them.

Warrandyte electorate

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (15:15): (358) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. What improvements can be made to give students at Goodstart Early Learning Ringwood safer crossings to support them walking to and from Mahon Reserve? I must admit, as it is my first question on behalf of my constituency, I did need some help putting it together, and I was greatly helped and swayed by our youngest citizens and lobbyists: the kindergarten children from Goodstart Early Learning Ringwood. To quote them: 'We love going to Mahon Reserve for bush kinder, but we want to talk to you about something important: our safety while walking there. We have some ideas to help

make our journey safer and we really hope you can help us. We can work together to collect data on road safety, make a banner at the car park and fix the signage on the road and in the car park.' I look forward to hearing and seeing the minister take their ideas on board.

Pascoe Vale electorate

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (15:16): (359) My constituency question is for the Minister for Community Sport. What funding programs are available to help support the Coburg Giants and the Coburg Basketball Association? First established in 1949, the Coburg Giants is one of the oldest basketball associations in Australia. For 74 years the club has continued to slam dunk above its weight, doing Coburg proud on local, national and international stages – winning two NBL titles, in 1989 and 1994. The club has produced generations of male and female basketballers who have gone on to represent Victoria and Australia via the Boomers and the Opals. The association is now one of the biggest community grassroots clubs in the northern suburbs and home to, get this, 3700 players, 499 teams, 437 coaches and many more volunteers – plus countless hours of parents being taxi drivers – operating from their spiritual home at Coburg Basketball Stadium. I have had the privilege to visit the Giants, including the wonderful president, Sally Kerin, and long-time volunteers, Tracey McCombe, Michelle Anderson and John Watson, on many occasions. They would love more news on how they can secure further funding to support their growing participation rates, especially amongst women and girls.

Bills

Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

Introduction and first reading

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (15:17): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Bus Safety Act 2009, the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017, the Marine (Domestic Commercial Vessel National Law Application) Act 2013, the Road Management Act 2004, the Road Safety Act 1986, the Sentencing Act 1991, the Transport Accident Act 1986, the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983, the Transport Integration Act 2010 and other acts and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (15:18): I ask the minister for a brief explanation of the bill.

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (15:18): The main purpose of this bill is to continue the government's strong commitment to road safety and the delivery of the road safety strategy through enabling the conduct of a world-leading research trial into medicinal cannabis and driving. The bill also seeks to protect amenity and accessibility in public spaces by giving local councils greater control over e-scooter and bicycle share schemes in their municipalities. It also makes a number of amendments to the road safety and transport legislation to improve their operation and effectiveness. Other reforms include changes to information disclosure regimes to enable the sharing of data with other government departments, in particular the State Revenue Office, and greater transparency in handling data arising from the public transport network.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Early Childhood Legislation Amendment (Premises Approval in Principle) Bill 2023*Introduction and first reading*

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for Medical Research) (15:19): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 and the Education and Care Services National Law set out in the schedule to that act to provide for the approval in principle of certain types of education and care service premises, to amend the Children's Services Act 1996 to make certain offences infringement offences and to provide for the approval in principle of certain types of children's service premises, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (15:19): I ask the minister for a brief explanation of the bill.

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for Medical Research) (15:19): The bill will establish a premises approval in principle scheme for new early childhood services in multistorey buildings to address design and safety issues commonly experienced with centre-based premises in multistorey buildings. The bill will also add an infringement power to the Children's Services Act 1996 to ensure that consistent regulatory tools are available to address similar conduct by providers across all early childhood services.

Read first time.**Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.****Environment Legislation Amendment (Circular Economy and Other Matters) Bill 2023***Introduction and first reading*

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (15:20): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021 to further provide for matters relating to the container deposit scheme, the waste to energy scheme and the recovery of regulatory costs for those schemes and to amend the Environment Protection Act 2017 to improve the operation of that act and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (15:21): I ask the minister for a brief explanation of the bill.

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (15:21): This bill introduces amendments to the Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021 and the Environment Protection Act 2017 that address issues identified during implementation of Victoria's container deposit scheme and waste-to-energy scheme. The amendments aim to minimise the risks to the operation of both schemes and to clarify and streamline some elements of the operations of the circular economy act. For example, these amendments will – however, they are not limited to this – clarify cost recovery arrangements for the container deposit scheme, allow licensing fees to be set, enable Recycling Victoria to recover costs from beverage producers and fund its operations, ensure that recipients of remedial notices can pass them on to polluters and ensure that certain authorised officers and protective service officers have the authority to act as litter enforcement officers.

Read first time.**Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.**

Business of the house**Notices of motion**

The SPEAKER (15:22): General business, notice of motion 9, will be removed from the notice paper unless the member wishing their matter to remain advises the Clerk in writing before 5 pm today.

Petitions**Surf Coast planning**

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) presented a petition bearing 249 signatures:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the need for Government to work with the Surf Coast Shire Council to find a more appropriate location for the proposed Mind Australia 12 unit development at 26 Silvereve Street Torquay. The Surf Coast Community fully supports local affordable and accessible housing within their community, however the State Government has a responsibility to provide this in the most appropriate location. The Silvereve Street location does not provide adequate safe outdoor space for residents, it has inadequate off-street parking and is in significant conflict with the S173 agreement that all homeowners in the Stretton Estate agreed upon.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly request that the Victorian Government work with Mind Australia and the Surf Coast Shire Council to find a more appropriate location for the 12 unit development.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) presented a petition bearing 67 signatures:

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria. This petition draws the attention of the House to call on the Victorian Government to work with the Surf Coast Shire Council to find a more appropriate location for the proposed Mind Australia 12 unit development at 26 Silvereve Street Torquay. The Surf Coast Community fully supports local affordable and accessible housing within their community, however the State Government has a responsibility to provide this in the most appropriate location. The Silvereve Street location does not provide adequate safe outdoor space for residents, it has inadequate off-street parking and is in significant conflict with the S173 agreement that all homeowners in the Stretton Estate agreed upon.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Committees**Public Accounts and Estimates Committee*****Appointment of the Parliamentary Budget Officer***

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (15:23): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee on the appointment of the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Ordered to be published.

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

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (15:24): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 12 of 2023, on the following bills:

Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

Planning and Environment Amendment (Soil Protection) (Solar Power Generation Facilities) Bill 2023

Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rent Freeze and Caps) Bill 2023

Special Investigator Repeal Bill 2023

State Taxation Acts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2023

Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023

together with appendices.

Ordered to be published.

Documents

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Financial Management Act 1994:

Financial Report for the State of Victoria 2022–23, incorporating Quarterly Financial Report No 4 – Released on 6 October 2023

Report from the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events that he had not received the Report 2022–23 of the Puffing Bill Railway Board, together with an explanation for the delay

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 – Report of requests under s 11

Ombudsman – Report 2022–23 – released on 12 October 2023

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

Ararat – C39 Part 2

Darebin – C211

Loddon – C47

Melbourne – C434

Monash – C170

Victoria Planning Provisions – VC247

Yarra Ranges – C186

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 – SR 104

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 – SR 105

Residential Tenancies Act 1997 – SR 106

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Documents under s 16B in relation to:

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations 2017:

Secretary Approval Nurse Immunisers – SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) VACCINE

Secretary Approval Pharmacist Immunisers – SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) VACCINE

Wildlife Act 1975 – Declaration of the dingo to be unprotected wildlife in certain areas of Victoria

University of Melbourne – Report 2021 (*replacement for copy tabled on 21 June 2022*).

Bills

Bail Amendment Bill 2023

Council's amendments

The SPEAKER (15:25): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Bail Amendment Bill 2023 with amendments.

Ordered that amendments be taken into consideration immediately.

Message from Council relating to following amendments considered:

1. Clause 1, page 2, lines 1 and 2, omit all words and expressions on these lines.
2. Clause 1, page 2, line 26, omit "bail." and insert "bail; and".

BILLS

3. Clause 1, page 2, after line 26 insert –
 “(e) to require a review of the operation of the amendments made by this Act.”.
4. Clause 6, lines 21 and 22, omit “4AA or 4AAB,” and insert “4AA,”.
5. Clause 8, lines 6 to 14, omit all words and expressions on these lines.
6. Clause 8, line 15, omit “(2)”.
7. Clause 13, lines 20 and 21, omit “whichever of section 4AA or 4AAB applies,” and insert “section 4AA,”.
8. Division heading preceding clause 16, omit “**Bail tests that apply to children**” and insert “**Notes to heading to Schedule 1**”.
9. Clause 16, omit this clause.
10. Clause 17, omit this clause.
11. Clause 18, omit this clause.
12. Clause 19, omit this clause.
13. Clause 20, omit this clause.
14. Clause 21, omit this clause.
15. Clause 22, omit this clause.
16. Clause 23, omit this clause.
17. Clause 24, line 24, omit “an adult” and insert “a person”.
18. Clause 24, lines 27 to 29, omit all words and expressions on these lines.
19. Clause 24, line 30, omit “3” and insert “2”.
20. Clause 24, line 31, omit “See – “ and insert “See section 4AA(2).”.
21. Clause 24, lines 32 and 33, omit all words and expressions on these lines.
22. Clause 25, line 6, omit “adult” and insert “accused”.
23. Clause 25, line 9, omit “adult” and insert “accused”.
24. Clause 26, line 25, omit “adult” and insert “accused”.
25. Clause 26, line 28, omit “person” and insert “accused”.
26. Clause 26, page 16, line 3, omit “adult” and insert “accused”.
27. Clause 26, page 16, line 6, omit “person” and insert “accused”.
28. Clause 30, page 18, Flow Chart 1, omit “Flow Chart 4” and insert “Flow Chart 3”.
29. Clause 30, page 18, Flow Chart 1, omit “Flow Chart 5” and insert “Flow Chart 4”.
30. Clause 30, page 19, line 3, omit “an adult” and insert “a person”.
31. Clause 30, page 19, heading to Flow Chart 2, omit “to adults”.
32. Clause 30, page 19, Flow Chart 2, omit “Flow Chart 4” (wherever occurring) and insert “Flow Chart 3”.
33. Clause 30, page 19, Flow Chart 2, omit “Flow Chart 5” and insert “Flow Chart 4”.
34. Clause 30, page 19, Flow Chart 2, omit “Flow Chart 6” (wherever occurring) and insert “Flow Chart 5”.
35. Clause 30, page 20, lines 1 to 4, omit all words and expressions on these lines.
36. Clause 30, page 20, Flow Chart 3, omit this flow chart.
37. Clause 30, page 21, line 1, omit “(5)” and insert “(4)”.
38. Clause 30, page 21, line 1, omit “4” and insert “3”.
39. Clause 30, page 21, heading to Flow Chart 4, omit “4” and insert “3”.
40. Clause 30, page 22, line 1, omit “(6)” and insert “(5)”.
41. Clause 30, page 22, line 1, omit “5” and insert “4”.
42. Clause 30, page 22, heading to Flow Chart 5, omit “5” and insert “4”.
43. Clause 30, page 23, line 1, omit “(7)” and insert “(6)”.
44. Clause 30, page 23, line 1, omit “6” and insert “5”.

45. Clause 30, page 23, heading to Flow Chart 6, omit “6” and insert “5”.

NEW CLAUSE

46. Insert the following New Clause to follow clause 116 –

‘116A New section 32C inserted

After section 32B of the Principal Act **insert** –

“32C Review of amendments made by Bail Amendment Act 2023

- (1) The Attorney-General must cause a review to be conducted of the operation of the amendments made to this Act by the **Bail Amendment Act 2023**.
 - (2) The review must be commenced no later than 2 years after the commencement of the **Bail Amendment Act 2023**.
 - (3) The review must be completed no later than 6 months after it commences.
 - (4) The Attorney-General must cause a copy of the review to be laid before each House of the Parliament no later than 14 sitting days after receiving it.”.
47. Clause 117, line 11, omit all words and expressions on this line.

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (15:27): I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

Two substantive house amendments were moved and adopted in the other place. A house amendment was passed to remove the relevant provisions to repeal the reverse onus test for young offenders for all but two of the most serious offences – terrorism and homicide-related offences. This amendment preserves the status quo in our approach to child bail and will not see children facing any more onerous bail tests than what currently apply. The Attorney-General has been clear about the reasons why we removed this from the bill and equally clear that we are still pursuing the reforms but are now doing so as part of the broader youth justice reforms.

We know that children are some of the most, if not the most, vulnerable cohorts within our justice system. We are not seeking to weaken our position, but we are creating a bail system that ensures remand is a last resort for children. We have paused the youth bail reforms and moved them to the broader youth justice package, which is on track to be introduced into the Parliament early next year. This is about looking at youth crime more broadly and ensuring that our bail laws coincide with the best approach possible to address youth offending. We know that youth crime is a result of a complex web of circumstances and often disadvantage and trauma, and we want to make sure that community and justice service providers are part of our approach to addressing this.

We are not going to buy into a false narrative that this is a backflip in response to a youth violence crisis. As the Attorney-General has clearly said, what we are seeing is a small number of young people committing serious offences and an even smaller number committing crimes for the first time. It is not accurate to describe this as a youth crime crisis. However, the government understands that we have an obligation to the community to ensure that our reforms are considerate of the recent high-profile traumatic cases that have involved young offenders. We completely recognise that for those who have been the victims of any crime, including those committed by children, it is absolutely a crisis in their lives, and I am not for a second undermining how traumatic and horrific this can be. This is why we want to ensure there is a comprehensive approach to addressing youth crime and why our Minister for Youth Justice and Attorney-General are actively progressing reforms to this end, and I look forward to seeing those reforms introduced into Parliament early next year.

While reforms to reverse onus testing specifically for child applicants for bail are paused, it is important to acknowledge that child applicants will still benefit from many of the changes included in the Bail Amendment Bill 2023. Similar to adults, children will no longer face uplift bail tests for repeat low-level, non-violent offending, reducing the risk of unnecessary remand where there may not be a risk to community safety. We have also expanded the specific considerations that child bail

decisionmakers must take into account when determining if a child applicant should be granted bail. These include consideration of the importance of supporting a child to engage in education, work or training with minimal disturbances or interruptions and of the child's personal characteristics and history, including any experiences of abuse, trauma, out-of-home care or involvement with child protection, as well as the fact that some cohorts of children experience discrimination resulting in their over-representation in the justice system, such as Aboriginal children, children involved in child protection and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Finally, the government has agreed to include a statutory review provision in the bill, with agreement that the review be conducted two years from when the legislation commences in March 2024. Regardless of any legislated requirement, the government fully intends to monitor these reforms on an ongoing basis to understand whether the provisions are operating as intended, and we will be working closely with stakeholders to ensure this can be carried out.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (15:31): When the government first floated bail reform, the opposition said that we were quite willing to work constructively with the government, and to some extent in this bill we have. There are aspects of this bill which the opposition does support. There are aspects of the amendments which are currently before the house which in fact the opposition initiated.

The statutory review of these bail changes was not an idea or an initiative of the government, it was an idea of the opposition. I appreciate the fact that in the other place, where the government does not entirely have the numbers, the government realised that it was important that some substantial changes to bail laws be reviewed, because we know that some aspects of this bill are undoing changes that this current Labor government made a few years ago. By that very nature we know that the government does not always get it right and the Parliament does not always get it right, and sometimes the courts interpret legislation in a way which the Parliament did not expect. When you are dealing with an issue as sensitive and as important to community safety as bail laws, it is absolutely essential that there should be a built-in statutory review, and that statutory review should be tabled in the Parliament so that the Parliament and, through us, the public are aware of what that review means. It is disappointing that when we put that to the government initially in this place the government did not accept those amendments. But the iron law of political arithmetic in the upper house forced the government to accept the statutory review, so we do welcome that.

I should also say there are aspects of this bill which we do not support, and one which I want to place on the record briefly is that this government has decided to abolish the offence of committing an indictable offence whilst on bail. I think that is a very retrograde step, and that will put Victorians at risk. I say to the government: this is on your head – through you, Deputy Speaker. This is on your head as the government. Against the views of many who work in the criminal justice system, who understand the risks that this measure is going to pose, the government has decided to say that the offence of committing an indictable offence whilst on bail should not be an offence anymore. That is what is contained in this bill. Let me explain to the house why that matters. It is not simply another offence. What it means is you are charged with an offence, you are given the privilege of bail and then you abuse that privilege by committing a serious offence. That is what an indictable offence is: it is a serious offence. If you abuse that privilege by committing a serious offence, under this change you can face the same weak test that let you get bail in the first place.

Our view and the view of the Police Association Victoria is that that is wrong and that if you abuse the privilege of bail once, you should face a tougher test to get bail again. I think if you asked many Victorians around their dinner tables at home 'Do you think it's fair that if somebody is offered bail, takes that up and then goes and commits a serious offence, they should face a tougher test to get bail again?' most people would give you a head nod. Most people would say yes. But this government thinks it knows better. This government has decided to abolish the offence of committing an indictable offence whilst on bail, which means that people can be charged with an offence, get bail, be charged with an offence, get bail, be charged with an offence and get bail again and again and again, perpetuating the cycle with zero consequences.

How will this keep Victorians safe? The answer is it will not. So I want to be very, very clear: while the opposition support many measures in this bail bill, we do not support that measure. The consequences of that for the community safety of Victorians is entirely on the political heads of the Labor government. I hope that our concerns prove to be misplaced, but I am pretty sure they are not and they will not be. When the chickens come home to roost, I look forward to members on the other side explaining to their communities why they made this change.

In relation to youth bail reforms I am very pleased that the government have agreed they got it wrong in the bill initially, because what the government had proposed in this bill initially, and what the government voted on when it went through this place, was to change the tests for youth bail. In doing so the government would have said that a young person, somebody under 18 – so they could be 17½ – charged with a very serious offence would face the weakest test to get bail. Just to be clear, there are three tests for bail at the moment: there is the lower test, the medium test and the high test. The opposition does not believe that a young person charged with a very serious offence – such as, for example, aggravated burglary or rape or aggravated carjacking or armed robbery, a serious offence like that – should face the weakest test for bail. We believe that serious offences like that should face a higher test. We did not propose the highest, the toughest, test; we thought that for a young person maybe the middle test is the way to go. But this government pushed this bill through the Legislative Assembly, ignored our amendments, and said, ‘No, no. We know best. Yes, let’s let young people charged with aggravated burglary, aggravated carjacking, rape, sexual penetration of a child under 12 or armed robbery face the weakest test for bail.’

In between the bill going through this place and being considered in the other place our TVs and our newspapers were filled with some horrific reports of real-life incidents involving young offenders. Can I make this point: for every person who says ‘Well, young offenders, we need to look after them’ – I accept that we want to get them on the right track, but can we not lose sight of the fact that the cohort most likely to be victims at the hands of youth offenders are youth. I do not hear a lot of concern for the victims of young offenders, who are overwhelmingly young people themselves. They deserve to be protected. They deserve to be safe.

It is about getting the balance right. The government got the balance wrong in this bill when they rammed it through this house with their numbers. I do not think they were particularly worried about losing a vote in the upper house when it came to youth bail measures, because there are sufficient ideological fellow travellers of this Labor government in the other place; they would have got the numbers through. But I think they realised, when those horrific reports came out during that period between the houses – that horrific abduction, armed robbery and bashing outside Glen Eira College and reports in my own electorate of students being robbed and bashed on Glenferrie Road and students being robbed and bashed at Chadstone shopping centre; my colleague the member for Brighton and others and I have all got stories – the idea that you say to young offenders ‘You can commit some of the most serious offences our statute books know and you will face the lowest test we have for bail’ makes no sense and puts us at risk.

I welcome the fact that the government through these amendments is withdrawing all those changes to youth bail. The government is trying to save face; I understand that. They claim it is not a backflip.

James Newbury: What do you call it?

Michael O’BRIEN: Well, we will see. If the government comes back with exactly the same dumb amendments next year, then I will say, ‘Okay, well, they haven’t backflipped’.

James Newbury: ‘They haven’t learned.’

Michael O’BRIEN: ‘They haven’t learned’ – correct, member for Brighton – ‘they haven’t learned.’ We have offered to work with the government. We did not propose ‘hang ’em high’ laws, we said something sensible. If a young person, a 17-year-old, a 16-year-old, is charged with a very serious offence – rape, aggravated burglary, aggravated carjacking, sexual penetration of a child under

12 – at least have the medium-tier test for bail. Now, it remains to be seen whether the government wants to work constructively with this side of the house when it comes to youth bail. We will probably only know that when we see the bill that comes back next year, but at least for the next few months until that youth offences bill comes back I think Victorians will be safer than they would have been had these amendments not been put through.

So with this bill and in fact these amendments there is the good, the bad and the ugly. There are some aspects of this we do support, because we do not want to see people held on remand for offences for which they would not go to jail even if convicted. That makes no sense to anybody. And we agree the way in which the courts have interpreted and applied previous bail amendments of this Parliament has led to unintended consequences, so it was actually quite right that as a Parliament we looked to try and resolve those. That is why I have offered to and to some extent have worked with the Attorney-General to try and get some of these bail amendments agreed on a bipartisan basis. But we do think the government has got it wrong in some areas. On youth bail they have got it wrong, and they are now trying to withdraw those aspects and reconsider them – and I encourage the government to seriously reconsider them.

To conclude my remarks, one area where the government has desperately got it wrong and I think will be putting the community at risk is abolishing the offence of committing an indictable offence while on bail. The Police Association Victoria warned the government back in March that removing this offence would put community safety at risk. This government thinks it knows better. I do not think it does, and as a consequence the government will bear full responsibility for any reduction in community safety as a result of that change.

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (15:42): I am going to make a very brief statement on this matter. I agree with part of what the member for Malvern just said, because at the end of the day we all want the community to be safe. I keep track of the crime stats in my own electorate. I am not oblivious to the fact that there has been a spike in crime. We see it anecdotally and we see it statistically. The member for Malvern referred to that ugly incident in Glen Huntly. In the wake of that incident I convened a meeting of all of the secondary school principals of my electorate and senior police from both Glen Eira and Kingston, and no doubt there are concerns that school principals hold on behalf of their students. But I would point out a couple of things if I can make two contributions on this matter.

The first is: this government does take community safety very seriously. That is why under this government Victoria has the largest police force in the country. We have actually recruited record numbers of police in the time that we have been in government, and I have absolute faith in our dedicated police that just like they dealt with the last time back in 2017 when we had a spike in crime they are dealing with this as well. The second thing I would say: there has been a troubling incidence of youth crime. Kids of 13, 14, 15, 16 have been committing crimes, and because we have things like CCTV and social media we can actually see it in a more confronting way now. But what I would contribute to this point is that while I am concerned about community safety just like any other resident of my electorate, what I am more concerned about is that a young 13-year-old offender who has many, many years of life ahead of them does not become an adult offender. We need to ensure that these young people who are committing unacceptable crimes now do not continue to commit these crimes into their adult years, because things just get worse if that happens. The community loses out. The community is not more safe if that 13-year-old as a 21-year-old is committing these same crimes, because they will not be committing the same crimes, they will be committing worse crimes. We do need to place an emphasis on ensuring that we are turning young offenders into good, decent adults.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (15:45): I just intend to make a few brief comments on the amendments. But first I acknowledge the work of the Shadow Attorney-General who, throughout this process with the bill, has led and has proposed a number of amendments to the government which they have picked up on. They were proposals that were well meaning, they were right, and it was good to see that the government has picked those up.

In short, the government got the balance wrong on what they were proposing in this bill, especially in relation to youth bail. In my community, Brighton was not even on the data map when it came to aggravated burglaries. We are now the number one suburb in inner Melbourne for aggravated burglaries. The Shadow Attorney made the point that many of these crimes committed by young people most affect young people. I speak very regularly, because of the incidence in my community, to the young children and often mothers who are confronted with these criminals in their homes. Oftentimes these families will walk downstairs to find home invaders in their home – some of the most shocking crimes you can possibly imagine. In one circumstance a young guy went out to get breakfast, went out to get his Weet-Bix in the morning, and two fellows were there with machetes to meet him in his kitchen. So it is important that when we set the laws of this state we do it in a way that ensures people who are committing the most serious crimes have consequences for their actions. What concerns me is not that the government have pulled back from what they were wrongly proposing; what I am concerned about is the word that was used at the time, which was that the government was just ‘pausing’ what they were proposing – pausing.

They got the balance wrong, and I would say to the government: work with the opposition through the Shadow Attorney, who has from the get-go looked at this bill, spoken with the government and offered solutions to this bill. I was with him in the government briefings where he proposed these reforms in a spirit of bipartisanship. I would call on the government to look at what they have paused, consider the impact, consider what police have said will be the impact of implementing these changes and do the right thing for Victorians and for Victorian victims.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (15:48): I will start by saying that the Greens oppose the particular amendment which, had the amendment not been made, would have allowed the repeal of the reverse onus test in the Bail Act 1977. In other words, we support removing the reverse onus test in the Bail Act. However, we also support the amendment which introduces a review to the legislation. Since we are voting on these together, we will oppose the house amendments as I understand. We are voting on them as a bloc. However, it is important to make the point that one of the best things in this bail reform was removing the reverse onus test for children. Given that that has now been pulled out of the bail reform bill, the best bit has gone. Therefore the Greens will oppose the house amendments. It is critical that we oppose these, because the most common cause for particularly younger children to be in prison is to be on remand because they were denied bail. One of the commonest causes for that is their failure to pass the reverse onus test. Applying this stringent criterion for bail on young accused has led to the unnecessary imprisonment of hundreds of teenagers in Victoria.

Therefore we are undoing the most important criminal justice reform before it has even had a chance to happen. The government’s stated reason for this is that they do not want to fuel a law and order debate that is not necessary. I understand their concerns, but that is going to be the same situation next year. They are planning to apparently bring in this reform next year. The political situation is not going to be any different. The government did not need the assistance of the Liberals to pass the full bail bill unamended in the other place – it does not require the Liberals’ vote to achieve this. The numbers will not have changed in the other place next year. The political situation will not have changed, because the conservatives will always whip up a law and order debate. The government’s best chance to bring in this critical justice reform, which will reduce the number of children in prison, is to do it now. That is why the Greens will oppose the amendments.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (79): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Colin Brooks, Tim Bull, Josh Bull, Martin Cameron, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Annabelle Cleeland, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Chris Crewther, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D’Ambrosio, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Wayne Farnham, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, 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, Tim McCurdy,

MOTIONS

Tuesday 17 October 2023

Legislative Assembly

3751

Steve McGhie, Cindy McLeish, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, John Pesutto, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Michaela Settle, David Southwick, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallenge, Emma Vulin, Peter Walsh, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Jess Wilson, Belinda Wilson

Noes (4): Gabrielle de Vietri, Sam Hibbins, Tim Read, Ellen Sandell

Motion agreed to.

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

Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

Royal assent

The SPEAKER (15:57): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2023.

Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

Special Investigator Repeal Bill 2023

Appropriation

The SPEAKER (15:57): I have received messages from the Governor recommending appropriations for the purposes of the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 and the Special Investigator Repeal Bill 2023.

Motions

Government appointment process

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (15:57): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier for the continued politicisation of appointments to independent government positions, with at least 33 former Labor members appointed to over 55 positions, noting that despite earlier denials, Martin Pakula is now on the Labor gravy train.

Leave refused.

Business of the house

Standing and sessional orders

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (15:57): I desire to move, by leave:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow general business, notice of motion 15, relating to the reintroduction of non-government business time, to be moved immediately.

Leave refused.

Program

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (15:58): I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5 pm on 19 October 2023:

Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

Special Investigator Repeal Bill 2023

State Taxation Acts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2023.

We have certainly had a sombre start to this week's sitting as the house took time to condole all those who have lost their lives, and their impacted families, in the Israel and Gaza region, when the house took the opportunity to condemn the acts of the terrorist organisation Hamas. I want to use this opportunity to thank all members of the house for the way in which they attended to this very sombre motion today. I think it was very much appreciated by those from impacted communities who came in to observe that debate.

As a consequence, we are getting to our government business program at 4 pm on the first day, but we have a very busy week ahead of us, with some substantial bills to be debated in this place, all of which deliver on the Allan Labor government's commitment and work to continue to get things done for the people of Victoria. That is the approach of our government. It is the commitment of our government. It is the way in which all members on this side of the house approach every single day – focused on the needs of Victorians; ensuring that we come into this place; that we bring the concerns, the aspirations and the wishes of our community to this place; and that we deliver the legislation that is required to meet those needs, those aspirations and those wishes.

The Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 continues to respond to the work of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence, and I really want to take this moment to congratulate the Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation for the work that she has done. I know many members on this side of the chamber are really looking forward to talking to this bill. All of us have stories, as members in this place, from constituents whose lives have been turned upside down because of the losses associated with gambling – the real and terrible impacts that gambling can have on the lives of so many people. I know that people will be sharing both those experiences of their constituents and indeed in some instances perhaps even their own lived experience.

The State Taxation Acts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2023 – I know that those on the other side are probably champing at the bit to speak to this bill. Well, let me tell you, so are we on this side of the house, because we are really conscious of the way that this bill seeks to increase housing supply across this state. It is making sure that we address the issues related with the unconscionable number of vacant houses that currently exist in this state. We are making sure that land bankers will pay the price of not developing the properties that they acquire. This government is serious about bringing on more housing supply, and that is exactly what this bill goes to. So once again, there will be many people on this side of the house looking forward to explaining to those opposite what this bill delivers. They can dress it up however they like. They can stay on the side of land bankers or people that acquire many, many properties. They could do that, but we will take the opportunity to outline to the house the real intent of this bill.

Finally, having concluded their work, there is a bill to repeal the Office of the Special Investigator. So once again, it is a full program of business. I commend the government business program to the house.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (16:03): I rise to speak on the government business program for the week, which does propose three bills, and in doing so I do feel that it is important to acknowledge the time the house spent this afternoon speaking to the matter of the events in Israel, the terrorist attacks in Israel, 10 days ago and the community that came in to Parliament today, both in the Queens Hall and out on the steps. Hundreds of members of the Jewish community came in to hear both sides of the chamber speak to those matters and show their solidarity and support. It was an important opportunity to see both sides of the chamber with the community, outside the chamber and on the steps.

In terms of the government business program itself, I move an amendment:

That the words 'State Taxation Acts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2023' be omitted.

I move the amendment on the basis that the government have put forward a bill and should not be surprised that only two weeks ago, when they introduced it into the Parliament and the community, the property sector and, frankly, mum-and-dad home owners all very quickly expressed their deep concern about what was being proposed with the bill and the pernicious nature of the bill, the coalition moved

that the community should be given more time to consider the impact of that bill, and the amendment that I move today on behalf of the coalition is in aid of that. In the same spirit that we sought to extend the amount of time that the bill would be laid on the table, this amendment would seek to take that item off the government business program so that the community can be fully across or better across what is being proposed – a bill that we know the community had incredibly deep concerns about when the bill was first introduced, and I will not go into the details of that. Those have been covered quite extensively in the media – a surprise introduction, some might say, a surprise announcement. The industry was very quick to point out their concerns. I will not quote them again, because I do not think that it would go to the matter of the question before us. But it would be fair to say there were genuine concerns by industry that what was being proposed was being proposed without any notice, and all industry was asking for was time to understand what was being proposed and an opportunity to provide feedback on that. That is what the amendment that I move today is in aid of.

Over the last week we have had a government briefing on the bill, and there are genuine concerns. There are genuine, detailed concerns that we have with the bill and what is being proposed. There were some pretty troubling details provided in that briefing around people who own homes having to provide receipts of where they shop nearby to prove they are using their own homes. That is what we are talking about here. We are talking about a new tax that is being extended to people on their own homes – people who work hard, people who save and buy a second property and will now in some circumstances have their water and sewage sifted through to work out how often they are at the site. I moved the amendment in the hope that the government will consider a fair and reasonable attempt by the coalition – we have heard from the industry, we have heard from the community about their concerns about this bill, and we would say to the government, ‘Don’t be arrogant. Provide the community, provide industry, with an opportunity to understand what’s being proposed. Provide an opportunity for the community to understand what’s being proposed.’ That is what this amendment would seek to do. Initially we proposed an extra two weeks – and we would accept the extra two weeks if that is the way the government saw fit – to provide industry with an opportunity to understand the new measures in the bill, especially ones around spying on home owners.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (16:08): Thank you for that eye-opening speech. I will start by saying that again, ipso facto, here we are. We are in Parliament. It is a Tuesday. The members of the opposition are opposing the government business program and putting up amendments. It is almost like they will lose the division at the end of this if they call for one. This is a very important government business program. We heard from people only 5 minutes ago speaking about why the gambling reforms are so important. I can confirm and concur that there are an estimated 330,000 Victorians every year who experience harm from gambling, and it costs an estimated \$7 billion a year for Victorians. This Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 of course came out of an inquiry focused on those who experience harm. I know there are plenty of people on this side of the house who will be champing at the bit to speak on that and make sure that we give that a good argument and get behind it. We know that, for some, gambling is a bit of a pastime they might do once on a weekend for an AFL footy game or something like that. But for many it is not a benign activity – it is an addiction – and these reforms are sensible, they are proportionate and they are necessary to prevent and reduce the harm from gambling in our community. I know that in this house there are members of several communities and they will speak on behalf of their communities and share some stories. They are communities that are well over-represented as far as statistics for gambling harm go.

Of course we on this side of the house are very, very happy to speak on the State Taxation Acts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2023. I will be focusing my remarks, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, on two specific bits of this bill, and one is obviously the changes to the vacant residential land tax, which will be put in place to encourage more existing properties to be made available to renters right across Victoria and encourage faster development of vacant land in established areas of Melbourne. But there are also the changes to protect consumers by prohibiting property developers and others from passing through their tax liabilities to often unsuspecting purchasers.

To provide some context around this – again, it was mentioned previously the position we find ourselves in statewide and nationwide – right across the nation housing is one of the biggest challenges we face at the moment. The latest data shows that in June this year housing affordability in Australia crashed to its lowest in 30 years. We are talking about not just houses and homes, we are talking about a roof over someone's head – a very, very basic human right. We have seen successive rate hikes and booming housing prices, and that means it is harder than ever to service a mortgage. This government has chosen to do something. If you are in the cheap seats over there today –

A member interjected.

Paul EDBROOKE: Well, it is not the nosebleed section. We will find that there are people on the opposite side of the house that want to go the low road with the state taxation bill. They will pick it apart however they can. It is a pretty solid bill – it is very hard to do. The issue we have is that you can sit over there and do nothing or you can actually build houses, you can change policy in planning to make sure that there is more housing available and you can introduce levies to make sure that short-stay accommodation comes onto the market and actually funds more housing. That is what this government is busy doing. And I for one, like most of my colleagues here – let me know if you are proud too – am very proud to be standing up in full support of this government business program.

We have got some other bills that have been introduced that we will be speaking on today, and they are very important too. But for me, with housing being one of the biggest challenges we face, we need to do something. It is this government – this progressive government – that is actually taking that on, being brave, being bold and ignoring those sticks in the mud that say, 'Sorry, we can't do this. We can't make change to make our brothers and sisters in our community that haven't got homes actually get a roof over their head'. I think those people and anyone that is trying to deny this government business program and is wasting time on that need to have a good look in the mirror and talk to their constituents, especially people that might be struggling with homelessness or struggling to get a house these days. I commend the government business program to the house.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (16:13): I rise to speak on the government business program today – another week, another tax, it seems. But I do want to first start by echoing the member for Brighton's sentiments and acknowledging what has already occurred in this place today, and that is the condolence motion and adjourning for an hour to recognise the horrific occurrences in Israel over the last 10 days. I also want to support the member for Brighton's amendment removing the State Taxation Acts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2023, allowing more time – an extra two weeks would be fantastic. This bill has caused quite a lot of alarm. We are getting phone calls daily and I am having people stop me in the street to ask about this, particularly in regions and small towns, where the message has not been clear – what a surprise – and particularly for vacant houses and vacant land. Maybe it does not happen so much in other places, but I know out in the regions in small towns buying a block of land and gifting that to children on occasions when they are to marry or when they come back – it is not so much land banking if there is rural land or rural lifestyle blocks available – will happen. That is a common occurrence, and that will then turn into housing for new families to keep them in the regions into the future, which is actually quite a valuable tool. It encourages those young families to come back after they may have moved away for university or for a career et cetera. More consultation is needed on that.

We are also getting concerned real estate agents who are reporting that initially, when the land tax and the land windfall tax was introduced, they were losing north of six rental properties per week to be sold to owner-occupiers. That is still occurring. Those rental properties are being pulled from the private rental market. These investors are selling those and going into commercial real estate. Those commercial premises, whether they are shops in the main street, will remain vacant. We know what happens when you drive down small regional and rural towns with a main street full of empty shops. It is an eyesore, and it does nothing for community morale. So pushing those private investors that have had investment properties – and most the time it is only one additional property – into the

commercial real estate space, where they do not actually need to put good paying tenants into those shops, is a real concern. We have had concerns from real estate agents for weeks now.

I do want to keep this brief, but I did want to support the member for Brighton in his amendment to remove the State Taxation Acts and Other Acts Amendment Bill. Let us talk about the gambling legislation. I know that we have a full program to talk about the State Taxation Acts and Other Acts Amendment Bill. There is a lot. If we can get through that entire program, it will be interesting to see, because I know that every one of the Victorian Nationals wants to have their say on all of those. The Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 has also caused concern, particularly for local operators, who might not be affected in the same way as city operators. But again, we have terrific community clubs that have machines, and they are concerned about some of how this amendment will affect them as well. There will be some great contributions. We have heard from the governing bodies over the last month. We will have some great contributions from the Nationals, and I very much look forward to hearing all of those. We oppose the government business program, and I support the member for Brighton in his amendment.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (16:18): I must say it is a busy week ahead, and I am disappointed that we have to start slowly here. We saw fantastic collegiality and in fact probably the most important work of this Parliament earlier this morning. I join with everyone in expressing my deep sorrow for all impacted communities in what is a terrible, terrible time.

Some people impacted in our communities with gambling harm may be surprised by the member for Mildura's concern – vague concern – that she shared about operators in her region. I look forward to her contribution on that bill so we can learn more details and specifics about the poker machine operators that she is worried about. But I cannot worry too long. We have got too much to do. We are here with our sleeves rolled up. We have got a lot of serious and substantive bills to put through the house. These are things that continue to show our government is progressing its big, bold reforms, and they also demonstrate our care and concern for the most vulnerable in our community. There can be no mistaking that people who experience gambling harm – and there are some 330,000 a year in our state – are some of the most vulnerable that we have. That is why we are continuing in our efforts to make sure that we are doing all that we can to make the operating environment as safe as possible for them. This is the next step towards that. Certainly when gambling has been raised by me previously with constituents, I have had people contacting me regarding what we are sure to hear other members of the house contribute today around the financial distress, mental health concerns, relationship issues and the intersection between gambling and family violence. So I look forward to hearing from members on this side and the other, especially those members who come from the outer suburban areas going into regional such as me, because we know that sometimes a venue with poker machines is the only social space available. I look forward to hearing contributions on that.

The member for Brighton's surprise at the State Taxation Acts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2023 surprised me. I was surprised at his surprise. Why would he be surprised that the Labor government is busy getting on with fixing the housing situation in this state? What is surprising about a Labor government doing everything that it can to increase supply in this state? What is surprising about a Labor government not being afraid to speak to all industries and to make sure that everybody is accountable in the way that they should be for doing the right things by Victorians who need a home? The member for Brighton is concerned about receipts and sifting through excrement. If he is worried about reading his own speeches, that is fine. But that is certainly not what I will be sifting through today.

In fact this is just one more step in our bold agenda to build more homes and free up more homes for rent. We have made no secret of it. We have made a whole housing statement of it. There are press releases that can be viewed – media releases. But do not take it from us. Take it from the people who expressed great relief at knowing that they have got a government that is not opposing and is not getting in the way of addressing the issue. They have got a government that is getting on and fixing it. People do not care what is done to slow down what is happening in this place. They want to see real

action, and that is what this government is doing – real action, getting it done, getting houses built and getting roofs over people’s heads.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (16:23): I rise to oppose the government business program, and I do so because one of the three bills in particular that is being discussed in the Parliament this week is the State Taxation Acts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2023, which is introducing another two taxes, taking this government’s tax numbers to 51 and 52 that they will have introduced during their term in government. These two new taxes will be added to the other 50 taxes that will continue to punish Victoria and punish Victorians because of the mismanagement of a Labor government that has been in now for over a decade and has completely and utterly sent this state into an absolute crisis financially, evidenced quite clearly by the need to continue to punish.

The lack of understanding that growth is about incentivising and assisting the community to flourish so that we can increase income is very disappointing, but that shows this government’s difficulty ability in understanding financial management. But what it really reflects for me is just how desperate the government is. Despite the debt, they cannot even show how these taxes will improve the state of Victoria. It reminds me of when I was doing my research around the world on a scholarship about a decade ago. When I went to countries like those in Eastern Europe and South America, when a jurisdiction was in real financial trouble from corruption and mismanagement of finances what you saw out in the regions was that the roads were in a parlous state, just like we are seeing in south-west Victoria and right across regional Victoria. You can see in the member for Ripon’s seat, not far from me, that the state of the roads is appalling, as they are in South-West Coast. This is a reflection of a government that has forgotten its regions and has not got the money to do what it is responsible for, which is to govern right across the state.

The State Taxation Acts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2023, with the two new taxes, demonstrates how the government just have not got the money to do the responsible things they have to. The Minister for Environment is at the table. Just two days ago I was shown around the showgrounds in my electorate, an asset which belongs to the government. During a recent storm the roof blew off the poultry shed. They showed me the disrepair of the showgrounds – it has gotten so bad that during a windstorm they lost the roof. They went to the government and said, ‘Can we have some money to fix the roof?’ We are talking about a tenant asking their landlord for a roof over the shed for events. You would think that it was a basic, fundamental requirement of a landlord to provide a roof for a tenant. However, they were told that it is their problem, that the government cannot help and to go away and fix it themselves. The show is on later this month. They showed me that the electrics are very dangerous – when it is wet, they short out. They also showed me the potholes on the road inside the showgrounds, around the edge of the arena, and how WorkSafe are calling that out.

Pauline Richards: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this is a tight procedural discussion about the government business program. I would ask you to bring the member back to the government business program.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The debate is on the government business program motion and the member for Brighton’s amendment to it. The member was coming back to the relevance of her comments to the government business program, I am sure.

Roma BRITNELL: I was talking about the fact that on the government business program motion members on the other side have been talking about how they feel it is important that this tax that they are introducing will provide relief for the housing crisis and provide more assistance to renters, and I was referring to the fact that when it comes to the assets that this state is responsible for, that the government is responsible for, there is no responsibility shown by the government to do exactly that for its tenants.

It is very disappointing that we see this government continually introducing more and more taxes but the situation for the Victorian community continuing to deteriorate. You see that with the deterioration

of the roads, particularly in regional Victoria. This government has completely forgotten about its constituents in South-West Coast, where the roads are in a parlous state of disrepair. I continue to oppose this government business program because we have not had the 28 days that we requested. As a matter of respect to our Victorian community, I think it is only reasonable that we have the opportunity to consult and see what impact this will have on our community members, as I have demonstrated.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Leader of the House has moved the government business program motion. The member for Brighton has moved an amendment to this motion. He has proposed that the words ‘State Taxation Acts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2023’ be omitted. The question is:

That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

Members supporting the member for Brighton’s amendment should vote no.

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (51): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D’Ambrosio, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (28): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O’Brien, Michael O’Brien, Kim O’Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Jess Wilson

Question agreed to.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (51): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D’Ambrosio, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (28): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O’Brien, Michael O’Brien, Kim O’Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Jess Wilson

Motion agreed to.

*Members statements***Oakleigh Golf Course**

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (16:37): I rise in support of the Oakleigh public golf course, the Oakleigh Golf Club, the Oakleigh Veterans Golf Club and the thousands of people who play at this fantastic course. Monash council is seeking community input on the future of the golf course – whether the golfing facilities should be improved or the course transformed into a park. Any closure will displace the local golf club and see an end to the 30,000 rounds played there each year. Accessible local sports facilities are of paramount importance. Oakleigh Golf Course is an entirely public venue offering an affordable and inclusive environment for individuals of all ages and skill levels to enjoy. We should be encouraging people to participate in sport and adopt an active lifestyle. The Oakleigh Golf Course has been a cherished community asset since the 1970s, and it should remain as an active space for sport in our community. I urge local residents and golf lovers to share their perspectives with Monash council as part of the consultation process.

Glen Eira child care

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (16:38): I would like to express my support for the families affected by Glen Eira council's recent preliminary decision to close their early learning centres. This decision is disheartening, particularly given the timing as we approach the end of the year. Child care and early education is an essential service. Glen Eira council's early learning centres have been a cost-effective alternative for many families. They are known for their convenient locations, for the comfort of their familiar environments and for their staff. I have heard from several parents who are deeply distressed. They lack confidence in the council's decision and are feeling unsupported in this trying time. I strongly urge Glen Eira council to reconsider their decision and consider the critical need for accessible early learning services.

Berwick Community Awards

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (16:38): Last week we had the pleasure of celebrating the Berwick Community Awards, which is a way to celebrate our local volunteers in the community – those that continue to give back, whether it is through schools, through community organisations or, like this year's Berwick awards champion Andrew Fyfe, through the Berwick Show and Akoonah Park.

Andy gives so much back to the local community. He has been involved with the show for many decades. I know he has also got his children involved in giving back to the community. The work he has done down at Akoonah Park is celebrated for so many things – our markets, community programs and community support – but probably most well known is the Berwick Show. We are lucky to have the Berwick Show once a year. It is on the last weekend in February if anyone wants to come down.

I have been to the Berwick Show all but one year of my life so far, and it is one of the greatest highlights of my career to go back there in a work capacity and to speak to my local community in a positive way. We used to get down there and hand out balloons. We do not hand out balloons anymore – they are not very environmentally friendly – so we go across now with some of our bags. We have got better bags now to hand out to people so that they can use them in their shopping. I think it is really important and a great opportunity.

To all the others who were nominated from the schools and CFAs – like Peter Obeth, who has had 8000 turnouts as a CFA volunteer, all for free to give back to our community – I want to say to each and every one of you: thank you so much for everything you have done, not just from me but from everyone in the community. You are the people that make Berwick better, and I am sure working with you we are going to continue to improve people's lives through your volunteerism.

Niti Bhargava

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (16:40): I rise to speak on the achievements of Niti Bhargava, a resilient migrant woman from India who is a mortgage broker and is now heavily involved in the local Kororoit community. Niti approached me at the beginning of this year, and I met with her for the first time on International Women's Day at a lunch which I held in Kororoit in Aintree. Since then I have remained connected with Niti. Inspired by her own experiences, Niti has built a financial literacy program designed to educate migrant women and families on several aspects of finance, from general banking to wealth management. After hearing stories of financial and domestic abuse, prevalent not just in Kororoit but throughout Victoria's migrant communities, Niti dedicated her time to volunteering and offering these programs. She aims to truly give these migrant women the skills and knowledge to be financially independent. Niti has hosted two successful financial literacy sessions for migrant women in Kororoit, both with a positive and encouraging turnout. She is also actively involved in breast cancer awareness and fundraising. She is a strong advocate for women in sport in Kororoit, especially through her love of cricket. Most recently Niti was featured in *Mortgage Professional Australia* magazine. This recognition truly shows her outstanding achievements and ongoing commitment to the local community. I want to congratulate Niti for her tremendous achievements, and I am excited to see her commitment to educating and empowering migrant women to help shape a stronger Kororoit.

Gippsland East electorate wind farms

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (16:41): I want to use this opportunity to raise an issue with the state ministers for environment, agriculture and outdoor recreation over considerable concerns that I and others have with the proposed wind farm developments off the Gippsland coast. It is also an issue that I have raised with the federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy. The issue that has arisen, after a series of meetings with the Lakes Entrance's Fishing Fleet, is the footprint for wind farm developments in Bass Strait, the eastern end of it, is over very, very significant fishing grounds. It is not possible to have a wind farm development in that area without impacting very, very severely on Lakes Entrance commercial fishermen. It is an industry that is so important to not only the Lakes Entrance economy but also the Victorian economy. It is an industry that has had a spatial squeeze in the past from the oil and gas industry expansion, and these fishermen do not want to see the loss of more commercial fishing grounds. I am advised that the federal government will be issuing feasibility licences potentially later this year, and we want to make sure that there are no feasibility licences issued for the eastern end of that zone, because that will be another step towards a development that will impact on the fishing fleet. They are happy to coexist, but they want to be included in discussions to make sure that their fishing areas are not impacted.

Rotary Club of Wendouree

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (16:43): It was an honour to attend the Rotary Wendouree breakfast club meeting last week at the Grand Ballarat. Thank you to president Geoff James for the invitation to attend. It was great to see such a big turnout there to hear from district governor Ian McKay. I want to thank the Rotarians of the Wendouree breakfast club for the volunteering and fundraising work they do across the Ballarat community, including raising awareness about mental health, suicide prevention and reducing family violence as well as working for decades to eliminate polio globally and malaria in the Pacific. I wish to congratulate Ellie Beer and Robert McDougall on receiving the honour of being named Paul Harris fellows in recognition of their significant contribution to Rotary and the community. Well done.

Ballarat Girl Guides

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (16:43): Congratulations to Ballarat Girl Guides on celebrating 100 years of guiding in Ballarat. It was wonderful to join with Catherine King, the mayor and generations of Ballarat Girl Guides to celebrate their centenary in our community. Congratulations to long-time leaders Rosemary Garth, Dawn Fischer, Sandra Ballard and Margaret Littlehales, who were

presented with special Adult Good Service Awards by Girl Guides Victoria state commissioner Linda Kors. The awards recognise their extensive voluntary contributions to guiding over many, many decades. Over the last 100 years society has changed but so have Girl Guides. However, the Guide promise made by all Guides – to do their best, to be true to themselves and develop their beliefs, to serve their communities and Australia, and to live by the Guide law – remains a constant. Wishing the Girl Guides much success.

Dr Philip Gan

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (16:44): South-West Coast is fortunate to be home to so many committed health professionals. All our health workers have been instrumental in getting us through the recent pandemic and the challenges of an ever-increasing workload due to Victoria's doctor shortage crisis. One of the many talented specialists in the South-West Coast that we call home is Dr Philip Gan, who is a leading surgeon. He has developed a technique where he minimises the invasiveness and the trauma of surgery. Dr Gan has invented an advanced keyhole laparoscopic device, with patents granted globally. This invention helps patients recover as painlessly and as quickly as possible from gastrointestinal surgery, reducing time in hospital by half, helping our stretched hospital resources and reducing hospital surgery waitlists. It is very complex for doctors to get their inventions into the hands of more surgeons without external support, due to processes like expensive clinical trials, and therefore support from government is necessary if we want to see more patients benefit from this invention. This is a great opportunity for our state and one that could be easily missed. Dr Gan's application should be revisited by the government so that we can see our healthcare workers reduce our hospital waiting list and get people back into life sooner. I thank Dr Gan and all health professionals for their commitment to our community.

Darley Park Community and Sports Centre

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (16:46): Over the weekend I was delighted to officially open the Darley Park Community and Sports Centre, a new \$5.2 million game-changing facility. It was great to celebrate the opening with Steve McGhie, the member for Melton and a strong advocate for this project. We were joined by members of the Darley Cricket Club, the Darley Football Netball Club and representatives from the Moorabool Shire Council. I particularly want to acknowledge Rod Ward, who is of course a lifelong supporter of the club. Sporting clubs are the absolute heart of our regional communities, and it is so important that they have these excellent facilities. I know our community and sporting groups will put the swish new pavilion to great use.

Darley Football Netball Club

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (16:46): As exciting as the new pavilion is, it pales in comparison to the extraordinary results that we have seen from the Darley Devils over the past month. Congratulations to the senior men's and women's football teams on their premierships in the Ballarat Football Netball League. Seeing the women in action on grand final day at Mars Stadium was amazing. Focus and skill defined the girls' victory, and Lilli Condon led from the front and was a deserving winner of the best on ground medal. And the finish in the men's comp was pretty extraordinary – Darley kicking a goal with seconds to go to win the premiership. Congratulations to players, staff, volunteers and members. I look forward to seeing you at the club.

Sandringham electorate funding

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (16:47): If this government, the now Allan Labor government, had not wasted more than \$30 billion on cost overruns on major projects; if their interest payments were not \$15 million a day, climbing to \$22 million a day at the end of the forward estimates; and if we were not the highest taxing state in the nation and we did not have the highest debt in the nation – more than Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania combined – in my community we would be able to afford so much more and provide the infrastructure that my community needs not just for this generation but for the next generation. We would be able to fund

local police to keep our community safe and more traffic lights on Bay Road. We would be able to fund local primary and secondary schools – Beaumaris North Primary School, Beaumaris Primary and Sandringham secondary college. We would be able to fund in a greater way Sandringham Hospital, the caring heart of my community. There would be more frequent buses on the 825 route to help those Beaumaris Secondary College students who are crammed into that route 825 bus at school pick-up and drop-off times. We would be able to better protect our environment and our natural resources, including the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary, or be able to preserve land at the former Gas and Fuel site on Nepean Highway in Highett and preserve the Sir William Fry Reserve instead of slapping on top and underneath it a suburban rail loop that no-one in my community ever asked for. We would be able to afford rail-under-road options at both the Highett Road and the Wickham Road level crossings, and we would be able to keep Latrobe Street open. We would be able to do so much more in my community if this government did not waste as much.

Lara electorate social housing

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (16:49): It was my honour to recently welcome the new Minister for Housing and the member for Geelong to the Lara electorate to officially open three new social housing homes as part of a \$1.45 million development at Camellia Crescent in Norlane. These homes are thanks to a partnership between Homes Victoria and the Northern Geelong Rental Housing Cooperative. The units are a great example of what can happen when the government works with community. These units were built for the express purpose of enabling existing members to access a smaller home that is the right size for them and in turn free up three family-sized homes for families in need. The homes are designed to meet the Livable Housing Design Guidelines, including having double-glazed windows, double insulation, solar panels and solar hot water, helping residents keep their power bills down once they move in.

The work that the Northern Geelong Rental Housing Cooperative do is so important in my community. Their vision is to empower their members, and their values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity are to be commended. The co-op being governed by members and the committee being made up of members mean that the residents are involved in the ongoing decision-making and responsibility for their housing and living conditions. These units are a great example of what we can do when we listen to community and work with community. I want to congratulate Vicki Ross, the manager of the co-op, and everyone involved for bringing this project to fruition.

Sunraysia Indian Association

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (16:50): I want to acknowledge and congratulate the Sunraysia Indian Association on their festival of lights event recently. The event, hosted by Dr Ajay Chowdhry, gave us all a beautiful insight into the celebration of Diwali, and he filled in beautifully between the colourful performances of dance, song and music before everyone moved outside for food, festivities and fireworks. It was a brilliant event and so well supported by the wider Mildura community.

Ouyen District Men's Shed

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (16:51): I wish to thank the members of the Ouyen men's shed for hosting me for lunch last week and showing me their extraordinary shed, which is in need of a new roof. They will be applying for project funding through the men's sheds grants program. We wish them all the very best. They have an extraordinary shed there and an extraordinary group of men. Rusty has pride of place on my desk in Parliament. They know exactly what I am talking about.

Heart Foundation

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (16:51): Last Friday night the Mildura Arts Centre was once again the focus of the Heart to Heart fundraiser for the Heart Foundation. Nardia Sheriff hosted a panel discussion around Australia's biggest killer, heart disease, before a truly funny yet confronting performance from Dilruk Jayasinha and his *Heart Stopper* show. The night was an emotional roller-coaster, but the support

show echoed and amplified our region's need for more adequate specialist cardiac services and highlighted and celebrated the extraordinary work of our local ambulance officers.

Ouyen Community Gym

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (16:52): Congratulations also to the Ouyen Community Gym committee, who have their magnificent gym that is now operational.

Mental health

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (16:52): Recently we acknowledged World Mental Health Day, and it is important to reflect on Victoria's journey in creating a fairer and more inclusive mental health system. Around three out of five people in our community who we lose to mental ill health have never interacted with a mental health service before. Three out of four people that we lose to mental ill health are men or boys. We have to keep destigmatising and raising the profile of mental ill health to make a more fair and more inclusive supportive service. It is one thing to have that ambition, but it is another to fund and invest in that.

The Andrews–Allan Labor governments have invested some \$5.7 billion in reforming our mental health system, responding to the 74 recommendations of the royal commission. This looks at things like establishing the mental health locals, which will be so transformational – 50 across our state and a further nine were announced recently, including at Dandenong; they are the front-door service for people who are struggling with mental ill health – all the way through to skilling up a substantive workforce. I give a big shout-out to our clinicians and our lived-experience workforce. We know that a big part of the royal commission's work was based on the lived experience of people who have suffered during that time. We need to scale up and support our mental health workforce. It was great to connect recently with Tandem and the lived-experience community workforce, who do an extraordinary job in this space. The Allan Labor government is transforming mental health for all Victorians in our community.

Cost of living

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (16:53): Prices are going up and people are struggling while big corporations like the supermarket duopoly are profiteering. This government claim that they cannot do anything about it – that it is not their problem. Here are four things the government could be doing right now to lower prices for everyone: (1) declare groceries a regulated industry to give the Essential Services Commission the power to prevent supermarket profiteering through price controls on essential items, (2) re-establish an office of prices so the government is on the side of everyday Victorians and is working with the community to deter excessive price rises with the power to monitor, investigate and expose excessive price rises across different industries, (3) appoint a minister for fair prices to lead efforts across government to stop unfair price hikes, to take on profiteering corporations like the supermarket duopoly and to ensure the government can be held to account and (4) support an inquiry into food affordability to look at ways to lower the cost of food and make sure that everyone has access to healthy, affordable food here in Victoria. The government has the power to act; it is choosing not to. Victorians desperately need direct government intervention to stop unfair price hikes.

Fairhills High School

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (16:54): A massive happy 50th birthday to Fairhills High School in my electorate. Fifty years ago Richard Nixon was sworn in for his second term as president, and the very first students of Fairhills High were walking through the door of a fantastic school that has provided an exemplary education to thousands of students. A big thankyou to all of the organisers of the birthday celebration, to all the fantastic Fairhills educators and to everyone who attended on the day. It was a great privilege to talk and to attend on a fantastic day for our community.

McMahons Road–Burwood Highway, Ferntree Gully

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (16:55): Some said it would never happen, but lights are now in the ground at the new McMahons Road intersection in Ferntree Gully, a huge project – 800 metres of new lanes, 500 metres of new turning lanes, hundreds of tonnes of crushed rock and God knows what else we are doing now. I tell you, it is massive. It is the biggest roads project in Knox. We are getting on with it, just like we said we would. The Allan Labor government will have this done by early 2024, and I was so proud to have secured this one back last year before the election.

Baby George

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (16:55): Some exciting news to share: Tash and I are now the very proud parents of our beautiful son George. It is fair to say George has had quite the journey into the world. He is happy, healthy, doing incredibly well and gorgeous. Tash was also great. She is a remarkable woman and a great mum already – no surprises there. We are elated that George is now here safe and sound. Tash has been incredible throughout these past few weeks and months as we have learned every pregnancy is different. A massive thanks to all the nurses, midwives, doctors and all the staff for everything. We are indeed very lucky to have the health care we enjoy. And for the benefit of George watching this one day: Mum and Dad love you very much.

Rowville electorate volunteers

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (16:56): Maybe the member for Bayswater can stop doorknocking in Rowville now. I rise to speak today about the fantastic volunteers in the electorate of Rowville. Just recently I had the pleasure of visiting the Knox Italian Community Club to witness the opening of the first Bocce Federation of Victoria games being held there in the local area of Rowville.

I also attended the presentation evening for the Knox district Scout association whilst giving an update on the fantastic opportunities Scouts are giving the kids in the community.

I was also pleased to visit the Digamber Jain Sansthan Melbourne meditation centre, which is located in Rowville, where our fantastic Jainism faith community has set up a spiritual centre that aims to support people's mental health.

City of Knox Australia Day awards

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (16:57): I am so proud of all the local communities in the electorate, and that is why it is so disappointing that the Knox council is pushing to scrap our Australia Day Knox community awards. Not only do these awards give the community a chance to recognise local heroes, but they also give clubs and societies a chance to recognise their own members, whose dedication and commitment often go unrecognised. I would like to urge residents in my electorate to take a stand against Knox council and sign my petition to save our Australia Day Knox community awards.

Melton level crossing removals

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (16:57): The past fortnight has seen a lot happening down in my electorate of Melton. The Melton community will be happy to hear that the Allan Labor government is progressing on the three Melton level crossing removals. All have undergone utility survey work, which involves geotechnical drilling which will assist in the determining of the final build plans.

Melton electorate citizenship ceremonies

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (16:58): We have welcomed over 1500 new Australians citizens to the Melton electorate – 70 at the Moorabool shire ceremonies. It was fantastic to meet with them all.

Melton Performing Arts

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (16:58): I also attended the Melton Performing Arts play, *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*. It was a great success. Well done to all the performers.

Binap Primary School

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (16:58): Last week I and the newly appointed Deputy Premier and Minister for Education Ben Carroll ventured out to the Binap Primary School site in Brookfield. We were joined by principal Jean Bentley and some of her new staff, and we were lucky enough to be there whilst the courts inside the new basketball stadium were being laid. The school will be open from term 1 next year, and I look forward to working with the school community into the future.

Exford Primary School

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (16:58): The Exford Primary School Big Hug community event was excellent, and I thank the organisers, donors, sponsors and volunteers. It was also an important occasion for the entire community to come together, showing support for the victims of the school bus crash. The strength of the school community and its leadership from principal Lisa Campo are commendable, and I thank them for their tireless efforts in supporting the staff, students and families every single day.

Darley Park Community and Sports Centre

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (16:59): I make reference to attending the official opening of the Darley Park Community and Sports Centre along with my great colleague the member for Eureka Michaela Settle. This project was funded through the Growing Suburbs Fund. It is a fantastic facility, and it is great for the sporting clubs in the community.

Wyndham early parenting centre

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (16:59): It is always a great thing to come here to this place and celebrate a project that you see from start to finish, and that is exactly what happened last week out in Werribee. Our Premier, the Minister for Health, the Minister for Children, the member for Point Cook and the member for Tarneit – some fabulous westies in total – got together, and we went down to check out Wyndham early parenting centre. This is such a great site for families in Wyndham. Wyndham is a community where over 120 babies are born each and every single week at Mercy Hospital alone. We need this centre. We have built it. It is going to be open in coming weeks, and it was fantastic to get in and see it before it was filled with families and children. Now, what we know is that not every journey as a new parent is an easy road to walk down. When things happen, like bub does not sleep, you need a place to go and you need experts with you to help you settle your baby, get to know them and slide into the crazy ride that is parenthood. This is an early parenting centre that was so needed and deserved by my local community. It was an absolute pleasure to be there with our new Premier to check it out. I cannot wait for our community to be able to access it.

Glen Waverley electorate

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (17:01): On Friday it was terrific to welcome the Treasurer to the Glen Waverley district for a jam-packed morning of local visits and meetings across my beautiful patch of the east. We started the day with a meeting in one of the delightful Brentford Square cafes, Culinaria, in Forest Hill bringing together a range of community stakeholders. These included Mitchell and Craig from the Glen Waverley traders, Penny and Mel from the Brentford Square traders, principal Jane Henderson from Vermont South Special School, principal Michael Cole from Glenallen special school, school council president Lisa Portell from Vermont Primary School, the CEO of the Cerebral Palsy Education Centre Claire Cotter and the manager of the Vermont South Neighbourhood House Carol l'Anson. Together we had a great discussion on the current challenges being experienced by these different groups, touching on how the Allan Labor government will continue to support these schools, community groups and businesses into the future. We also discussed how the Allan Labor government is making investments in our local community of Glen Waverley and how these will have an ongoing positive impact.

Following this great catch-up it was excellent to take the Treasurer down to Jells Park to view the exciting upgrades currently underway. With more than \$30 million being invested in walking path upgrades, the new Monash tennis centre and major improvements to the Jells Park sports fields there is no shortage of activity at Jells Park. The Allan Labor government is proud to be investing in the Glen Waverley district, and I look forward to working with the Treasurer to continue this important work.

Projex J

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (17:02): Just over three months ago, constituents Steve and Chantelle came to my office wanting to hold an event in memory of their son Jamerson. He loved fishing, and so they wanted to do a fishing tournament. Fast-forward, and after a lot of work by a lot of volunteers, on the weekend of 6 October the Projex J 'Get Busy Living' inaugural fishing tournament 2023 took place. It was a huge success bringing the community together. I congratulate Steve, Chantelle, the Westernport Angling Club, all of the volunteers and the sponsors for making it an awesome weekend.

Hastings electorate schools

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (17:02): On another matter, I have had the pleasure of holding principals' morning teas at my office in Somerville. We have held two events so far where I invite six principals from a range of local schools to talk about what matters to them. We sit down over homemade cake, tea and coffee and talk about what is happening within their schools and their communities. It is a great opportunity for me to hear about their needs but also for them to share ideas and outcomes with each other.

Hastings electorate bus services

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (17:03): On another matter, I met with upper house MP Tom McIntosh in Mornington recently to talk about planning for the cross-peninsula bus service from Hastings to Mornington. We are both excited about this project and agree on the importance of getting this planning right.

Motorcyclist safety

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (17:03): On another matter, October is Motorcyclist Awareness Month. Did anyone know that? No. It is the perfect time for all of us to remember that road safety is everyone's responsibility. There is a life behind every helmet. Share the road. Keep everyone safe.

One Tree Community Services

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (17:03): Recently I had the opportunity to visit One Tree children services in Altona Meadows. I would like to thank director Ruby McWaters and all the centre staff for their hospitality and their commitment to fostering a supportive learning environment for our community's littlest members. Kindergarten teacher Miss Stephanie's passion shone through, telling me that her focus is to instil the love for learning and create that thirst for the rest of their lives. Thank you for your passion and your foresight, and thank you to all the team at One Tree children's services. The long-term nature of their staffing profile is a credit to the centre and their management – that so many teachers are in there for the long haul.

Kaladhara Arts and Cultural Association

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (17:04): I would also like to thank the Kaladhara Arts and Cultural Association for the honour of being invited to their inaugural function celebrating Indian arts and culture. I would like to thank Karthick for inviting me to what was a fantastic event. We were honoured to listen to the drum troupe that welcomed Prime Minister Modi on his visit to Sydney recently. It was a particular highlight for me. Initiatives like the Kaladhara Arts and Cultural Association play an important role in sustaining and upholding cultural traditions that connect us across the community in Melbourne's west.

Ganesh Utsav

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (17:05): Lastly, I had the pleasure of attending Melbourne's Ganesh Utsav 2023 event, a major cultural event for the Hindu community. It was such a wonderful experience to be there, and I thank the president Vinayakk for his hospitality.

Dairy industry

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (17:05): Unfortunately, it is an age-old problem: huge multinational companies move into regional areas and forget that they are a part of the community as well. To that end I would like to commend the United Workers Union manufacturing dairy workers who are taking 48 hours strike action from tomorrow to go up against the companies of Saputo, Fonterra, Peters and Lactalis. These workers, some 1400 of them – and I believe that the Transport Workers' Union is going out in solidarity, all the truck drivers – are currently on strike. These workers are doing this because they only got very, very minimal wage increases over COVID. While people were at home globally, revenue increased for all of these companies by some 25 per cent and profits by over 170 per cent, yet these workers have to go on strike just to ask for a cost-of-living wage increase. To those workers at Saputo, Fonterra, Peters and Lactalis in Allansford, Warrnambool, Cobram, Leongatha, Tangambalanga, Laverton, Cobden, Darum, Stanhope and Mulgrave, you have the solidarity of not only me, of not only the members in this chamber, but the Victorian government as well.

Member for Ripon

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (17:06): It is my absolute honour and privilege to speak today to congratulate not only the newborn baby in our caucus but also a new married couple. Congratulations to Martha and Sam on their wedding only last weekend. It was a wonderful occasion. We are very excited about it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Correct titles would be appreciated.

Business of the house**Notices of motion**

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Jobs and Industry, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, Minister for Women) (17:07): I advise that the government does not wish to proceed with notices of motion, government business, today and ask that they remain on the notice paper.

Bills**Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023*****Second reading*****Debate resumed on motion of Melissa Horne:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (17:07): I am pleased to rise to speak on the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 and to give the opposition's position on this legislation which has been introduced by the government. It is part of a suite of reforms that were announced in July of this year and to a large degree also follows up some of the reforms resulting from the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence. There are two main parts to the legislation: the changes to mandatory closing hours for venues with electronic gaming machines and the changes to the casino with respect to the timing of payment of winnings issues for mandatory carded play and also the issue of a manager for the casino in the event that a casino licence is surrendered, cancelled or suspended.

Another aspect of this legislation relates to the issue of downtime. With respect to the institution of mandatory carded play, that will need to be managed by the third-party operator, being Intralot at the

moment. The legislation provides some guidance – some relief, if you like – in the event that that third-party operator has downtime or outages or technical issues that are beyond the capability of the casino or venue operators to manage. They will not be penalised for something beyond their control. Finally, there is the issue of a change to betting contingencies to allow the minister to prohibit wagering providers from offering bets on certain activities, including those outside Victoria. The current act already provides that power to the minister for activities within Victoria. This extends it to other jurisdictions as well, and I will go into more details on each of those throughout my contribution.

There is background to all of this, as I indicated. Although in the context of the bill, a 24-page bill, the issue of the mandatory closing hours for electronic gaming venues is literally two paragraphs – very brief – it is the substantive part of this legislation I think from a public perspective, given that many of the other issues are either minor or very restricted to the casino operations. The government announced on 16 July a series of gaming reforms, including this mandatory closure period between 4 am and 10 am for all venues except the casino, and I will come to that later. It also announced statewide mandatory precommitment and carded play and a reduction in load-up limits on gaming machines from \$1000 now to \$100 and reduced spin rates on gaming machines.

These reforms, it is fair to say, came out of the blue. They were not something that the sector was expecting. There had been very little indication from the government that there was to be significant reform in the gaming sector, indeed to the extent that prior to the election the government made no commitments whatsoever for the gaming sector and neither did we on the opposition side. Indeed the *Age* reported on 23 November last year with the headline ‘Labor, Libs pre-commit to pokies reform protection for pubs and clubs’. Now, I would not characterise it the same way that the *Age* has; I do not think it is necessarily about protection for pubs and clubs. It is about, though, providing certainty for an industry – and any industry. Indeed that article by Royce Millar and Josh Gordon contained the line:

In a September letter, Victorian Gaming Minister Melissa Horne assured the clubs the government changes were limited to the casino.

And yet here we are on 16 July, not much more than six months after the election, and the government outlines something that is so dramatically different to what it said just before the election – quite considerable reforms.

Now, there is no doubt that gambling harm is a problem in our community, and there is no doubt that electronic gaming machines are a part of that harm. There is a serious problem with people addicted to poker machines who are losing lots of money – who are harming themselves, harming their families and harming their friends by spending too much money, often money that they do not have, on gambling machines. I support any efforts to address the level of problem gambling in Victoria.

Indeed the opposition was the coalition government in 2011 that set up the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, which, I might add, is to be wound up, effectively, by this government according to the budget papers this year. That, again, is part of these reforms. It was eventually announced and explained as to why there was only one year’s funding for the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation in the state budget. I asked questions at the time of the minister, and the minister indicated the future funding for the VRGF would be for future budgets. And then lo and behold, just a month later, the government comes out and announces, ‘Well, actually most of the role and regulation provided by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation will in fact be rolled into the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission’.

We, as I said, certainly support activities that reduce problem gambling, that reduce the harm that comes from gambling. I do raise a concern, though, that there is often a much, much bigger focus on gaming machines than there is on gambling harm full stop, because gambling harm comes in a whole range of types, whether it is people punting on races – horses, dogs, the trots – whether it is people playing the pokies or whether it is people punting online. There are, I think, very many numbers of ways that harm does occur. I am concerned that the government has introduced or announced these reforms in a context where (a) as I said, it had said before the election that it would not be making any

changes to the gaming framework and (b) before that it had just entered into a 20-year licence arrangement with pubs and clubs for the electronic gaming machines.

There is a significant issue I think this raises of sovereign risk. The government has effectively entered into a contract with pubs and clubs for the provision of gaming licences and just a few short months later – in fact about a year later – has announced significant reforms that could have quite genuine impacts on revenue and impacts on the value of those licences and do expose the state, in my view, to a potential sovereign risk issue. Whether that goes anywhere and there are any legal challenges is not a question for me, it is obviously a question for those licensees, but I do know from talking to them that they are very concerned.

When I say ‘talking to them’, that is something that we on the opposition side do. I have certainly met with and spoken to the Alliance for Gambling Reform – there are a couple of gambling harm events this week that I will be attending – and I also talk to the industry. I talk regularly to the Australian Hotels Association (AHA) and to Community Clubs Victoria (CCV) to understand their concerns and issues. It would appear that the government has not done that, because these reforms announced in July, including the subject of this bill, the mandatory closure periods, came as a complete shock. No-one got a heads-up on what the government was proposing here.

This is in a context that was a surprise to me. The context is, as members will be aware, that most members probably get invited – the Greens probably do not get invited – to the Australian Hotels Association annual drinks at the start of the parliamentary year, something that the former Premier was a regular attendee at. Certainly I have seen some ministers, probably not enough, at that event each year. It is an opportunity to mingle with pub owners and the hotel industry more broadly, and the former Premier was there regularly. The former Premier outlined his support for the pub sector repeatedly. He recognised the contribution that pubs make as a hub for their communities and the contribution they make particularly as employers, and he recognised the work that they do in the wider community with respect to sponsorship and support of their communities. So it was a surprise to me that that same Premier, Mr Andrews, then came out and announced these reforms with no consultation with the Australian Hotels Association, Community Clubs Victoria or indeed anyone, it seems.

I know the AHA and CCV have worked very well in being open with the government and opposition and all members of Parliament about their aims and their industry, and it is a significant industry. We caught up just recently with Clubs Victoria and some of their stats. They have 30,000 employees and 2.3 million members – if you put 2.3 million members into context, roughly one in three Victorians is a member of a club – and they give back \$56 million a year in cash and in-kind donations, \$127 million a year in in-kind labour and \$805 million in free or subsidised facilities. Those facilities are things like RSLs, golf clubs and bowls clubs, where people have the opportunity to go to a club, to get some fellowship and to socialise. They might want to have a punt. The vast majority of people put a few dollars through a machine while they have a beer or a cup of coffee and socialise with their friends. Likewise, AHA members donate around \$27 million a year to charities, contribute \$4.5 billion to our gross state product and employ some 52,000 people. Between them those two provide over 80,000 jobs in the state. We have just heard the member for Narre Warren South talk about the importance of jobs. This is a sector that does provide a lot of jobs. Not all of them, of course, are related to gaming machines, because many of them do not have gaming machines, but certainly it is a key component.

I know the AHA works very hard to keep government members and ministers informed of their concerns and issues. Paddy O’Sullivan, the CEO, and Dave Canny, the president, have worked extremely hard to try and make sure the government understands the value that they provide, and likewise Community Clubs Victoria, Andrew Lloyd, Greg Roberts and all of their members, who play such an important role in the community. So it was a complete shock I am sure to them, as it was to me, when these reforms were wheeled out just seven or eight months after the government had gone to an election with a commitment to make no changes. It is probably a salutary lesson for any industry or business with this government to think that they have a stable environment – well, you can be

thrown on the scrap heap at any given time. As I said, there is a need to ensure that we tackle harm, and the government has indeed announced these reforms.

I might add, while I am talking about consultation, the government announced the reforms on 16 July – and clearly, as I have indicated, no-one knew they were coming – and then said they were going to consult with industry. To that extent the industry received an email on 23 August that provided a bit of a framework, an outline, of how the government intended to consult with them on these reforms, and it contained a line that stuck in my head. It said:

The Department of Justice and Community Safety has compiled a consultation paper to assist with the early stages of policy development.

How do you assist with the early stages of policy development for a policy that has already been announced by the government? It is quite absurd to suggest that the government is now going to consult when it has already announced what it is going to do. I think that is a real concern about how this government goes about its business in dealing with industry, in dealing with any sector. Whether it is a commercial sector like this, whether it is a heavily licensed sector like this, heavily regulated, or whether it is simply the private sector, the commercial sector, the volunteer sector, you do wonder what sort of attitude the government is taking to these things when it can simply come out and change the rules midway through. As I said, there is a significant sovereign risk issue there.

To go to a little bit of the detail in this legislation, the mandatory closing hours issue I mentioned is literally two paragraphs and implements a mandatory 4 am to 10 am closure period. That is hard to argue with. I do not think too many of us could stand up in here or out in public and argue that it is really important that someone has the opportunity to be at a pokie machine at 7 am. There are exceptions of course. There are shiftworkers, there are people who work odd hours and there are insomniacs and all sorts of party animals that have different time lines and time arrangements than the rest of us. But I do think that there is a case for limiting the hours at a particular time, and the evidence does show that enforcing a break of some description like that will actually help those who need to get out of a venue and need to stop putting money through it – those with a serious problem who might be going for 10 or 12 hours at a time. It is probably unlikely that people are doing that, because our venues do tend to have a good, close watch on their customers. They have responsible gambling officers, and they are making sure that people are not overdoing it as best they can. But in a big venue setting a break is not a bad thing.

What I think though is quite contradictory and quite hypocritical of the government is the fact that these new hours will apply to everyone except the casino. Indeed in the second-reading speech the minister said that the government has ‘some of the strongest casino laws in the world’. Ironically this whole piece of legislation, when it comes to the mandatory closure periods, does not apply to the casino. We have seen for a long time that the casino has got special treatment from this government. There was a blind eye turned to what was going on at the casino, and I will turn in a moment to some of the other aspects of this legislation, which are continuing to tidy up the outcomes of the Finkelstein royal commission – a royal commission, I might remind the house, that really only happened because of the Bergin inquiry in New South Wales. That inquiry uncovered some atrocious behaviour by Crown Casino, behaviour that had been completely missed by the former Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation, and this government was dragged kicking and screaming ultimately to establish that royal commission.

You will remember, Deputy Speaker, that there was some absolutely disgraceful behaviour found through that royal commission when it came to money laundering, when it came to junkets and when it came to criminal activity within the casino. Indeed Commissioner Finkelstein said:

... for many years Crown Melbourne had engaged in conduct that is, in a word, disgraceful. This is a convenient shorthand for describing conduct that was variously illegal, dishonest, unethical and exploitative.

They are pretty strong words from a commissioner, a very respected former legal mind, and that was based on the evidence that was produced at that royal commission. As I said, I think it reflects pretty

poorly on the government that it had to be dragged kicking and screaming to undertake that royal commission. It reflects pretty badly on the former VCGLR as the then regulator, who literally did not pick up any of it. I would hope that the new Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission will be doing a much better job.

That brings me to some of the amendments related to the casino. We have got effectively two parts to the casino legislation here: one is a new part 2A inserted into the principal act, the Casino Control Act 1991, which will clarify the powers of a manager who would be appointed in the event that a casino licence is suspended, cancelled or surrendered. The provisions for a manager have been in the act for a long time but have been amended through the last couple of pieces of legislation with respect to the royal commission findings, and this bill makes some further changes to that. They largely replicate the provisions in the existing act, but there are some modifications, largely to protect the interests of both the manager and the state, including in the event that there is an administrator or liquidator appointed to the casino or to the casino operator at the time that a manager is in place. They ensure the casino can continue to operate under a manager. It gives the manager some powers with respect to clear access to property, limits on third-party rights and matters such as shared services provided to the casino by non-casino parts of the business, such as housekeeping, car parking, security, waste disposal and the like. Effectively you have got Crown Towers and other aspects of the business where services are shared, so this bill tidies up some of that.

The second area relates to the timing of the new cashless gaming requirements and seeks to limit money laundering opportunities by capping payouts of winnings in cash. Basically the bill as it stands sets up two periods. There are some minor changes and some technical amendments, if you like, to how those payouts are handled between now and 1 December 2025 when the full mandatory requirements will come in on all machines to be played in the casino. There are further requirements that come in post 1 December 2025, and this bill clarifies exactly what that will be in clause 11 – that is, providing those interim requirements up until 1 December 2025, which do not include an ID requirement. Post 1 December 2025 there will be an ID requirement; people who are getting out more than \$1000 in winnings will need to provide their identification. There will be limits on how it can be paid out. There will be certainly also a 24-hour limit if someone requests a payment by EFT. Those are the amendments to the casino.

I will just touch on the other things. I mentioned that Intralot currently has the role of the third-party service provider for gaming machines, and there is a clause giving the minister effectively the power in the event of an outage – ‘downtime’, as it is referred to. The casino cannot be held responsible for not implementing some of the carded play and precommitment arrangements if it is circumstances beyond their control, and we do not have any issue with that.

Finally, just while I am going through the other non-opening time issues – prohibited betting contingencies. The minister currently has power to prohibit wagering being offered on certain activities that occur that might be, to quote the second-reading speech, ‘out of step with community expectations’, such as children’s sport or amateur sport. This very minor amendment changes that from being for activities that occur in Victoria to ‘in Victoria or elsewhere’, recognising that of course Victorians can be punting on activities happening interstate or overseas. This will ensure that the minister can prohibit betting on certain activities. This has largely come from concern earlier in the year about bets being offered on the under-19 women’s cricket world cup, where you had 15-year-olds and 16-year-olds playing – so minors playing. I think the government needs to be reasonable and sensible on this and be cautious about what it prohibits betting on. There will be some circumstances where it is difficult to ensure clarity, and one of the wagering companies gave me the example of a 17-year-old playing at the Australian Open. It may not be clear the age of players at the tennis, for example, and there may not be any particular concern from the community about betting on a minor in that circumstance. I do remember Boris Becker was 17 when he won Wimbledon in about 1985. I guess all I would ask of the government is to do some consultation with the industry when it is making decisions on that sort of betting.

I will return now to the mandatory closing hours issue. I think there is general disquiet from the providers in the sector about this change. They are already limited to 20-hour operation – they cannot operate for more than 20 hours in a 24-hour period – but have had the ability to set their own opening times. Largely the government is responding. The second-reading speech indicates and the government has said publicly that it is concerned that there have been some venues effectively gaming the system – no pun intended – by staggering their hours and providing in the local area a 24-hour opening period so people could move from one venue to another and literally gamble 24 hours a day. I guess I would say that while we do not oppose legislation to address that, how much enforcement, how much regulatory activity did the government do to try and stop that from happening? Did it go and knock on doors and say, ‘Hey, you’ve got an obligation not to do this’? I am not sure that occurred before the government simply moved straight to the sledgehammer of bringing in legislation on this. Again, I do not think there is much argument for people to be playing pokies at 4 o’clock or 6 o’clock in the morning, but I do wonder whether the government looked at how it could talk to the industry about this before it actually brought in legislation, particularly in a circumstance where that legislation will not apply to the biggest gaming venue in the state, being Crown Casino.

I think it is particularly unfair that – given the history that I have outlined with the casino royal commission and so much of the reform that has been introduced in this state that has already been applied to Crown Casino in terms of mandatory precommitment, carded play and the like – it is now being enforced on a sector that has done nothing wrong. There was no evidence at the royal commission that the sector has been involved in the sort of behaviour that Crown was involved in. Particularly that is the case for venues who would be in direct competition with the casino – those venues in close proximity, predominantly in the city, the CBD, but with the casino being on the edge of the CBD, down into South Melbourne and Port Melbourne and that area as well. The opposition will be moving an amendment to the legislation, and under standing orders I wish to advise the house of the amendment to this bill and request that it be circulated.

Amendment circulated under standing orders.

Danny O’BRIEN: This amendment is to clause 26. As I said, there are literally only two paragraphs with respect to the gaming hours. Clause 26 inserts new section 3.5.28A(2):

This section does not apply to a venue operator who is a casino operator.

Our amendment adds the words ‘or in relation to an approved venue that is within 3 km of a casino’, effectively saying that those who are close by should not be disadvantaged by the fact that the government is exempting the casino from these mandatory closing hours. We do not think that is fair. If it is the view of the government that the casino is in some way a protected species because it is a significant venue and it is a tourism attraction, then that applies broadly to the area around it, in our view, broadly to the CBD. If we are going to be an international city, if we are going to be a place that welcomes people to come and socialise, to celebrate, to party, to drink, to gamble, to dance and to do all those things that a vibrant city offers at night, then it is not very fair that the rule only allows the casino to be open 24 hours and there is a mandatory closing period for gaming venues in the vicinity. Again, the maximum 20-hour rule would still apply for venues, but if they chose to remain open in the early hours of the morning when they are competing with the casino, they could do so under the amendment that we will move. I would hope for support here or in the other place for that amendment because it is a matter of fairness. People may ask why 3 kilometres. It is an arbitrary figure. Wherever you go, wherever you put a line, you are going to provide people on the edge of that line a disadvantage, but 3 kilometres is roughly a reasonable walking distance. It takes it to roughly the Albert Park beach, it takes it to Punt Road and it takes in all of the CBD and much of Carlton and North Melbourne. Those areas that are considered the CBD and the inner-city entertainment area would be exempt under these rules.

We are not opposing the legislation. I encourage the government to support our amendment, and I certainly encourage those in the other place to support it when the bill gets there. The government does

not have a mandate for these reforms, so it should acknowledge the concerns of the industry. We in the opposition certainly are keen and committed to tackling problem gambling, but I think we need to get the balance right and make sure that we support the jobs and the industries that are crucial in this state as well.

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Employment) (17:37): These are good amendments, and I congratulate the minister for her work. My community, among many communities across this state, has been vocal in wanting to see ongoing gambling reform, including gambling advertising reform, for some time. These amendments will take us another step closer to reducing the damage that gambling can cause to families and to communities. When there is a gambling addiction, it does not just rest with that one person; there is a ripple effect. It goes to their families, it goes to their close friends, it goes to how they live their life, it goes to how they are able to manage their job, it goes to their sleep patterns and it goes to so many things that cause challenges within our communities and that also cause challenges for governments. We need to have ongoing reforms to mitigate gambling harm as much as we can.

These reforms will improve the protection afforded to all Victorians that gamble. It is estimated that around about 330,000 Victorians experience harm because of gambling each year, and it costs Victoria an estimated \$7 billion a year. That is a lot of money – \$7 billion a year. We as a government have got a specific focus on helping those who experience harm, and these are sensible and necessary steps that we can take to prevent and reduce the harm that gambling can bring.

We know that gambling can be fun. I am not going to stand here as the fun police and say we cannot gamble, we should not gamble. It can be fun. I know that there are many people in this place and many people in this state who love to have a bet on the horses. The spring carnival is upon us, and I know that there are people who are having a ball going out on the weekend, putting on their glad rags, getting out there, having fun and having the odd bet, but this is not something that is affecting their day-to-day lives. This is an event. This is an occasion. This is something that they are doing as a social activity. It is not something that they are doing at 4 in the morning in a pokies venue with two other people and a cold cup of coffee.

Gambling harm and gambling addiction can be incredibly socially isolating, and what we are talking about as a government is problem gamblers and how we can help problem gamblers and how we can mitigate problem gambling. We know that gambling addiction can lead to significant financial distress, relationship issues and mental health concerns. This is a huge cost for the individual and for the wider community. Now, I am particularly happy and supportive in these amendments of the mandatory closure period between 4 am and 10 am. One element of this legislation that I think will make considerable change is the inability for gaming venues to roll through the closure of a venue. Venues have always had to close their gambling rooms for 4 hours a day, but they have – and I do mean this pun because I am talking to you, Deputy Speaker – gamed this rule.

Danny O'Brien: I already used that pun.

Vicki WARD: Yes, I know. But we know that the Deputy Speaker loves a good pun, and a repeated pun is not something that is beyond him.

Cindy McLeish: Pun, not punt?

Vicki WARD: Punt? No, pun. You may well like a punt as well, Deputy Speaker, but you do like a pun. It just shows that sometimes we can lack imagination in this place when we are using the same puns.

Gaming venues have acted like predators because they have deliberately created an environment where you can go from venue to venue to venue where one will always be open 24 hours of the day. Gaming venues have chosen their closing hours and of course married them to other surrounding venues so that opening hours roll around the clock, ensuring that at least one nearby venue is open when the other one is closed. For example, in seats such as St Albans, Footscray, Broadmeadows, Frankston, Oakleigh and

Monbulk, venues stagger their opening hours to provide 24-hour, seven-day-a-week access to poker machines in pubs and clubs. It is not much better in Dandenong, in Melton, in Thomastown, in Northcote – and we have the wonderful member for Northcote here – in Richmond and just up the road from me in Bulleen, where patrons can gamble on a poker machine 23 hours a day.

This preys on vulnerable people. So one thing that is so important about this reform is the mandatory shutdown, which will give people the opportunity to stop and reassess their gambling activity, to slow down, to go home, to see their families and their pets, to reconnect, to not be on a roll, to have that break in play that can snap them out of that hyperfocus that they are in and to stop losing money. That is why these gambling places have kept themselves open – to not allow for that break in play to continue to generate revenue, and we know the way they generate revenue is through gambling loss. So ensuring these compulsory closing hours is a measure that gambling researchers say will help vulnerable people who are experiencing gambling harm.

This bill also makes important changes to stop harmful betting products being offered to Victorians. This change will give the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission the power to enforce bans on betting on events that are not in the interests of Victorians, even if those events occur outside the state or country. I heard the member for Gippsland South saying, ‘Well, what about the tennis? Boris Becker won it at 17.’ We have to ensure that there are regulations that stop gambling on our kids. When you are gambling on local soccer games of kids and when you are gambling on international events where there are kids playing, there is a problem with gambling. There is a problem with culture, and it is something that we need to stem. We have seen bookmakers offering bets on minors and amateur sports. ABC’s *Four Corners* revealed earlier this year that millions of dollars are bet on suburban soccer games in Australia every weekend. They highlighted a weekend in May where global bookmaker Bet365 was offering bets on 146 soccer games around Australia, including under-20 competitions in New South Wales and Western Australia where there were multiple 17-year-old players, including a player as young as 15.

Data scouts can be seen across matches in our suburbs sending live updates to bookmakers so bets can be taken across the world. Now, the Victorian Premier League has seen two major incidents over the past decade. In 2013 multiple players and coaches of Southern Stars Football Club were charged with sports corruption offences. An estimated \$2 million is believed to have been connected with this operation. In 2017 a match between Dandenong Thunder and Melbourne City under-20s was investigated by police, and two men involved with Dandenong Thunder were issued match-fixing charges relating to orchestrating a better outcome.

In January the ABC reported that bets were being offered on the under-19 women’s T20 World Cup in South Africa. Almost half the Australian players were aged under 18, including players, again, of 15 years of age. This is clearly out of step with the expectations of our community. Our community expects that our kids are excluded – wants our kids to be excluded from gambling. They do not want our kids to be gambling. They do not want our kids to be understanding gambling odds, and they certainly do not want our kids to be the objects of gambling.

This is where we come to gambling advertising, which is, as you would know, Deputy Speaker, something I talk about regularly. I welcome the report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, which made 31 recommendations, including that the Australian government prohibit all online gaming inducements and inducement advertising and do so without delay. That is something that I know you are particularly interested in, Deputy Speaker. I hope that includes gaming as well – in terms of online games. They also recommended that the Australian government, with the cooperation of the states and territories, implement a cohesive ban on all forms of advertising for online gambling to be introduced in four phases over three years commencing immediately. I do encourage the federal government to get on with this type of activity – with banning the advertising that we are seeing on our TVs, on our phones, everywhere we go.

Peta Murphy, a member and the chair of the committee, has said that gambling advertising and simulated gambling through video games are grooming children and young people to gamble and encouraging riskier behaviour.

Members interjecting.

Vicki WARD: I agree with those behind me. She is a fantastic local member who has done incredible work with this committee, and it is work that will help to transform the way that we respond to gambling advertising. A 2016 study found that 75 per cent of children in Australia believe that betting is a normal part of any sport. I know, like you do Deputy Speaker, that that number will have grown since 2016. Gambling advertising is pervasive, as are the opening hours of gambling venues, so I fully support the amendments that have come through with this legislation, and I commend the amendments.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (17:47): I rise too to make a contribution on the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. This bill has had an interesting origin. It came out of the blue, you could say, because prior to the election the industry were under the impression that there were going to be no further changes in this area, and lo and behold in the middle of the year, in July, the then Premier Andrews and the minister made an announcement that there would be legislation and there would be a number of changes that would be brought forward. We see this as the first of those. The others are perhaps a lot more controversial, and it is interesting to note that when they announced these changes on 16 July, firstly, it was out of the blue, but secondly, they pretty well said this is what is going to happen, and now they are looking at doing the consultation. Now, for me, my view of consultation is you do the talking first. You seek the feedback before you write the legislation, before you see how things might work, in case there are some unintended consequences and some gremlins that you have not thought about because you have not actually done that consultation and sought that feedback in the first instance. I think it is exceptionally important that that work is done in the first instance, not as an ‘Oh gosh, we’d better that now that we’ve made these announcements’, because that is fraught with danger.

Having said that, this is the first tranche of the gaming industry reforms that have been announced, and what it includes is the introduction of mandatory closure periods for gaming machine areas – but not the Crown Casino; that is already dealt with – between 4 am and 10 am. It also amends provisions relating to the appointment of management of the casino should the licence operator be cancelled, suspended or surrendered. We would think that that is probably not going to happen, but we have had some pretty big issues in Australia that have led to the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence. There have been some absolute issues and challenges with oversights and things not operating with the governance that should have been expected over an organisation as large as that. So whilst you would think it probably would not happen, never say never, because these sorts of things do happen from time to time.

As I said, these reforms came out of the blue. There are issues with problem gambling. A very small number of people are impacted by problem gambling, and I will talk about that later in my contribution, but in the main a lot of people do gamble very responsibly. The industry was taken by surprise here. There are pubs and clubs that had just entered a 20-year licence and sale period in 2022. When you enter a licence for that long – 10 years plus 10 years – you are expecting certainty. You are expecting to know what it is that you have entered, and when the goalposts begin to change you may re-evaluate what it is that you have entered into and the contractual agreements there. Whilst this bill is looking at altering the hours of operation and having mandatory closing hours between 4 am and 10 am, I think most people, in the main, would think that you do not have to have machines operating at 6 am. There may be reasons – there may be shiftworkers who like to wind down with this legitimate activity – but the information I have is that in particular areas people are able to move from one venue to another because they stagger the closing hours so that there is always somewhere open that they can go to gamble. I do not think that anyone should lose too much sleep over changing those.

As I have mentioned, there was the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence, and there were 33 recommendations. Part of the change here is about trying to address some of the money laundering. It is pretty difficult, I would imagine, to launder money through gaming machines. If you are putting \$1000 in there, as a limit, to try and launder that money and you only press the button once or twice and then try and get your money that is cleaned up a little bit, that is a fairly painstaking process. I am not sure that altering the limits from \$1000 down to \$100 is going to make a huge difference.

Managing downtime – we do know that from time to time power outages do happen. Not every operation has a large generator to cope with those sorts of things. There are clauses to provide the minister with powers to make declarations with respect to those sorts of outages.

I do want to focus over the last few minutes on some issues with problem gambling. When the coalition was in government we set up the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, and that is due to close by 30 June next year. This is something I would really encourage the government to have a look at, because they commission a lot of research into gambling and gambling harm. One of the studies that I will refer to in a moment is a great example of perhaps why that should be in place.

Many people are able to gamble very effectively – not effectively as in winning but in managing the amount that they spend – and can control that and have a bit of fun in a social activity. But there are instances where it does get out of hand. I do recall quite a number of years ago – 20-odd years ago – a staff member that I had came to me and was absolutely shaking because she had found out that her mother was a gambler and had lost many thousands of dollars. When the family found out, they did not know what to do. It was out of the blue, and they were so worried and fearful that they would lose their house. It ended up being okay. They got the right assistance that they needed, and her mum was okay in the long term. But I did hear of another instance from a friend about one of her friends whose husband had a gambling problem and had pretty well lost the house but hid constantly the bank statements and any bill: ‘No, I’ll look after those bills. No, you don’t need to see it. I’ve got it.’ This person, the spouse, let that happen and found out way too late that they were in so much financial debt that it was very difficult to recover from it.

Not so long ago, earlier this year, I met with financial counsellors in the Yarra Valley at EACH in Yarra Junction, and they talked to me about some of the issues with gambling but also the link to domestic and family violence. One of the studies that I was very interested in that came through the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation was *Recognition and Responses to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Gambler’s Help Services*. They had done a qualitative study, and the research there was pretty interesting because it did note a lot of the issues that had been raised with me through those at EACH in the Yarra Valley. I just will mention that the amount of money that is there to fund support services is pretty light on. One person is funded for 0.3 through the VRGF, 1½ days, and that is not really enough for her to be able to do all the work that she needs to do. She gets similar funding to do family violence counselling through consumer affairs.

Some of the issues were picked up in this paper, which is from October 2022. It is worth the house noting that this is good work done by the VRGF and it needs to be continued. There is the hidden nature of gambling and domestic violence or intimate partner violence, and in situations when a partner has gambled, the stresses in those households are particularly high. We need to be mindful of that because at the same time we have a huge incidence of domestic and family violence in this state, and gambling does have a little role in that. To take away some of the support services and not adequately fund them I think is an oversight of the Allan Labor government, and I encourage them to take another look at that.

I have also heard stories of elder abuse where people are being abused and they have gone to try and escape their son or daughter and gone off to gamble instead. *(Time expired)*

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (17:57): It is a great pleasure to rise today in this place in support of this legislation, the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. From the outset can I please acknowledge the Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation for her fantastic work and not just her commitment to this piece of legislation before the house today but her amazing commitment to reducing gambling harm in our state and being a voice for sometimes those who are voiceless and those who have been through hell and back. My thanks are on the record to the minister, to her team and of course to the hardworking people in the Department of Justice and Community Safety for working to get this legislation before the house today.

Can I also just acknowledge one of the previous speakers on our side, the member for Eltham, the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence. A fantastic contribution was made by the minister, talking about her passion on this matter and the importance of reducing gambling harm not just in her community but right across Victoria. It was quite sad – and I know others will talk about this as well – to hear about the fact that at this point you can bet on under-age people in a range of different so-called betting markets. It is an absolute disgrace. We are better than that. I would like to think the industry is better than that. But if they are not, we will legislate and we will regulate because that is just not on. Nobody should be able to wager on the outcome of an event that includes someone as young as 15. I thank the minister for her remarks. It is nice to hear from across the aisle a great deal of bipartisanship on the importance of legislating and continuing our work to reduce gambling harm. This legislation absolutely is another fantastic step in the direction of doing exactly that.

We know that this bill will amend the Casino Control Act 1991(CCA) and the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 (GRA) to deliver gambling harm reforms and to improve the implementation of recommendations from the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence, which has been well detailed even today but also in other forms of legislation. The bill will amend the CCA to allow the payment of winnings provisions to commence following the introduction of mandatory carded play. It will clarify that the casino operator is not liable for failures in the precommitment system that occur during declared downtime periods and will strengthen statutory management arrangements where a casino licence is cancelled, suspended or surrendered. The bill will amend the GRA to prohibit gaming venues from providing 24-hour gaming, a significant feature of this legislation that is honouring a commitment we made back in July. It will extend the offences relating to betting on a contingency to activities outside of Victoria and will of course amend the Casino (Management Agreement) Act 1993 to make consequential amendments following recent reforms.

We know that earlier this year in July the Victorian government announced what I absolutely believe is Australia's most significant package of gambling reforms. These reforms will absolutely improve the protections afforded to all Victorians that gamble, with a specific focus on helping those who experience harm. Just in brief, I think it is important to acknowledge some of the detail of those announcements made in July when we announced our significant, sweeping new reforms. Those reforms were to reduce gambling harm at venues with electronic gaming machines across the state. We know that those reforms included that all EGMs in Victoria will require mandatory precommitment limits, carded play and load-up limits, which will help to determine how much money an individual can put into an EGM at a time. That will be capped at \$100, down from the current limit of \$1000. Mandatory precommitment, carded play and load-up limits will be introduced subject of course to thorough consultation. Today as part of this legislation we know that by mid-2024 mandatory closure periods will be enforced for all gaming machine areas in a venue, except at the casino, between 4 am and 10 am. The government will also make it mandatory for all new EGMs to spin at a rate of 3 seconds per game, importantly slowing the pace of the game down and limiting the amount that can be lost so people can sort of take a breath, collect themselves and work out if they really want to keep gambling.

I am absolutely honoured to speak on this bill, which will deliver on the first of these reforms and in a number of other important areas to reduce gambling harm. It comes during Gambling Harm Awareness Week, a week to reflect and to make sure we are continuing the progress of this Allan Labor government's fantastic work in reducing gambling harm, because we know that for some

gambling is not just about fun, it is not just activity, it can absolutely be an addiction which does cause serious harm. These reforms are sensible, they are proportionate and they are necessary to prevent and reduce harm from gambling in our community, because we know that gambling harm is not just limited to the individual doing the gambling; these harmful behaviours hurt families and loved ones. I know that all too well from my experience growing up in Dandenong, and not just from my own personal experiences. I went to school in what would be considered socially disadvantaged communities, attending Dandenong Primary and Dandenong High School, and I had mates who had families that went without and did not go on holidays. Those are simple luxuries in life one would think they could enjoy, but they did not know how they were going to make ends meet and put food on the table.

I think society, Victoria and our nation have come a long way since then – not all of that positive. Obviously online betting and some of the other initiatives in the gambling space make it hard to keep up, but certainly growing up I learned very early an appreciation for the impact that gambling can have on families. Now I represent the Knox community, and Knox, like any other municipality, loses millions of dollars per year in just financial terms. The impacts on family, mental health and physical health are often not as easy to quantify, but they are certainly just as significant for many families. We know it is estimated that around 330,000 Victorians experience harm because of gambling each year – that is each year – and it costs Victoria an estimated \$7 billion, and 330,000 is 5 per cent of Victorians each year, a truly sad and profound number. We know that this leads, as I said, to significant financial distress, relationship issues and mental health issues.

In one of my other roles before coming to this place, as a police officer, part of our family violence reporting was to understand if gambling was a factor in family violence, and more often than not, sadly, gambling was certainly a part of it. So we know the serious and sad impact that gambling can have on the family as well as increasing the chances of family violence. That is another reason why we must recommit ourselves not just to this legislation but to further improvements in reducing gambling harm. We will do that through of course this legislation. That will make sure that all poker machines outside the casino are shut off between 4 am and 10 am. As has been detailed previously by other speakers, we know that up until now venues have had to close their gaming room for 4 hours, but it has sort of been up to them to choose when those hours are. We know that this has led to an effect of venues staggering their opening hours to provide 24-hour access to gambling, which is just unbelievable. This behaviour is widespread, and it cannot be left to go unchecked. I think it is a really important reform this Parliament is seeking to embark on to make sure that we never let it happen again, because across one-third of the state, poker machines are available 22 hours of the day or more, which is just devastating. The impact of this is felt deep in our suburbs – in Knox, in my community where I grew up in Dandenong – and it is absolutely reflected in Victoria's gambling losses. This is a real problem.

Some of the other reforms are that we are extending contingency offences to interstate gaming providers. We are also strengthening the casino manager provisions. We are clarifying payment-of-winnings provisions, and of course there are a range of other reforms that this legislation commits to. I thank the minister for her work and the commitment of this Allan Labor government, and I support this bill and commend it to the house.

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (18:07): It is a pleasure to rise and make a contribution on the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. We are led to believe that this will be the first of a couple of tranches of industry reforms – announced, I think, in the middle of this year – that will be coming into play. The introduction of mandatory closure periods for gaming machine areas is probably the key element of this tranche of legislation – other than Crown Casino, I might add – and those hours impacted are between 4 am and 10 am.

Now, I want to focus if I may for a little while – because there will be issues that have been earmarked that are likely to come in in the second tranche of amendments that are to be made. I will not try and forecast what will be in that legislation, but what I want to say here is the timing of some of these

changes that are being proposed is not quite right when you look at the lay of the land. It was less than a year ago – and our lead speaker on this bill may have provided this commentary – that the government entered into arrangements with pubs and clubs on electronic gaming machines. They negotiated financial outcomes that look at really the next 20 years – 10 years by 10 years – and then within 12 months of those negotiations taking place on electronic gaming machines the government came in and changed the goalposts. What they have done is they have set parameters for the pubs and clubs to negotiate on, and those parameters have resulted in them working out their business models, working out what they were prepared to pay. They went through long meetings. They met with their own boards, their own committees, and they came up with what they were prepared to pay for gaming machines. And then it got changed. Within 12 months we hear of proposed changes, not only changes around opening times but other changes mooted to be legislated early next year.

How can you as a government negotiate in good faith around gaming machine licences and then within 12 months move the goalposts? It is not right. Governments of the day – this goes for governments in all jurisdictions in Australia – and not just governments but parliaments, need to have at the forefront of our minds the harms gambling can cause within our communities. They have certainly been very, very well documented. They are very, very real, as I am sure we have all seen through our electorate offices with people coming in who have been impacted by these changes. But the government needs to be made aware that, having entered into negotiations and licences having been allocated, it cannot make a raft of changes that impact on the bottom line of those that have been successful in obtaining machines. The second tranche of reform that we are told is coming in after Christmas really, really needs to consider this because, as has been mooted by members of the government and the minister in a public announcement, there are changes that are proposed that could have an impact on the bottom line of a lot of our pubs and clubs. Of particular concern are the suggested mandatory precommitment and carded play – I think the shadow minister, our lead speaker, covered off on that – and the reduction in load-up limits from \$1000 to \$100 and also reduced spin rates.

Without going into the merits of these actions and the impact that they will potentially positively have in relation to problem gambling, all these mooted changes should have been laid on the table before negotiations on gaming machines were entered into. The one that has a little bit of contention in this tranche of legislative amendments is the operating hours. I certainly support the member for Gippsland South's amendment relating to opening hours, because that will ease the impact on those venues that are immediately around Crown Casino and indeed competing with it, but it is a position that we should not have been in in the first place.

We are told mandatory carded play and other reforms that have the potential to impact on those entities that negotiated in good faith are now the subject of 'new engagement' in relation to the government. I would certainly hope they are. As part of this engagement process I have no doubt that our pubs and clubs sector in Victoria will raise the concerns that I have just raised in relation to the negotiations in good faith and then having decisions made that will potentially significantly impact on their bottom lines. I hope this engagement results in dropping some of these changes, delaying some of these changes or, if indeed the changes are going ahead, paying some compensation to those entities that are impacted by the changes that are being made. It is fair to say that these reforms came out of the blue; they were certainly not expected. It was probably in the pipeline for some time, but I am assuming that the government went through its negotiating process around licences and thought, 'We'd better not make these changes until after the election, because we don't want to risk a campaign being run against us by the pubs and clubs of Victoria', so this bill has come in within 12 months of the government being re-elected.

The government changes also need to take into consideration not making New South Wales a more attractive proposition for those who like to have a little flutter. Despite gambling problems being an ongoing and constant issue in our community, we need to be aware that there are many who love to have a gamble and there are many who can afford to have a gamble. They have worked hard all their lives and this is their chosen social pastime – to get out with a few of their mates and put a few dollars

through the poker machines. I certainly do not want to see any changes in this state that will make New South Wales a more attractive option because social gamblers have to go through a process in Victoria that they do not have to go through in New South Wales. For instance, Lakes Entrance is a big tourist town in my electorate. I do not want people who are going on holidays – and a lot of people only put money through the pokies when they go on holidays, even though they can probably do it around the corner – having to sign up and provide all their personal information in Victoria when they do not have to in New South Wales. What they will do is they will drive over the border to Merimbula. They will say, ‘We’re not going to be fussed or bothered with all that stuff.’ I mean, imagine if you were in Echuca–Moama or imagine if you were in Albury–Wodonga, but that will be an issue in Lakes Entrance. A lot of people toss up whether they are going to come to Lakes Entrance on holidays or whether they are going to stay in the car for a few extra hours and go to Merimbula once they are on the road. Let us not put that hurdle in place that they drive through areas like mine to go interstate because it is going to be a bit easier for them to have a casual flutter. It is the casual gamblers that will be mainly impacted by this.

Having said that, there is certainly one element of the bill I want to mention before I finish that I strongly support. That is the amendment to allow the minister to prohibit wagering firms from offering or taking bets on certain activities not occurring in Victoria. They have had that option in Victoria, but now the act will give them the power to limit betting on certain events either in Victoria or elsewhere – I think that is the terminology that is being proposed in this bill. We do know that change was stimulated from reports of some gambling agencies offering markets on the Women’s Under-19 T20 Cricket World Cup, which indeed included a number of players who were minors. It is inappropriate that we are having betting markets on events that do involve players who are certainly under-age. That should not be allowed, and that is something that I certainly support.

I just reiterate before finishing that we know problem gambling is an issue in our community. We do need to take steps. I have no issue with that whatsoever. My concern, probably more so with the legislation that is potentially coming rather than this, is the sector was not advised of these changes when they negotiated in good faith on gaming licences and the value of them. And I also do not want to see changes made that disadvantage those who genuinely want a flutter, can afford to have a flutter and want to have a flutter with their friends, so they go over the border interstate and do not spend their money in Victoria. The parlous state of our finances in this state means that we need as much economic stimulus as we can possibly get at the current time, and we do not want to provide an incentive for people to spend their dollars in New South Wales. I fear that that is a potential outcome.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (18:17): Unlike the speaker before me I do not fear much at all apart from the fact that this reform will actually do good for Victorians. I am really proud to be standing here and speaking to this bill that is before us, because I know that it will help many, many Victorians. Gambling harms too many families, and I have seen the effects of gambling firsthand. It is awful and it ruins families, and that is the reality. In my electorate of Kororoit we have 5.66 poker machines per 1000 adults. Kororoit is the number one for pokie expenditure in the state. Literally \$350,000 is spent in Kororoit per day on poker machines. We need to reduce gambling harm, and I am pleased to support this bill because I know what it is hoping to achieve.

Now, the Shadow Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation in his remarks has questioned why the casino is different. The answer is quite simple. Unlike in pubs and clubs, there are limits on the time that a patron can play before taking a break. The code of conduct requires that patrons of the casino must take a break in play. A patron of the casino cannot play for more than 36 hours a week. A patron of the casino cannot play for more than 12 hours a day, and a patron of the casino cannot play for more than 3 hours without a 15-minute break. These rules do not apply for pubs and clubs, so I hope that the member is listening to that.

Secondly, from December of this year mandatory precommitment and carded will be implemented on poker machines in the casino. This means that if a patron wishes to play a machine, they must set the amount which they are willing to lose. This also does not apply to pubs and clubs.

Thirdly, the casino is subject to extraordinary levels of regulatory oversight. The regulator has a dedicated team that focuses just on the casino and is based in the casino. This level of oversight is warranted, but it does not apply to pubs and clubs.

We know that ease and convenience of going to another location to gamble causes harm, and that is what this bill will address. I note that the member for Gippsland East spoke about potentially inconveniencing casual gamblers. I cannot even fathom that: inconveniencing casual gamblers. It is just something I cannot believe someone would say. Also to refer to gamblers as 'having a little flutter' – it ruins people's lives and ruins people's families, and it is something that we as politicians need to recognise and try to get changed, so I hope that we do have full support for this bill.

As I have just alluded to, I believe that gambling reform in Victoria still needs to go much, much further, and it needs to get to the root of the problem. We need serious and permanent measures to stamp out the scourge of problem gambling in our community, and these measures need to be designed in consultation with people with lived experiences of problem gambling and harm reduction advocates. It is estimated that 330,000 Victorians experience harm related to gambling every year. Just last week the Alliance for Gambling Reform reported that losses to poker machines in Australia have surged to a staggering all-time high of \$14.54 billion. Victoria suffered an increase of 12 per cent in losses to pokies, or \$3,021,644,869 in losses. That is how much Victorians lost. Australians already lose more to poker machines per capita than any other country in the world – in the world. I would not refer to that as a little flutter; I would refer to that as a major problem.

The impact of problem gambling on our communities is devastating. It stems way beyond financial loss. It leads to family violence and family breakdown and to mental and physical health issues as well as alcohol and substance abuse. We have known this for decades, but we have not done much about it. This bill is addressing the issues and doing something now. Recent research suggests that gambling could be responsible for up to 20 per cent of suicides in Australia. As I have said in this place before and alluded to earlier, in my seat of Kororoit, Brimbank LGA suffered the worst total losses to electronic gaming machines out of any LGA in Victoria in the 2021–22 financial year, with \$128 million lost, while Melton LGA in Kororoit ranked number 16 in total losses, with \$68 million lost to pokies. This is something that the member for Melton and I have discussed on a number of occasions, and it is not okay. Change needs to be made.

We believe that urgent reform to tackle problem gambling needs to continue to go much further, and it needs to happen in the lifetime of this Victorian Labor government. In saying that, legislation like the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, which is before us today, is making a good start. On 16 July the then Andrews Labor government announced Australia's most significant package of gambling reforms, and I want to congratulate Minister Horne for her hard work and the team that were with her. This followed on from the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence. These reforms, which are being carried out by the now Allan Labor government, will improve the protections afforded to all Victorians that gamble, with a specific focus on helping those who experience harm.

The bill delivers on the first of these reforms. This legislation will make sure that all poker machines outside of the casino are shut off between 4 am and 10 am. Up until now venues have had to close their gaming rooms for 4 hours, but it has been up to them to choose when those hours are. This has led to venues staggering their opening hours to provide 24-hour access to gambling in pubs and clubs. This opportunistic behaviour is widespread. I proudly sit on the VRGF, the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, and I have heard firsthand from people who have actually hopped from club to club. It is not okay. Across one-third of the state poker machines are available 22 hours of the day or more. The impact of this is felt deeply in our suburbs and especially in my electorate of Kororoit. We know from data which has been collected by the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission, the VGCCC, that when venues stagger their opening hours, patrons move to nearby venues to continue gambling, and the research shows that gambling late at night is strongly associated with gambling harm. A mandatory shutdown between 4 am and 10 am will help to give people the opportunity to

stop and reassess their gambling. These breaks in play are important, and this is a measure that gambling researchers say will help vulnerable people who are experiencing gambling harm.

This bill also makes important changes to stop harmful betting products being offered to Victorians. This change will give the VGCCC the power to enforce bans on betting on events that are not in the interests of Victorians, even if these events occur outside of the state or country. We have seen bookmakers offering bets on minors in amateur sports. As was mentioned by the member for Melton earlier, betting on players as young as 15 years of age is simply not okay. Likewise, we also know that bets are also being offered on low-tier amateur sports, which not only is harmful but also presents a serious integrity risk. Most of these wagering services providers are licensed outside of Victoria, with many of these events also occurring outside of Victoria. This legislative change will ensure betting practices that are not in line with community expectations cannot be offered to Victorians.

This bill also makes several changes to improve the implementation of the recommendations of the royal commission. The royal commission found Crown Melbourne unsuitable to hold the Melbourne casino licence as it engaged in illegal, dishonest, unethical and exploitative conduct but that the immediate cancellations of Crown's licence would cause considerable harm to the Victorian economy and innocent third parties. In response, this government put the casino under the management of a special manager and provided for the automatic cancellation of Crown Melbourne's licence unless the VGCCC is clearly satisfied that Crown is suitable to continue operating the Melbourne casino after a two-year period of review. As we move towards the gambling regulator's decision on the suitability of the casino operator, we need to ensure that they have the tools at their disposal if the licence is not returned. This bill is not an indication of the VGCCC's decision. The independent gambling regulator will make this decision by themselves. This bill will, however, ensure that the casino is able to keep operating if the current or a future casino licence is cancelled, suspended or surrendered. Importantly, it includes provisions to allow a casino manager to deal with casino property and provide the manager with access to shared services across the casino complex.

Amendments passed in Victoria last year restricted the payment of cash winnings to a maximum of \$1000 in a 24-hour period. To improve the workings of these reforms, the bill will amend the payment of winning provisions and definitions so that they commence at the same time as carded players on all games at the casino, including table games. Labor is doing all of this for the courageous advocates who have generously shared their experiences of gambling harm and to help our vulnerable communities. I support the bill, and I hope everyone does.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (18:27): I rise today to speak on the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. As we know, and as earlier contributions have rightly pointed out, there are people within the community who have serious issues when it comes to their ability to know when enough is enough; when they are able to recognise that their gambling has turned from something that is fun to do every so often to something that is costing individuals and families more and more money to the point where people are having significant impacts on their own mental health; where there are significant impacts on families and livelihoods; and particularly when there is secrecy involved. It can put an enormous amount of pressure particularly on families but also on individuals when they get to that recognition point, that 'I cannot control my ability to choose whether I want to gamble or not, whether I want to put a certain amount into a poker machine or not', as we are talking about in this instance. They are not making rational decisions about where money from their income is going in their family home. All too often we have heard of horrific stories, and most members in this place would have stories where there has been a family impacted in a way that simply shows that problem gambling is a problem for more than just the individuals who are in front of the machine or putting a bet on. It is something that impacts on many, many people.

I would like to counterbalance that with the difficult line that government and I think all MPs and decision-makers have to find, which is: how do we ensure that if you earn money and if you want to put 10 bucks through the pokies once every year you still have the right to be able to do that and have the freedom to be able to do that? That is an incredibly difficult line to get right, because for the people

who we do not catch who do have an addictive personality or who do become addicted to gaming or gambling, the outcome is catastrophic. But you need to balance that against the vast majority who do gamble responsibly, who do use gaming machines appropriately, and while I do recognise that within this legislation that is before the house today it is making some steps towards addressing a certain element, there are other aspects that need to be considered as well.

I would like to reference the consultation paper that the government announced on 16 July, which put forward a number of proposals in regard to managing gaming and gambling differently in the state of Victoria. There are elements in this, as of course we see in the legislation before us today, which is the first tranche of changes in relation to that consultation paper, and to be quite honest the biggest change is around the mandatory closing periods. In my electorate of Lowan I have spoken to local pubs and clubs that are gaming venues, and they have no concerns about this. In fact, it does not really impact on them. They are not open during those hours in any case, so this legislation is not controversial by any means at all. It is very interesting when you are speaking to these gaming venues, because they really do take their role as a balanced entertainment venue versus making sure people are safe and identifying if they are getting to that element where there are gambling harms and they may be a risk to themselves or harming their family inappropriately, and trying to do their best to step up where that is appropriate. In my view these gaming operators are doing an exceptional job in my electorate. They speak with quite a lot of passion about people who have faced gambling harms in their own organisation – sometimes even their own staff have been involved in that – but they are doing all they can to participate and ensure that people are kept safe while enjoying the entertainment aspects of gaming.

But what has rightly been raised with me is that pokies are just one form of gambling and gaming. Even through the mandatory closure period, while it will have some impact in the metropolitan areas, and that is something that has been raised by other members today, where there is maybe a higher density of gaming operators and where there has been an attempt to shift opening and closing hours to ensure there is 24-hour service, we live in a world where there are so many other avenues to place a bet or to gamble, to get that thrill of putting money on and taking a risk that you might win something and get something out of it the end of the day, that this only hits a very, very small market. We all know on every single phone you can download any number of gaming-like apps where you can put real money on that. That is not controlled by hours of service. That is not controlled by any of the proposed changes through the government's consultation paper. So while this is one step forward, it is a small step forward and only targeting pubs and clubs, and there is an aspect of it here as well of course which addresses the casino.

There are aspects of the consultation paper that are of great concern to pubs and clubs. As I said, there is no concern in my local area around the mandatory closing periods; however, there are other concerns, and some of that is just around whether it will hit the mark or not and whether it will simply turn people away from a gaming environment, where there are staff who are trained up to identify problem gaming and gambling, where there are staff who are able to provide direct support and help people link in with addiction support services, and instead shift people into perhaps an environment where they are by themselves, there is not a support network around them and they are able to gamble unlimited amounts online, which is a massive growth area for gambling which impacts not just our local area of Victoria but is something that you can of course access internationally as well.

Some of the key concerns are around the YourPlay system turning from a voluntary to a mandatory scheme. There is a real concern that if government is tracking when they are placing their bets and what they are putting their money on that information could be used in a way that was not intended and was not part of the scheme that was put forward to them, and that people would therefore be pushed out of these types of gaming venues and be pushed into other areas which are not so heavily monitored by the government.

There is also a significant concern around the limits, particularly how they will work in practice. For example, if you put 100 bucks into a machine and you have a big win and you have got \$1000, do you have to continue to spend that money in that same pokie machine? Can you withdraw it and put into

another machine? Is it seen as the same gambling opportunity or situation or is it seen as different circumstances? Is that sort of ticket-in, ticket-out system seen as cash? Is it the initial investment? Is it follow-up? How will that work? I know that these are things that are not going to take place before July 2024, but these are concerns that are really having a big impact on what people in the pubs and clubs environment are thinking about and talking about at the moment.

Just going back to YourPlay for a moment, we know that YourPlay has been voluntary, and there has been limited uptake of it. That is because for the most part people do not think that they are problem gamblers, and for the most part they are not problem gamblers. To have Big Brother looking over your shoulder for a precommitment which is set at a certain amount treats everyone in exactly the same way, but, as we know, everyone has a different disposable income. I am not saying it should be one thing or another, but we have to get that line right to make sure we are minimising gambling harms and the associated harm around that, whether it is impact on families or mental health – suicide rates, as we know, are enormously high through some of these gambling harms. Family violence comes into it as well. There are so many negative impacts when you see those extreme levels of gambling addiction and gambling harm, but we also have the vast majority of people who see it as a way to get out of the house. They see people that they may not see otherwise. It is a form of entertainment, and we need to look at that and make sure we get the balance right in terms of the ability and the freedom of Victorians to spend their money that they have earned in a way that they see fit versus making sure we have got a controlled environment for problem gamblers. As I mentioned, we need to make sure that we get it right in terms of not inadvertently pushing people out of a secure environment and into an isolated environment, which may just exacerbate the problems.

The member for Gippsland South has put forward an amendment to ensure a fairer arrangement in relation to approved venues in operation around the casino. I strongly support the member for Gippsland South's amendment, and I look forward to listening to further debate on this legislation.

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (18:38): I am delighted to stand and speak on the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. On 16 July the previous Premier and the wonderful Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation announced landmark gambling reforms. Many people in this house will know that gambling reform is an issue that is incredibly close to my heart. I have spoken many times on the harms of gambling, and I will continue to do that. When these reforms were announced I had never been prouder this government, and I want to take a moment to acknowledge the commitment and work that the minister has put into these reforms. I am forever grateful for her absolute commitment to reducing gambling harm.

Martha Haylett: Hear, hear!

Michaela SETTLE: Indeed, hear, hear! Before I go on, I would just like to address some of the comments from the other side. This is something I am passionate about, and it absolutely grinds my gears when I hear the hypocrisy coming from the other side. They are preaching at us on the one hand that we should be mindful of gambling harm while on the other they are being cheerleaders for the pokies industry. The member for Lowan said that we are concentrating here on pokies and what about online gambling. I do not know if she is aware, but online gambling sits within the federal arena. It is not something we can work with, which is why we are not dealing with it in this bill. The member for Eildon is either disingenuous or utterly ill informed, because she went on to tell us –

Darren Cheeseman interjected.

Michaela SETTLE: Yes, probably both. She went on to tell us that the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation financial counselling service is gone. That is not true. Financial counselling services continue to be provided to people who have gambling issues. I know Acting Speaker Addison is as proud as I am of Child and Family Services and all the work that they do in providing that financial support. It would be nice if those on the other side stood with Victorian people instead of the industry, a business.

Now, the member for Gippsland South suggested that this government had no mandate. Well, let us just be very clear about this: the opinion of Victorians is clear. The *Age* reported on a Resolve poll that was done in September which showed that the majority of Victorians support mandatory precommitment limits and carded play on all Victorian poker machines – so that is people of all wages. There seems to be a suggestion from the other side that we need to worry about mandatory precommitment depending on someone's wage. It sounds a lot like the sneakers comments that we know from the other side. But the survey by Resolve, conducted exclusively for the *Age*, revealed that 57 per cent of respondents backed the pokies crackdown. So while the member for Gippsland South says that we do not have a mandate, I would say that the election was that mandate and Victorians stand with us in wanting to do something in this space.

Many people have spoken already about the harm that gambling causes; 330,000 Victorians experience harm as a result of gambling each year, costing Victoria around \$7 billion annually. The Alliance for Gambling Reform did a study recently which showed that poker machine losses in clubs across five states last financial year surged by \$14 billion. Victoria thankfully had one of the lower increases, though it did show an increase. What I really want to say here is that these figures are horrifying – we all know how horrifying they are – but to some of us they are much, much more than figures. To me it is the devastation of my family. To me it is having to look my sons in the eyes and tell them that I am leaving Daddy. It is much more than figures. I would ask that while those on the other side sweat and worry about the income of large corporations, perhaps if they spent a bit more time thinking about Victorians, thinking about Victorian families, then they might even have a hope of doing a little better.

With this bill, we are looking at what is going to be the first tranche. Those on the side of the member for Lowan seemed to think that this was a fearful thing that was to come upon us, all of these new reforms. For me those sweeping reforms were just extraordinary. As I said earlier, I have never been so proud. Of course there are the mandatory closure periods, which will come into this bill, but there is also a reduction of load-up limits from \$1000 to \$100 which will come into play, and there is also the adjusting of spin rates. They are things for further down the track. We are doing lots of consultation at the moment about that, but what we are bringing into legislation today is around mandatory closing. It is interesting that those on the other side think that this is going to cost us thousands of jobs and millions of dollars. What we have at the moment is a system where there is a mandatory closing of hours but not specified hours. I do agree that this legislation increases that closing by 2 hours, but ostensibly it is the same. It just fixes those times. So I suppose what they are talking about on the other side is a loss of income for 2 hours.

Now, a long, long time ago, in my wilder youth, I remember visiting a place called the Taxi Club in Sydney. The Taxi Club was open 24 hours a day. I remember the first time I went there being absolutely horrified that people were there gambling at that hour – I was being much more civilised in drinking. But I guess what has to be said in this space is that nobody is recreationally gambling at 4 am. For those on the other side the member for Lowan is like, 'Oh, you know, some people want to do this, this is fun and this is their right'. Well, sure, then they can do it at some reasonable hour. I would ask her to question if she knows anyone who is having fun and is in a recreational environment at 4 or 5 am in front of a pokie. I very much doubt that there is much recreation involved there. They also seem to be fixated that it is going to change the jurisdiction and it is going to be so much worse for the clubs and pubs in Victoria. Well, I would point out that New South Wales already has the mandatory closing period with the same hours so this in fact brings us into line with New South Wales and South Australia. On this sort of panic that everyone is going to cross the borders, they have got quite a few borders to cross before they get anywhere. Certainly in my electorate if someone is driving to cross the borders to continue gambling – the reason why we are instituting this is that it is about trying to take a break – to get from Ballarat to the border is a good 4 or 5 hours, and that will give you the same break.

The reason why it is important to have that break is we talk about people being in the zone, and as I said to you – I am very open about this – I know what the zone looks like. I have told this story before, but I remember saying to my ex, ‘When you were raiding the ATM, did you not think of me and the kids?’ And look, he is a good bloke. He is a good dad. He said, ‘No, I wasn’t. You’re not there, you’re in a zone.’ He did not think about us – and he did love us; that is not what was going on there. Addiction is a mental health issue and a really bad space. What these mandatory closing hours do is give you a chance. It gives you a chance to go home to your wife and kids, to go home and think again about whether you want to be there, and that is what is so important about this legislation. It gives people a break to try and collect themselves, to get out of that zone. For those on the other side to be so concerned about a potential loss of income for 2 hours at 4 in the morning over families – families need the gambler to come home. They have got to wrap their arms around them and make sure they do not do it again.

It is Gambling Harm Awareness Week. The theme is ‘Talk. Share. Support.’ If there is anyone out there who has gambling issues, just talk to someone. Talk to your best mate. Talk to someone in the street. Get it out there. There is no stigma. This government supports you and we will continue to support you. Yes, there are counselling services, and this bill will go further in supporting you. So in this week in particular, if you are concerned about your gambling, reach out to someone. That is how we make the big difference. Again I just have to say thank you to the minister. This is about changing families’ lives.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (18:47): It is my pleasure to rise to speak on the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. When this was announced on 16 July, this series of gambling reforms, that is the length of time that I like to do some stakeholder consultation. It gives me plenty of time, because when venue managers contact me or committees of community clubs contact me with concerns – or with questions rather than concerns – there is plenty of time to meet with them, sit down and work through all of those, which I have done. I like to do stakeholder consultation by myself. There is nothing better than firsthand information, as far as I am concerned. If you can sit down and have a conversation with someone, it serves the entire cause better, so I have done that over the last month or so. I have sat down and spoken with the management committees of the Mildura Working Man’s Club, the Gateway hotel and the Robinvale Golf Club. These smaller clubs that are situated right on the border are concerned only because they are community-owned clubs that are owned by their members and governed by their members, with New South Wales clubs across the other side. That is more of a concern for those entities – when the club across the river in New South Wales have very lax rules and very different rules. What would be great would be if New South Wales would come along and be consistent in the changes. We are all about reducing harm as far as gambling goes, but when the rules are not consistent on both sides of the river and when it is only a 5- or 6-minute drive away, that is a real concern.

But some other points were made. Sitting down speaking to Gordon, who is the CEO of the Gateway hotel in Mildura – sometimes some real points of common sense come out of these conversations – one thing that he brought up was to get tougher on enforcing gaming licences. If someone does the wrong thing, if a venue does the wrong thing, enforce their licence. Close them down. Close them down for 30 days. The industry would reform itself overnight is his argument. If they do the wrong thing a second time, close them down for three months. Three strikes, that is it, you lose your licence. These are the sorts of reforms that the industry and people working in the industry would like to see. That is a pretty commonsense, simple suggestion. But it is one that I thought at the time had a bit of merit, and this is coming from someone who operates a gaming venue.

The clubs and pubs that have gaming machines in our electorate do not operate 24 hours a day anyway. They are not concerned about that. They are all for closing earlier. That is neither here nor there. What is a concern is that the rules are not the same on both sides of the river when they are so close. It is not a 4- or 5-hour drive to get to the border, like the member for Eureka said. It is 5 minutes away. If New South Wales would come along for the ride, maybe these sorts of reforms would pave the way for

New South Wales to at least do that with regard to the cash-out limits, the ticket-in, ticket-out system – all of that – because if the load-up limits on gaming machines in Victoria are \$100 and still \$500 in New South Wales, that will make a difference to some. They already do. When the clubs close in Victoria, they will go to the other side of the river. These are the concerns that the industry has.

The community clubs, in particular the Robinvale Golf Club – and I have had many conversations with the committee there; to them, to that committee, they are first and foremost a golf club, but the gaming is an arm of that – I do not think are open until midnight on any given night, but they are concerned. They do give a lot of money back to the community. There are certain parts of the community that rely on those donations back. For example, last year the local preschool needed a popcorn machine – they do a lot of fundraising events at markets, the Christmas festivals, things like that, and they needed their own popcorn machine because hiring one was costing them a fortune. My suggestion to that particular committee was, you know what, go and see the golf club – they have a community grants program and I am sure they would be more than happy to fund that for you. And they did without question. They did. When sporting groups are going away – the Robinvale Pathangals go away to the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited carnival in Shepparton every year – and they need support they go to the community clubs that have a stream to fund that. So there is a concern from not just a business feasibility point of view but also giving back and just the inconsistencies between the Victorian side and the New South Wales side. That was the conversation that consistently came up, the load-up level difference between gaming machines in Victoria and New South Wales.

That is really what I wanted to touch on today, just that stakeholder engagement, to highlight that. Everyone that I spoke to that is involved in a venue that has gaming machines said to me no-one wants to see gambling harm. They do what they can, but if there were means to enforce licences more greatly, as I suggested before, if a gaming licence is breached, close it down. If they do it a second time, close them down longer. If they do it a third time, three strikes and you are out. It is pretty simplistic, but is there merit in it? Is it something that should be explored? Perhaps it is in a series of gaming reforms. I think it is certainly worth exploring, and my point is that that comes about from having firsthand consultation with industry. When you are given enough time and know that these changes are coming, you can sit down and have meaningful conversations, and out of that perhaps comes something beneficial for everyone. That is really what I wanted to add to this debate.

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (18:55): I too rise to make a contribution to the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, and I do so knowing that it will be truncated somewhat this evening. To me, the difference between the government and those opposite just could not be clearer, really. You either continue to be apologists for an industry that exists for the sole purpose of taking money out of the pockets of working people – you know, those who can least afford it – or you actually just stand up for them, people who experience gambling harm. The sorts of experiences that the member for Eureka just took us so clearly through – and thank you for sharing your lived experience with the house tonight.

The bill introduces gambling harm reforms and implements recommendations from the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence. The amendments to the Casino Control Act 1991 include the establishment of a statutory management regime to manage the casino in case of licence suspension, cancellation or surrender, and the statutory manager will have specific functions and powers including the statutory property in case of administration or liquidation. The bill allows the manager to seek legal advice and provides protections against third-party claims and personal liability. It inserts those new provisions related to the payment of winnings and restrict payouts above \$1000 to be made by cheque or bank transfer.

The amendments to the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 prohibit the approval of 24-hour gaming venues and standardised gaming hours, and most importantly venue operators outside the casino are prohibited from allowing gaming machines to be played between 4 am and 10 am. I understand that this is already consistent with the laws that are in New South Wales. The legislation aims to reduce

gambling harm by preventing late-night gambling, provide a break for players to increase awareness of their decisions and introduce penalties for violations of those rules.

I too would like to note that this bill is being brought to the house during Gambling Harm Awareness Week, and as I always do when I speak to gambling-related bills in this place, I would like to especially shout out to the Alliance for Gambling Reform. They do incredible work in our community. They identify gambling as a public health issue and an issue that needs to be addressed that way, and like the member for Eureka, I am so proud of our government in bringing these harm minimisation reforms to the house.

I would also like to give a very special shout-out to a parliamentary intern of mine who, through the Victorian Parliament's internship program, put a report together on electronic gaming machine usage in my electorate of Narre Warren South this year. The report evaluated as well as looked at the impact that comes from the harm caused by electronic game usage and how it could be mitigated throughout suburban Victoria. It was a tremendous body of work that he produced, and I really thank him for putting that work together. His findings incidentally reported that Narre Warren South has very much shown above average density of electronic gaming machines in comparison to the rest of Victoria, as well as one of the highest annual player expenditures on electronic gaming machines, with many households experiencing at least \$1000 of gaming losses per annum. So I would like to thank Jack, and on that note I will also commend the bill to the house.

Business interrupted under resolution of house today.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Woolsthorpe wind farm

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (19:00): (371) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Planning, and the action I seek is for the minister to reject the amendment to the planning permit for the Woolsthorpe wind farm that will permit overheight wind towers to be built in the current flight path of Warrnambool Airport. The wind farm's planning permit had wind turbines up to 168 metres in height, which did not interfere with aircraft safely operating out of the nearby Warrnambool Airport. However, this 168-metre height limit has been irresponsibly amended by this state Labor government's planning panel to allow towers of up to 230 metres in height – a 40 per cent increase in height.

Now, let me be very clear on this, Minister. A planning panel under your department has approved a permit for wind turbines that puts lives at risk. The approved overall height of 230 metres is greater than the current Civil Aviation Safety Authority minimum safe operating level for operating out of Warrnambool Airport. The panel stated that CASA could raise the minimum safe operating level to accommodate the wind turbines and allow aircraft to operate; however, I think it is fair to assume that the Civil Aviation Safety Authority will not allow for such a situation, as this would potentially put lives at risk. What this means is it will potentially be impossible for certain aircraft to utilise the Warrnambool Airport, including larger jet aircraft that are seen operating services to regional Victoria at airports like Bendigo and Mildura.

Warrnambool Airport is home to Ambulance Victoria's HEMS 4 helicopter, business operators, flight training providers and local recreational flyers, and on top of this the airport is regularly visited by planes from Ambulance Victoria, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and Angel Flight. These are critical, and we cannot put these services at risk due to an irresponsible planning decision.

Once again we are seeing this Labor government ignore regional Victoria's interests. Not only that but they are also actively undermining the future prospects and development of a regional town with their rushed efforts to reach net zero, with the wind turbine heights preventing an extended runway being developed and the addition of passenger services to Warrnambool.

Whilst those opposite like to lecture and heckle about regional Victorians being against renewable energy and slowing down the planning process, it is quite the opposite. The Moyne shire, in which the Warrnambool Airport is located, is home to the most wind turbines of any local government region in our state. South-West Coast is doing all the heavy lifting to meet the rushed goals set by this Labor government, which has no plans on how to reach them. We saw that in the secret deal with AGL to keep coal power plants open, and now we are seeing it with their need to sacrifice a major regional town's local airport. Warrnambool and the South-West Coast will not tolerate the loss of the viability of our airport. The minister should use common sense and reject this amendment.

Hoa Nghiem Early Learning Centre

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (19:03): (372) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Children, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me in visiting the Hoa Nghiem Early Learning Centre. Hoa Nghiem is a really interesting early learning centre connected to the Hoa Nghiem Buddhist College, which is a primary school run out of the temple in Springvale South. The Buddhist philosophy and curriculum make the school and the ELC quite unique. The temple, the school and the ELC are just another example of our thriving, diverse community. Victorians come from more than 200 countries, speak 260 languages and follow 135 different faiths. Nearly half of all Victorians were born overseas or have a parent who was born overseas, so it makes sense that we also have diversity in our education institutions.

I am extremely proud of the government's broader investment in temples and multicultural infrastructure in our community and across the state. The Labor government has committed to delivering over \$50 million of investment to build, upgrade and renovate new community infrastructure for multicultural and multifaith communities, and under the program we will invest \$250,000 towards delivering upgrades for the Hoa Nghiem Buddhist Temple for Victoria's Vietnamese community in Clarinda and Melbourne's south-east. I would love for the minister to join me in visiting the Hoa Nghiem Early Learning Centre, and I look forward to her response.

Esmond bridge, Murray Valley Highway

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (19:05): (373) I am delighted to rise, and my adjournment matter is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action that I seek is that the minister seriously consider making safety modifications to the Esmond bridge on the Murray Valley Highway, approximately 5 kilometres west of Bundalong. The bridge that I am raising today is located on the Murray Valley Highway, a major arterial road in our region. The bridge, which crosses over the Ovens River, is a very narrow bridge. It is wide enough for a car and a truck to pass, but only just, but it is hardly wide enough to have two trucks pass over that bridge, and that is quite serious on a major arterial.

It is common knowledge that when trucks come to that bridge they radio each other on the UHF to ensure that they do not come across the bridge at the same time, but cars with caravans do not have the same luxury, and there are near misses on a daily basis. Just last week a truck that was marginally oversized was stopped on the bridge because it simply could not pass a local car, which was made to reverse up to allow the truck to go over the bridge.

Minister, there are many safety measures that could be employed here, including flashing lights when a vehicle is already on or approaching the bridge, or a reduction in speed limit for vehicles coming from the east to 60 kilometres an hour. I am not suggesting for a moment that we need a new bridge at this stage or even traffic lights to make it only one-way traffic, but reducing the speed and having other warning lights and safety measures would assist in making this bridge a safer bridge for all. It is a major thoroughfare, and it is a very dangerous crossing.

Assyrian, Syriac and Chaldean communities

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (19:06): (374) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. It relates to the recent tragedy at a wedding in the city of Bakhdida, also known as Qaraqosh, which killed well over 100 people and left many more with severe burns and life-changing injuries, and the need to secure justice for the victims. The specific action I seek is for the minister to advise me how the Victorian government is supporting the Assyrian, Syriac and Chaldean communities to live safely, freely and prosperously in Victoria, having been forced to flee their ancient homelands in northern Iraq.

Many of those killed and injured in Bakhdida had family, friends and loved ones living in my electorate of Greenvale and across Melbourne, meaning that the suffering of this tragedy has been felt acutely here in Victoria. The Chaldean, Assyrian and Syriac communities have already demonstrated such extraordinary resilience in recent years in the face of hardship, terror and persecution. The murderous hatred and religious intolerance of the terrorist group Da'esh forced many to flee their ancient homelands in Nineveh and northern Iraq in 2014.

After often long and arduous journeys through third countries such as Jordan and Türkiye, many Assyrians, Chaldeans and Syriacs have found sanctuary and a new home in Victoria, where they are making an immense contribution to our community through business, the professions, faith and public service. These outstanding contributions are particularly evident in Melbourne's northern suburbs, including my own electorate of Greenvale. Others from the Syriac, Chaldean and Assyrian communities have been working hard to rebuild shattered cities like Bakhdida, which is why the fire and tragic loss of life at a wedding, an occasion that should have been the cause of so much joy, has been such a painful blow.

I was proud to stand in solidarity with thousands of my constituents who gathered in peace, prayer and remembrance on the steps of this our Parliament on Sunday 8 October in honour of those who lost their lives in Bakhdida. I now ask the minister to join me in supporting the Assyrian, Syriac and Chaldean communities in their time of deep grief and to advise me how the Victorian government is working to provide them with practical support.

Torquay Marine Rescue Service

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (19:08): (375) My adjournment debate this evening is for the Minister for Emergency Services, and I am inviting the Minister for Emergency Services down to my wonderful electorate of Polwarth and to Torquay. The Torquay Marine Rescue Service is a wonderful local institution down in Torquay, which does a great job. It basically looks after everybody at sea – from the Port Phillip Heads all the way down to Lorne. It is a big area and it is a busy area. It is full of people all summer long, all winter long – all year round. They have participated in rescues from aeroplanes crashing into the sea, stranded yachtsmen, fishermen – you name it. They are on call all the time to help look after not only Victorians but many of the visitors to the wonderful Surf Coast region.

This marine rescue service is run 100 per cent by volunteers. They are on call 24/7, seven days a week. They are there to help look after not only their own community and the people that they know and love but also everyone that comes and wants to enjoy the Great Ocean Road region. The Torquay Marine Rescue Service, after much argy-bargy, has a large seagoing boat that is designed to be launched off the beach – which is the only alternative they have there in Torquay – at Fishos Beach. But the most important thing is they are in a mess at the moment because they have got a piece of equipment but they do not have the rest of the facilities around them to support that. They need a bigger garage to store it in. Currently it is being left out in the weather. It has really expensive equipment and kit on board that is now just sitting next to the edge of the road. This leaves it open to vandalism and theft, and we really cannot have such critical infrastructure in our community that looks after so many tens of thousands of people on our beautiful coastline sitting there not properly housed and looked after. Really, for most people it makes no sense to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on first-rate oceangoing equipment and then not store it properly, so that needs to be fixed.

The club also tells me that with the service, the volunteers, the guys there on training nights on Tuesdays and Wednesdays when they go down there, it is quite an effort to get it into the sea. The trailer is not fit for purpose, and they need a proper trailer. These are important bits of equipment, and quite frankly it is not good enough that if just for lack of funding and lack of support some pretty sort of basic kit is not made available and it ends up costing lives.

Any delay in getting a boat and a service into the water to rescue someone stranded at sea is not a good look. It is not what the volunteers want, and it is certainly not what the people of Victoria expect. So, Minister, you are welcome. Please make contact. We will go down and visit these wonderful volunteers. Let us work together to solve this.

Banksia Gardens public housing estate

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (19:11): (376) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Housing, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me to visit the Banksia Gardens housing estate in Broadmeadows. Last Thursday we had the really exciting visit to Broadmeadows with our fabulous new Premier Jacinta Allan, the federal Minister for Housing Julie Collins, our wonderful housing minister Harriet Shing and our local federal member Maria Vamvakinou. It was all-star cast of women announcing the biggest investment in Broadmeadows in history – so far – with \$80 million to build 120 new homes at Banksia Gardens.

This announcement has been so well received and long awaited. I have been strongly advocating for this project for over 18 months, and I would like to thank fellow advocates Julijana Todorovic, Gina Dougall, Jaime de Loma-Osorio Ricon and the team from Banksia Gardens Community Services; councillors Joseph Haweil, Karen Sherry, Naim Kurt, Sam Misho and Hume City Council; members of the Broadmeadows Revitalisation Board; and our friends from Labor for Housing.

Only Labor is delivering real action on housing, and this social housing project is funded 50–50 between the federal and state Labor governments. With record investments in our Big Housing Build and the social housing accelerator, Labor governments are working together and delivering projects to ensure people have a safe place to call home. I also express my sincere gratitude to the former housing minister Colin Brooks, his wonderful staff, the Broadmeadows housing office and Homes Victoria for their incredible work in delivering this much-needed project.

The new homes will be modern, comfortable and environmentally sustainable and will include fully accessible units for people with disabilities, right in the heart of Broadmeadows close to shops, services and education facilities. Construction of the new homes will get underway next year and will create more than 700 local jobs. The ground floor of the development will include services to support both current and future residents, and there will be a new cycling and pedestrian link to connect the centre of Banksia Gardens to Coleraine Street, with the magnificent Kangan Institute, Labor's \$60 million health and community services centre of excellence currently being built and the new tech school that we announced in the election, which is about to be built. It is all happening. I would have loved to have shown Minister Shing all of this last Thursday, but it was teeming with rain, so I would love her to come back so I can show her around the estate and introduce her to some of the wonderful residents there.

On top of all this work, Broadmeadows has also been announced as a focus activity centre in the housing statement, and I thank Minister Kilkeny and her office for taking the time to talk to residents, including at a meeting her adviser and I had yesterday with the wonderful Sonja and John Rutherford from the Broadmeadows Progress Association.

School facilities

Jess WILSON (Kew) (19:14): (377) My adjournment is to the Minister for Education, and the action I am seeking is an immediate audit of demountable classrooms across public schools in Victoria to inform an urgent works plan to get students out of portables and into permanent fit-for-purpose learning facilities. It should go without saying that classrooms are vital to learning, and the Victorian

School Building Authority says that its purpose is to help every Victorian child have a great local school that prepares them to thrive in the 21st century. I congratulate them in this aim, but I am concerned that many Victorian schools are still trying to teach 21st-century learning and skills in portable classrooms from the previous century.

Figures obtained by the *Age* under freedom of information show that there were nearly 6000 relocatable classroom buildings placed at over 1000 state schools as of August this year. Of those, 35 schools had 20 or more demountables and 137 had more than 10. Take, for example, Tarneit P-9 College, for whom demountables make up two-thirds of their learning and teaching facilities. For a school catering to a rapid growth area popular with young families, this is a completely unacceptable situation. Within just two years of opening, Tarneit had 21 demountables and has installed another 15 since, with three more to be added next year. Tarneit College principal Anne-Maree Kliman rightly called on the government to invest in existing schools, especially when:

... they're rapidly growing and ... recognising that there's a need for those permanent buildings at that point in time, not waiting until it gets to a point where we're overflowing with relocatables. It should be a constant review.

Alamanda K-9 College in Point Cook has the highest number of demountables, sitting at 61, while Hazel Glen College in Doreen has 49. Many of these portables at Victorian schools are decades old and do not meet the needs of a modern learning environment. Of course I do understand that portable classrooms have a purpose in our schools. They can be set up relatively quickly and easily to meet the demand for space when existing buildings cannot keep up with enrolments in the short term, but they have significant drawbacks. They take up a space on campus that we could use for other purposes, particularly for playgrounds or other outdoor spaces such as ovals, and it also seems that they may be giving the government an excuse to overlook the very real infrastructure needs of the school.

This government likes to talk about building new schools, but this needs to go hand in hand with investing in the infrastructure needs of existing schools. Demountables may be sufficient for a short period of time, but they will never replace purpose-built permanent classrooms that have been co-designed with the school community to meet their needs. Again, in the case of Tarneit College, it is a completely unacceptable situation that over two-thirds of buildings on campus are demountables. With nearly 6000 demountable buildings across Victorian state schools, it is clear that there has been a failure to adequately plan and resource the rollout of appropriate facilities for schools in growth areas. That is why an immediate audit of demountable classrooms to inform an urgent works plan to get students out of portables and into permanent learning facilities is necessary.

Narre Warren North electorate schools

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (19:17): (378) My adjournment matter is also for the Minister for Education, and the action that I seek is that the minister come and visit my electorate of Narre Warren North to see the amazing upgrades that are happening at our local schools. This year's state budget reflected a meaningful investment in our local schools, and this included \$24.2 million in upgrades to Hallam Secondary College. We have committed \$310,000 to Fleetwood Primary School in Narre Warren for key upgrades to benefit the school community. On top of this we have committed \$9.1 million for James Cook Primary School in Endeavour Hills, with the budget kicking off with the planning works. The principal, school council and staff are really looking forward to seeing these upgrades progress, and I am looking forward to seeing and hearing from the minister soon.

Middle East conflict

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (19:18): (379) My adjournment matter is for the Premier. The action I seek is for the Premier to investigate how the government can better support local community members impacted by recent events in Israel and Gaza, including by ensuring the safety of our Jewish community and the investigation, arrest, charging and prosecution of those inciting violence, supporting proscribed terrorist organisation Hamas or engaging in any other potential criminal activity.

On 7 October and since we have seen barbaric Hamas-led terrorist attacks in Israel, resulting in the biggest loss of Jewish life since the Holocaust. We have seen bombings and the rape, kidnapping, burning and murder of so many men, women, children, babies and grandparents, many being innocent civilians going about their lives in a kibbutz, at a music festival and in their family homes. Children have been shot, young women raped and murdered, people burned alive, hostages taken. The video of young Shani from the music festival, with terrorists parading and spitting on her deceased, mostly naked body with her broken leg, sticks in my head. Locally, a Jewish friend also told me of his rabbi's wife's cousin, who was murdered, with her severed arm with wedding ring found.

I support Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas on Israeli soil and within Gaza and elsewhere to target Hamas and their military infrastructure, including to stop further attacks and try to free hostages. Hamas must free all remaining 199 hostages. With the subsequent conflict arising from Hamas's actions, I also mourn innocent Palestinian and other lives in Gaza, where people have been displaced and innocent lives lost, particularly of women and children. I hope that best efforts are put in by all to avoid more civilian casualties.

Injustice breeds injustice, and I do not want to see innocent lives lost or civilians scared for their survival, Israelis and Palestinians alike. Hamas must also no longer use civilians or hostages to defend terrorist infrastructure and as human shields. I have also been disgusted with some people locally at protests chanting things like 'Gas the Jews' – something that since the Holocaust we should never hear – targeted at all Jews, not just Israelis or Israeli Jews; or actively supporting Hamas, a prescribed terrorist organisation; or neo-Nazis trying to target Jews on our trains. I have Jewish friends now afraid to go out or to send their kids to school. One has said he is organising to leave Australia with his family despite being born here, citing danger and a mass rise in antisemitism. On the train yesterday to Parliament I observed a person of Jewish faith proudly wearing his yarmulke, as he should be able to, but I could tell he was nervous. No-one here should feel unsafe.

On these points, and particularly as the Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Justice and Corrections, I reiterate to the Premier that we must work together to ensure the safety of our Jewish community; we must enhance active police presence at future protests and arrest and charge those inciting violence or engaging in criminal activity; and we must support identifying and charging people who have done that in the past.

Wendouree electorate First Peoples organisations

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (19:21): (380) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, and the action I seek is for the minister to visit my electorate of Wendouree and meet with representatives from the Wadawurrung traditional owners corporation and the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative. The Wadawurrung are seven family groups recognised under the traditional law and customs of the registered Aboriginal party, and the RAP area covers over 10,000 square kilometres including the electorate of Wendouree. I wish to acknowledge the work of acting CEO Liam Murphy and general manager of recognition and negotiations, all the traditional owners and the Wadawurrung corporation for the work they do across our community. I look forward to meeting with representatives and listening to the issues that are important to them.

The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative was established by members of the local Aboriginal community in 1979 and is led by CEO Karen Heap, the BADAC board of directors, chief executive of culture Shu Brown and an incredible workforce. BADAC delivers health, social, welfare and community development programs to the Aboriginal community in Ballarat and surrounds. As a member of the Allan Labor government, I am proud we are supporting BADAC-led projects including the construction of a culturally safe independent-living community for local Aboriginal elders as well as the Yirram Burrong early education centre in Sebastopol. Yirram burrong means 'morning child', and this new early learning centre is an Aboriginal-led and community-owned kindergarten with an emphasis on culture, education and community. Meeting with representatives from BADAC will

provide an opportunity for the minister to hear directly from the Ballarat Aboriginal community about building a better future.

I am so proud that our Labor government supports improved outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians, and we are proud to walk with them in Ballarat and across the state. I note that Victoria is the only Australian jurisdiction to have actioned both the treaty and truth components of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*. I look forward to hearing back from the minister and am hopeful that the minister will welcome the opportunity to meet with Wadawurrung traditional owners and BADAC.

Responses

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (19:23): A matter was raised by the member for South-West Coast to the Minister for Planning seeking action to reject a planning permit application for a wind farm in her electorate.

The member for Clarinda raised a matter for the Minister for Children seeking action to join him in visiting a particular early learning centre in his electorate, which he went into detail about.

The member for Ovens Valley raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety in relation to action the minister could take to make changes to a bridge on the Murray Valley Highway that crosses the Ovens River.

The member for Greenvale raised a matter for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs with regard to practical support that the Victorian government can provide to several communities – the Syriac, Assyrian and Chaldean communities in his electorate – in the northern suburbs who could do with continued practical support from the government.

The member for Polwarth raised matters for the Minister for Emergency Services inviting the minister to the electorate of Polwarth, particularly to visit the Torquay Marine Rescue Service.

The member for Broadmeadows raised a matter for the Minister for Housing seeking action to join her on a visit to the Banksia Gardens housing estate.

The member Kew raised a matter for the Minister for Education seeking an audit of demountable classrooms across the state.

The member for Narre Warren North also raised an adjournment matter for the Minister for Education and Deputy Premier seeking a visit to the amazing upgrades, to have a look at those, in the local schools in her electorate, including Hallam Secondary College and very many others.

The member for Mornington raised a matter for the Premier seeking an investigation into what other practical support the government can provide to communities here, both across Victoria and in his electorate, who have been traumatised and distressed regarding events in the Middle East and particularly the support that can be provided for the safety and security of the Jewish community here in Victoria.

The member for Wendouree raised a matter for the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples seeking action to visit her electorate to speak with representatives of local First Peoples organisations. I commend those matters to the house.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The house stands adjourned until tomorrow morning.

House adjourned 7:26 pm.