



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Wednesday 4 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'Keeffe, 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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Wednesday 4 October 2023

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

*Bills***State Taxation Acts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2023***Introduction and first reading*

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Economic Growth) (09:34): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Duties Act 2000, the First Home Owner Grant and Home Buyer Schemes Act 2000, the Land Tax Act 2005, the Local Government Act 1989, the Property Law Act 1958, the Sale of Land Act 1962, the Treasury Corporation of Victoria Act 1992, the Valuation of Land Act 1960 and the Windfall Gains Tax Act 2021 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (09:35): I seek a brief explanation of the new taxes imposed upon Victorians.

The SPEAKER: Order! Is that a request for a brief explanation of the bill?

Brad ROWSWELL: Yes, it is, Speaker.

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Economic Growth) (09:35): The bill includes vacant residential land tax reforms to encourage housing supply and consumer protection measures to increase transparency on purchase costs for property purchases. The bill also makes a number of amendments to Victoria's taxation and land valuation laws to maintain the integrity and sustainability of the taxation system and land valuations, ensuring they continue to operate as intended.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

*Business of the house***Notices of motion and orders of the day**

The SPEAKER (09:36): General business, notice of motion 9 and order of the day 1, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2 pm today.

*Committees***Public Accounts and Estimates Committee***Appointment of a Person to Conduct the Performance Audit of the Auditor-General and Victorian Auditor-General's Office*

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (09:36): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee on the appointment of a person to conduct the performance audit of the Auditor-General and Victorian Auditor-General's Office.

Ordered that report be published.

*Documents***Documents****Incorporated list as follows:****DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT** – The Clerk tabled:

Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, Board of – Chair Report 2021–22

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Documents under section 15 in relation to statutory rules 104, 106

Victorian Information Commissioner, Office of (OVIC) – Report 2022–23.

*Bills***Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2023***Council's agreement*

The SPEAKER (09:37): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 without amendment.

*Committees***Environment and Planning Committee***Membership*

The SPEAKER (09:37): I have received the resignation of Sam Groth from the Environment and Planning Standing Committee, effective today.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee*Membership*

The SPEAKER (09:38): I have also received the resignation of Paul Hamer from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, effective from today.

Integrity and Oversight Committee*Reporting dates*

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (09:38): I move, by leave:

That the reporting date for the Integrity and Oversight Committee's inquiry into the operation of the Freedom of Information Act 1982 be extended to no later than 30 June 2024.

Motion agreed to.*Members statements***Moonee Valley City Council Neighbourhood Spirit Awards**

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (09:39): I rise to acknowledge the great contributions that many citizens in Moonee Valley have made in the recent awards from the city council. I want to give a particular shout-out to Cathy Connop, who is Citizen of the Year. Cathy has been a bedrock of the Flemington community and runs the Farnham Street Neighbourhood Learning Centre. Cathy embodies everything that is good, everything that is decent. She is a champion for the local community, and I could not think of a more worthy recipient.

I want to acknowledge the fact that Jenny Nola's contribution as the head of Save Moonee Ponds was also acknowledged and appreciated. Jenny is an outstanding local community representative. She is calm, she is methodical, she is thoughtful, she is considered. She has been a delight to work with in my time both as a candidate and as a member, and she really understands her community incredibly well.

To Sainab Sheikh from the Somali Women Development Association – I have got to know Sainab, and it is fitting that she too was acknowledged recently in the City of Moonee Valley spirit awards because Sainab has had a real focus on making sure that Somali Australians have a focus on their education. She has run homework clubs and she has been a tireless advocate because she really wants to make sure that Somali Australians have every opportunity to succeed.

A big shout-out to Sarah Dovey too, who established the community library at Napier Street, Strathmore. This is a fantastic local facility that citizens have used extensively, and it is a great contribution.

Finally, to Moonee Valley Sustainability, you guys are just fantastic. Thank you so much.

Country Fire Authority

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (09:40): CFA volunteers are an important, highly valued and vital part of our rural communities, but maintaining the numbers is becoming a real challenge for rural brigades. The Labor government needs to show some real leadership here and stop slashing the funding to the CFA and brigade resources. It is time to respect, support and invest in the CFA – invest in services they need to ensure they can maintain their capability – and for everyone to get behind the recruitment of new members. It is well documented that volunteer numbers have dropped by the thousands in the last few years, and the upcoming fire season is predicted to be one of the most dangerous ever and is already threatening us. We need to do something more than rely on existing volunteers to recruit into the fold, and the government needs to help in support.

Goulburn Valley Suicide Awareness Group

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (09:41): I recently attended the third annual Goulburn Valley Suicide Awareness Group walk in Yea, and I want to commend the organisers for the work they are doing to increase awareness into suicide locally. Jacky Gilbee, heartbroken over the loss of her son Russell, wanted to make a difference and help others like her. There was little in the area, so she set out to change this. Her team, Tony Jacobs, Michelle Dolman, Don Lawson, Rod Clue, Penny Paxman, Toni Smith, Carole Sissins and Steve Joblin, have taken up the mantle. The Alexandra truck show has also thrown their support behind the organisation. Recently the group was successful in a Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal grant, which will support them over the coming three years and allow them to host local support group meetings rather than people needing to travel long distances to Melbourne or to larger regional cities for support. Well done, Jacky.

Qantas

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (09:42): Last month Qantas unanimously lost its High Court appeal over sacking 1700 baggage handlers, cleaners and ground staff. In the Transport Workers' Union media release on 13 September, the TWU has also called on new CEO Vanessa Hudson to publicly apologise to illegally sacked workers and commit to a speedy and non-adversarial approach to Federal Court hearings on compensation and penalties. Three unanimous rulings from the Federal Court and the High Court found that Qantas breached the Fair Work Act 2009, outsourcing workers and preventing them from accessing their industrial rights to collective bargaining and protected industrial action. The TWU national secretary Michael Kaine paid tribute to that workforce's determination to hold Qantas management to account. He said:

Qantas workers have made history today. It has been three years and 20 days since Alan Joyce first announced the decision to outsource these workers, and they have not stopped fighting for a moment to ensure justice was served.

...

Qantas needs a fresh start. A worker voice on the board would make a significant difference and send the right signal that Qantas is serious about getting back on track.

The federal Parliament needs to pass the closing the loopholes bill currently being delayed by the Senate until February next year. That needs to change, and they need to take action. This TWU legal battle began in 2020. Qantas should seek to resolve these financial compensation matters as soon as possible as a show of good faith and to settle those matters with the workers. To the Transport Workers' Union, as a proud member, along with very many of my colleagues and every member of the Allan government, congratulations to TWU for fighting for workers rights and winning.

Gippsland fires

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:43): I rise to extend my heartfelt thanks on behalf of a grateful community to the wonderful volunteers from the CFA who have done extraordinary work over the last couple of days protecting life, property and townships after the fires near Loch Sport and Briagolong. They were ably supported by Forest Fire Management Victoria firefighters along with the police and many emergency services agencies who did their best in difficult circumstances to deal with these early season fires. Their combined efforts, along with the very welcome rain that arrived yesterday, helped avert a serious threat, especially in Loch Sport, where the fire licked at the very edge of town.

I also want to praise the people of Loch Sport as well as Seacombe, Golden Beach and Paradise Beach and surrounding areas, who kept themselves informed, supported each other and got through what was a scary couple of days. I also know there is already anger about the Loch Sport fire and the potential consequences it could have brought. Loch Sport locals have long been concerned about the fire threat in their town given there is only one road in and out, and the community is surrounded on each end by coastal and banksia heathland in national parks. Nearly four years ago in the wake of the Black Summer fires, the community called a public meeting to push for better fuel reduction burning and firebreaks, especially on the entrance to town. Six months later the area was mulched, which was great, and a small planned burn did go ahead last financial year, but another large burn did not. This is a small part of the failure of the Labor government's so-called *Safer Together* fire management strategy, which has seen the area of fuel reduction burning or treatment plummet in the past nine years. This is not good enough – we need to do better.

Western suburbs air quality

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) (09:45): The challenges we face in the inner west around air quality are complex and unique, but this government has put in the work to make my community a better place to live, work and raise a family – work such as the clean air strategy; truck trade-ins to get dirty, polluting trucks off our streets; a \$5 million grants program to seal local roads to reduce dust pollution; getting 9000 trucks off local roads when the West Gate Tunnel opens; \$250,000 to establish Patch in the Park community garden; and \$5 million upgrades to Duane, Brooklyn and Rowan Avenue reserves. I want to thank Patsy Toop for her advocacy for clean air in the inner west, as well as Geoff Mitchelmore and Ruth Cronin for advocating for vital projects to improve our community.

But all of this work will be put at risk by a proposed contaminated soil treatment facility not 400 metres from family homes. The facility plans to receive 200 tonnes of soil per operational hour – and this is not a bag of garden soil that you pick up from the local Bunnings; it is street-sweeping dust and contaminated drilling waste. In today's climate there is absolutely no social licence to continue projects of this sort in metropolitan Melbourne, and it is completely against the work this government has been doing to improve air quality in the inner west. I stand behind the residents of Brooklyn in their fight against this facility. I look forward to meeting them later tonight to be able to progress their claims.

UR Retreat

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (09:46): It was an absolute privilege to again support and attend the UR Retreat for young women, an amazing camp specifically for teenage girls in my community aged 12 to 16. Fifty young women had the courage to step out of their comfort zone and attend the camp, giving them a valuable springboard for their development journey, where they participated in workshops to expand their skills and confidence, heard from inspirational speakers, made new connections and friendships and discovered that they do belong, that they are loved and valued and that they can aspire to reach their full potential, all in a safe, caring and nurturing environment, free from judgement. Congratulations to program manager Bonnie Knight and finance manager Vanessa, as well as camp leaders Ash, Alisha, Cilla, Holly, Karena, Kimberly, Natalie, Phoenix and Shae.

UR Retreat has helped 820 young women over 16 years and has definitely saved lives. It is an awesome initiative of the Bridge Builders Youth Organisation, based in Lilydale. I pay tribute to and thank Phil Stenhouse OAM, Beck Mitchell, Nabil Salameh and the board and volunteers at Bridge Builders for their vision and hard work to support and empower local young people and make a difference in their lives.

Country Fire Authority

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (09:47): Thank you to the many volunteer firefighters from our local CFA brigades, including Lilydale, Mooroolbark and Wandin, who have taken their tankers to help fight the Gippsland bushfires in Briagolong, Maffra and Erica. Thank you to all emergency services workers for keeping Victorians safe.

Glen Katherine Primary School

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Employment) (09:48): Congratulations to Glen Katherine Primary School on their fantastic production of *The Wizard of Oz*. It was a brilliant performance, and it was wonderful to see how confident and talented Glen Katherine students are. I want to acknowledge the principals, Eliza Spear, Dayne Ernest, Oliver Begbie, Lilly Montgomery, Kobi Butler, Piper Ampfea-Sloley, Jasmine Lyons, Ivy Creber, Ella Sutton and Thomas Harding, and the understudies, Lucy McLaughlan, Juliet Lunny, Jed Paterson, Zara Webster, Hamish Beadles, Ruby Jorgensen, Imogen Begbie, Jenna Rowden and Chloe Hansson. It was a fantastic performance, and it does not happen without incredible support. Congratulations to the co-directors, the set design, props and backstage crew, the acting coaches, the choreographers and the costume, background images, set design and administration teams. I want to thank the backstage crew, the student prop and audio teams and everybody who helped out. Congratulations again, Glen Katherine. You were amazing.

Diamond Valley College

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Employment) (09:48): I congratulate Diamond Valley College for their amazing production of *Annie*. I loved seeing the talent and passion showcased by these fabulous DVC students. My particular congratulations on a great performance to the lead cast, Lucy Galpin, Zoe Templeman, Ayla Coxford, Jayme Larkin, Larni Bullock, Yanis Stielau and Ethan Falcke, and to the understudies, Amelia Wilson, Ele Triegaardt, Jasmine Falcke, Caleb Falcke and Mackenzie Cullen. A huge thankyou and congratulations to the musical performers and those who worked behind the scenes in stage management, direction, choreography, sound, lighting and design and the backstage crew. Congratulations on all the hard work you put in to make this production a success – it absolutely showed. You were fantastic.

Ride2Work Day

Tim READ (Brunswick) (09:49): How do members of Parliament get to work? Well, judging by the large car park and the small bike shed, which is barely bigger than two car spaces, not enough of us ride in. I acknowledge some of us do have a long commute. Nevertheless we are not alone. Two-

thirds of Australians do not get enough exercise, transport emissions are going up instead of down and road crashes and congestion are so common and predictable that they get a special time slot on the radio. So we do need to get more Australians out of their cars and onto their bikes or travelling on foot or by some other means. It so happens that Ride2Work Day is coming up in two weeks – next sitting Wednesday, 18 October – so I would urge all members and parliamentary staff to join me riding their bikes into Parliament if they can.

Juliana Addison: It's a long way.

Tim READ: The member for Wendouree is excluded. Bikes are now an established means of transport in inner Melbourne, and we are seeing people going in on e-bikes in their work clothes. We are seeing people on cargo bikes delivering their kids to school. We are seeing businesses opening up on bike paths. So congratulations to Victoria's first Minister for Public and Active Transport. Let us hope that means more people on bikes. *(Time expired)*

The SPEAKER: Order! The member's time has expired. It is a fair way from Bendigo too.

Narre Warren North electorate sports clubs

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (09:51): During the last sitting week I spoke about some awesome AFL and netball teams in my electorate, and I want to provide an amazing update on what a successful season they did have. I want to give a massive shout-out to the Endeavour Hills senior footy club. Last month the division 3 team beat the Frankston Dolphins and emerged as champions, 94 to 77. A special shout-out to the players that were named best on ground, to Sean, Ryan, Liam, John, Bailey and James. I would also like acknowledge the key individuals associated with the Endeavour Hills senior footy club: Tom, the incredible president; Rex and Fran, for the incredible work that they do; and the coaches, George, Arnie and PK. And a massive congratulations to those that were awarded life membership last week at their presentation, Jess, Swifty, the gorgeous Gail and of course Brad. They are all incredible recipients of the award.

Another exciting piece of information is that in the 2024 season the women's football team will make its return, adding further depth to the club's activities. The club makes diversity and inclusion a priority in everything that they do. Just recently I attended an incredible event that the club was involved in with the Bachar Houli Foundation, and I am really excited to hear that the club is going to continue its involvement with the foundation next year. The work that they do together is important for our community.

Now switching gears to netball, I am delighted to inform you that the Narre Warren Football Netball Club also had a ripper season with three footy premierships and eight netball premierships won.

Dromana Football Club

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (09:52): I want to congratulate the Dromana Tigers, who won the Mornington Peninsula football and netball league division 1 seniors premiership, a huge achievement for a great local team, with the Tigers securing a 54-point victory over Frankston YCW. A special mention to Dromana's ruckman Billy Geurts, who was awarded a best-on-ground performance, and Dromana coach Matt Price, who has now played in a flag, has won as a coach and has done an incredible job across the season. It was a near-perfect season for the club. It was a well-deserved win for the Tigers and a huge moment for the whole Dromana community.

Nepean electorate hospitality awards

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (09:53): I want to recognise some local award winners at the 2023 Restaurant and Catering Hostplus Awards for Excellence. Samphire at the RACV Cape Schanck Resort took out 2023 contemporary Australian restaurant, while Cape restaurant, also at the RACV Cape Schanck resort, won in the 2023 premium dining category. This is another proud moment for our local tourism and hospitality sector, which has consistently received accolades as among Australia's best.

National Police Remembrance Day

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (09:53): I was honoured to join my federal colleague the member for Flinders Zoe McKenzie MP to commemorate National Police Remembrance Day at the Rosebud RSL. I want to express my sincere gratitude to all those members of Victoria Police who each and every day put service above self to instil public order and safety in our community. To those officers who have given their lives in the line of duty: may you be forever remembered for your sacrifice.

Mordialloc electorate infrastructure projects

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (09:54): I want to acknowledge the elevation of Premier Allan into the role. I really am excited to continue the work and service in our local community. Premier Allan is not a stranger to our community, with significant delivery across the south-eastern suburbs. When you think about the ambition to remove level crossings on the Frankston line, which started back in 2014, we started with Cheltenham and Mentone and then moved through our community to Chelsea, Edithvale and the soon to be removed Parkdale, Mordialloc and Aspendale level crossings. We are making the Frankston train line level crossing free. Of course the Dandenong, Cranbourne and Pakenham lines are already very close to that. In 2025 they will be level crossing free.

The Mordialloc freeway was talked about for decades, but it was not until Premier Allan came to the party and delivered this project that it has taken trucks and taken cars off local roads and returned local roads to local residents. It gets you home safer and sooner, and it is already being used substantially. Just coming up the road this morning with my fellow constituents, it has made a massive difference in the south-eastern suburbs.

To be underground at Town Hall and Parkville stations recently and to think about what Metro Tunnel will mean for our communities – the Frankston train line and the Dandenong, Cranbourne and Pakenham lines will be transformed with Melbourne Metro rail tunnel coming on. So already Premier Allan has delivered so much for the Mordialloc electorate, and I cannot wait for the next stage as we get on and deliver for our local communities across the south-eastern suburbs.

Goranwarrabul House

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (09:55): Recently I had the opportunity to meet with Brenda Newman, who leads the Lower Hume Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Program at Goranwarrabul House in Seymour. Brenda and her team are doing an outstanding job but, sadly, have a pressing need for urgent funding and resources. The service is providing food support to more than 40 households each week, with Taungurung and Yorta Yorta families travelling more than an hour to lean on this incredible community program. Among other essential services, the house provides dentistry, optometry and complex mental health support to the Hume region's Aboriginal communities. We also have a local Koori engagement officer responsible for 150 students across 18 schools. This is an unsustainable workload and is seeing our most vulnerable Aboriginal students slip through the cracks. The team also emphasise the necessity of establishing an Aboriginal liaison officer within hospitals in the region. This is currently delivered by Ms Newman as a volunteer who attends hospitals to support Aboriginal community members in need of a culturally safe environment for care. This role would be instrumental in guaranteeing culturally appropriate medical care, providing maternal child health support and effectively managing complex mental health matters as well as NDIS advocacy.

Colbinabbin Primary School

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (09:56): Elsewhere in my electorate, the Colbinabbin community are tirelessly advocating to improve the safety conditions around their local primary school. Residents have made it very clear the crossing is not safe for their children. They have told me of several near misses between the children and heavy traffic and are rightfully concerned. Safety measures being proposed by the community include flashing light signage to make the school zone clear and safety barriers.

Voice to Parliament

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (09:57): On 14 October Australians will be asked a simple question and to vote on the proposed law to alter the constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia and establish the Voice to Parliament. The First Peoples of Australia are the oldest continuing living culture in the world. They have lived on, cared for and protected these great lands for centuries. This referendum will decide if we choose to listen to them about legislation that will directly impact them. This referendum gives the Australian population an opportunity to unite and secure meaningful structural reforms that cannot be legislated away. By voting yes on 14 October we stand together for the importance of recognition, the Voice and the advisory functions it would uphold. It represents hope and the acknowledgement that we can do better and that we are not okay with the reduced life span, the high suicide rate or the poor health outcomes. By saying yes, we are in fact saying we can do better.

When governments listen to people, we make better decisions, we get better results, we get better value for money. The Voice to Parliament will act as an advisory body to the Parliament on laws that will impact the way of life for First Nations peoples. Therefore I ask those who may be in a current position of doubt to really consider how this will impact their day-to-day life, because unless you are a First Nations person, it cannot. A voice will not take anything from non-Aboriginal people. It cannot make laws, it cannot impose taxes and it will not control funding. It will impact your lives just as much as the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, the Real Estate Institute of Australia and arguably the Minerals Council of Australia and the Business Council of Australia will. I have already voted yes in solidarity with our First Nations peoples.

Labertouche Cave access upgrade

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (09:58): I want to rise today to congratulate the Drouin Rotary Club, Parks Victoria and students from Drouin Secondary College for their fantastic project which has renovated visitor access to the Labertouche Cave. Drouin VCE student Andrew Mills led the project, with fellow students Ethan Purvis and Bridget Wagner assisting. They worked with Rotarians Leigh Bates and Don Kelly as well as Parks Victoria ranger Andrew Musgrave. The community project needed more than 125 volunteer hours to be completed and was part of Andrew Mills's vocational major. It started in July and required site visits to undertake strategic planning and was then completed over three intensive days in September. Students replaced fencing, repaired damage to rotten stairs and completed works around the site to ensure safe access was returned for visitors. It was a great example of vocational, practical learning that benefits our community. Well done to all involved.

Country Fire Authority

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (09:59): I would also like to thank all the CFA volunteers that have been fighting the fires throughout Gippsland and my community of Narracan. It has also been in Gippsland South, Gippsland East and Morwell. The CFA volunteers have done extraordinary work under very trying conditions, and I will also give a shout-out to the SES volunteers that will now struggle with the rains and the floods that we have there currently. I would like to thank all those volunteers.

Glenroy Residents Association for Malayalees

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (10:00): It was an honour to attend the Onam celebration recently organised by the wonderful Glenroy Residents Association for Malayalees and held in the magnificent Glenroy College Performing Arts Centre. We are so fortunate to have so many Malayalee residents locally. With their incredible skills, generosity and values of compassion, inclusion and hard work, they contribute so much to our community. I thank Reji, Smitha, Rahul, Dennis, Robin and the entire GRAM team for their commitment to celebrating culture and fostering connections among local families and providing a social network where people can share their joys, challenges and traditions with each other and the next generation.

Pacific Island women's health equity forum

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (10:00): I also had the pleasure of attending a very informative Pacific Island women's health equity forum run by the incredible Anasina and the Engage Pasefika team. Our Pasifika community is one of strength, warmth and compassion that cares deeply for each other and the world around us, but it is not without its challenges, and unfortunately huge gaps in health and wellbeing outcomes exist. The only way to close these gaps is by listening to the people in the community with firsthand experience who know and understand the barriers and can help break these down and call on the strengths of their community to create real and lasting change and programs where people feel listened to and empowered. I thank Hume City Council, VicHealth and the state government for supporting the forum, and I congratulate Anasina for creating the Pacific Island community playgroup and for her tireless work and advocacy to ensure our Pasifika community are heard and have a seat at the table.

Parliament Prize

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (10:01): Each year the Parliament of Victoria asks students across the state from grade 5 to year 12 to share what they would say to Parliament if they were an MP. This is a chance for them to talk about the issues that are important to them and their community and for us to listen. Students video their own 90-second members statement and send them in to be judged, and I am very happy to belatedly share that Jess from Somers Primary School won second place in this year's Parliament Prize, an amazing achievement with over 700 other entries in her age group to contend with.

Arts events

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (10:02): On another matter, I was asked to represent the Minister for Creative Industries at two events: the launch of the Archibald Prize 2023 exhibition at the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, which runs until 5 November – well worth a drive down, and also the opening night of Bangarra Dance Theatre's Melbourne season at the Arts Centre, which is a fantastic performance and runs for the rest of this week. I highly recommend it.

Hastings electorate tourism

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (10:02): On another matter, I was very happy to host a visit with the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events and Minister for Creative Industries to the amazing McClelland gallery and sculpture park in Langwarrin. We toured the sculpture park and viewed their latest exhibition, titled *Current*, featuring newly commissioned and recent work by three First Nations artists. We then had a round table with the Committee for Frankston & Mornington Peninsula, the Mornington Peninsula Regional Tourism Board and business leaders to talk about the various challenges local businesses are grappling with around tourism and what solutions are available. I am proud to be part of a Labor government that continues to listen to our community.

Norm Minton

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (10:03): Lastly, vale, old Norm. Rest in peace, mate.

Geelong electorate health services

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (10:03): Congratulations to our new Premier, the second woman Premier and, to top it off, a regional woman. I am really looking forward to serving in the Allan Labor government and to continuing the incredible work of this government, such as in the health area. Health professionals and support staff in Geelong are delivering exceptional healthcare services, as evident from the positive feedback I have received from numerous constituents. They acknowledge the ongoing challenges our healthcare system faces but continue to express their gratitude for the care and support they receive.

The Allan Labor government is committed to improving health care and services throughout Geelong. This commitment is obvious through significant investments in services such as the children's emergency department, the youth prevention and recovery service, the Barwon women's and children's hospital, the early parenting centre, the central Geelong mental health hub, the Swanston youth hub, a specialised dementia care program, a new cardiac angiography suite, an additional interventional radiological suite and a range of state-of-the-art medical equipment. We know we need more health professionals to deliver the care our community needs and deserves. That is why we have offered free nursing courses along with other health courses through free TAFE. I have met with many of these TAFE students, and they tell me what a difference free TAFE has made for them and their career path.

Mid-Autumn Festival

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (10:04): Happy Mid-Autumn Festival, known as the Moon Festival or Mooncake Festival. The Moon Festival is steeped in thousands of years of rich traditions, having been celebrated for around 3000 years. It is a time to gather with families and friends and to look forward to a prosperous future. Last month's celebrations were another great example of our vibrant community embracing cultures and making sure that a strong sense of community is upheld. Victoria is one of the most diverse places in the world, and our cultural diversity is central to who we are. The Allan Labor government is committed to nurturing Victoria's vibrant multicultural, multifaith society. Once again I would like to thank the many organisations of this year's festival for making the celebration possible. Thank you to the Federation of Chinese Associations; the National Council of Australian Federal Chinese Associations from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos; the Vietnamese Community in Australia, eastern suburbs chamber; the Cambodian Chinese Friendship Association of Victoria; and many more. It is essential we continue to nurture Victoria's cultural diversity to ensure our state remains a welcome place for all. It is events such as this that help build a welcoming, accepting and cohesive society. I wish everyone a very happy Moon Festival.

Voice to Parliament

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (10:06): Right now the ballot boxes are open for Australians to cast their votes in the Voice referendum. It will be the first time many Australians have voted in a referendum. It was for me when I attended the early voting centre in Thornbury on Monday and wrote 'Yes' on my ballot paper. The significance of this historic national decision point cannot be overstated. We have a moment in time – this moment right now – to change the lives and futures of First Nations people for the better. It is not overly complicated. The referendum asks for a yes or no on a simple proposition: recognising First Nations people in the Australian constitution and consulting with First Nations people about the issues that affect them. There has been a lot of quality, insightful debate over past months on this question. Sadly there has also been plenty of misinformation and co-opting of the issues. A yes vote does not take anything away. It moves us forward as a nation in the understanding that listening, recognising and working collaboratively is at the heart of our democracy. In Victoria our First Peoples' Assembly is already modelling what can be achieved when we actively listen to and embrace the wisdom and self-determination of First Nations people. The referendum is a chance to tangibly change lives, when for too long and on too many measures we have been going backwards. It is a call not from politicians but directly from First Nations Australians, made together in the shadow of Uluru. No matter your politics, I hope you will join in writing yes on your ballot paper.

Voice to Parliament

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (10:07): I rise to put everyone in this chamber on notice today. We know more than any other Parliament in this country the power of an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. This state proudly has the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, built from the ground up by our First Peoples for our First Peoples. In fact the Assembly gained so much goodwill that at the 2022 election Victoria had bipartisan support for voice, truth and treaty. This is Victoria at its best. Now I ask each and every one of you, regardless of whether you are red, green, blue, whatever: what

are you doing to support the federal government decision-making and long-overdue constitutional recognition of our First Peoples? Have you doorknocked? Have you phone banked? Have you had those difficult conversations with family members – that odd uncle? Have the conversation. What is evidently clear is that we cannot keep doing the same thing and expecting better results. It does not work that way. The gap is not closing; in fact some things are getting worse. We in this place know better than the lies, the mistruths and the downright hogwash that have been spewing out of the no campaign. Why? Because we have had a voice for four years, and the sun rises every single day as we work towards better self-determined outcomes in Victoria. Choose to be on the right side of history. Do not leave any stone unturned. Fight for this referendum and get it over the line. It is the least we can do for the oldest continuous living culture on earth, one which I am immensely proud to share home with.

Statements on parliamentary committee reports

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Report on the 2023–24 Budget Estimates

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (10:09): Yes, the member for Frankston is correct. I rise to talk on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee 2023–24 budget estimates report, which was tabled yesterday. It is great actually to see so many members of PAEC in the chamber at this time. To the grandfather of PAEC, the member for Gippsland South, it is so great to see you here. You provided so much wisdom to the committee.

Danny O'Brien: You know I am going next, don't you?

Mathew HILAKARI: I do. Unfortunately, we are losing for PAEC the membership of the member for Box Hill, who has been elevated to parliamentary secretary, and I congratulate him on that appointment. My neighbour right here next to me, the member for Yan Yean, remains, but we were all ably led by the chair of the committee, the member for Laverton, who provided just extraordinary leadership for the report and so much so that we ended up without a minority report, which is a statement on the great contributions made by everyone on the committee. I want to acknowledge the members from the other place – member for South-Eastern Metropolitan Region; member for North-Eastern Metropolitan Region, our deputy chair; Mrs McArthur, member for Western Victoria from the other place as well – and Ms Sandell, the member for Melbourne. We could not do these things without our secretariat's support – we just could not. I want to thank Dr Caroline Williams, our executive officer, our lead analyst Charlotte Lever, our financial analyst Rony Xavier Vazhappilly, our analysts Dr Kathleen Hurley, Mathias Richter, Caitlin Wu, and of course our research assistants Rowen Germain and Chloe FitzPatrick and our administrative officer Jacqueline Coleman.

I am not going to get too deep into this report today; I know I will have other opportunities to do so. However, there are 129 findings and 82 recommendations. It is a substantial report on what is an annual activity within this Parliament: considering the budget. It is incredibly important. It defines how we have spent our money and how we can better report on it in the future for transparency for our entire community. Of course the committee's recommendations promote enhanced performance reporting, the review of substantial spending and saving initiatives, the release of details regarding spending allocations and the release of program evaluations, and this promotion is important for future PAEC hearings and future budgets.

While we consider all these budget initiatives, why is it important for the community in Victoria? Well, it is because it is about how we use the taxes that we raise and how we spend them to improve the life of every Victorian. In my own community that has been through the development of Point Cook Road. This is something that everybody who lives in Altona Meadows, in Seabrook, in Point Cook and even in Werribee South uses every day, and the taxes of this state to improve the infrastructure that we need are just so important. The Point Cook Road–Central Avenue development is important because it is one of those highly congested areas. When you need half an hour to get out

of your own suburb, things have to change, and this government is doing that. That is why I was so pleased to see this as part of the budget estimates discussion and as part of the deliberations on the budget. Everybody knows how difficult it is to safely pass through this area. People who are on bikes really take their lives into their own hands. Pedestrians just do not use this intersection. That is why budgets are important – because they can make lives better. That is why we need to consider how to use budgets well and fruitfully for the benefit of our whole community.

I certainly thank the new Premier for being out there with me the day after the budget but also for her contribution regarding different elements of the budget. I was particularly pleased with the ongoing Minister for Police's reporting to PAEC around the support for Point Cook police station. It is the first police station for Point Cook, a community of 70,000 people today. It was 50 people in 1996, which is why we are feeling a lot of these development changes are needed. He reported that there was over \$19 million being committed for the Point Cook police station as well as the South Melbourne builds. The Point Cook police station will sit alongside the State Emergency Services station, which is being built right now. So there are some really great things going on in Point Cook. I will be coming back to this PAEC report many, many times, because there are a lot of great things in there.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Report on the 2023–24 Budget Estimates

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (10:14): I rise to speak on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee report. It has been very interesting to have a chat with my good friend from Gippsland South over a period of time and also the members in the upper house in relation to this report and some of the issues, particularly focusing around Victoria Police. We have just had Police Remembrance Day, when I think everyone in this house would have joined together to support our local police but also to support our police management and those that have lost loved ones along the way. It is a tough job, and when you go down, you stand at those memorials and you speak to some of the families of lost loved ones in their time, you understand how difficult and dangerous the role is.

However, we all know it is an essential service. Without Victoria Police we would have many more issues here in our state. One of the things with Victoria Police is we know that as the population grows, Victorian police numbers need to grow with them. In the report, in 5.7, it goes through some of the key issues in Victoria Police numbers. One of the things that has been highlighted by the Chief Commissioner of Police is the fact that the attrition rate and the recruitment rate are not matching, and we have actually got more people leaving Victoria Police now than we have had in history and we are not recruiting at the same rate. The budget highlights – originally it was said by the government – that this was because they could not get people to apply and there were other issues in workforce stability and trying to get people to apply for many roles, not just Victoria Police. However, it appears from the budget to be a budget issue, because the budget has allocated in 2023–24 funding for a total of 502 police officers over a two-year period. At the same time Victoria Police are already 807 short, so they have got 807 vacancies on their rosters every day across this state. If you recruit 502 over a two-year period – and you do not need to be a mathematician – that still leaves us over 300 short. It used to be that this government, which was then the Andrews Labor government, would state every time they spoke about police numbers that these were new police – additional police numbers to what we had. If you are trying to catch up 807 and if you employ 807 over the next two years, you are at net zero – you have not recruited one new Victorian police officer to make an additional difference in our state.

What is the impact of that when you are not recruiting Victorian police? We see 24-hour stations being shut. We see a government trying to renegotiate the enterprise bargaining agreement with the Police Association Victoria to remove the requirement for one-man stations to remain as one-man stations. Currently if they want to move someone from a one-man station, they have to go through a process, and it has to be for things like a terrorism attack – it has to be a major incident. There has to be a genuine reason why you are going to make a small community – regional communities generally – more unsafe by removing the police officer they have. But the government want to remove that so

they can move them around based on what is needed for rostering in other areas. So effectively because of the 807 short, larger regional towns or inner metropolitan areas that are short on police can now take people away from country areas and bring them into those areas just because they are short on the roster. It is simply not fair.

The impact of this is on our crime rate. Now, I am out in Casey. We have seen across the state that aggravated burglaries are up 40 per cent. This is the amount of times people are going into a home with a knife, a gun or other weapon whilst people are home to steal things from their house. I have said it in this place before. In the 2000s people would come home and their TV would be missing – someone had burgled their house. They would call the police – it was a cold offence – and they would go through and try and sort it out and try and convict whoever had committed that crime. Now we are seeing them come in with knives and guns. It is a more dangerous position for not just the police but the community, because the brazen acts of these criminals, where they are going into homes when people are there, is scary for people I know specifically in my community. But the scariest part about this is 55 per cent of crimes are going unsolved in the Casey area, so that means offenders are getting away with more, to commit more crimes. The only way to fix that is if the government fixes this budget black hole. We know that they have sent the state broke. We know they want to make cuts. We know they have got to adjust their budget to pay off debt long term. But you cannot do that at risk to community safety. Too many people in our community rely on the fact that when you call 000 because someone is in your house with a knife Victoria Police will be there as soon as possible, and currently that is not happening. I will continue to speak on this until such time as we get the police numbers we need to bring down the crime rate in Victoria.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Report on the 2023–24 Budget Estimates

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (10:19): I am very pleased to rise to speak to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee 2023–24 budget estimates report of October 2023. I was previously on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I know what a strenuous activity it is and what a concerted effort all members of the committee must make to deliver a reputable report, and indeed they have. I will commend the chair the member for Laverton. We also had a member for North-Eastern Metro, a member for South-Eastern Metro, the member for Box Hill, the member for Point Cook, the member for Yan Yean, a member for Western Vic, the member for Gippsland South and the member for Melbourne. I commend them all on their hard work delivering a report.

Now, what was it? I think there were about 129 findings – is that right? – and 82 recommendations. So that is splendid. That means a lot of hard work has gone into contributing to a great analysis of what is very important, and that is the fiscal activity of the state – the financial management of the state. In that regard, when we are talking about what revenue is utilised for – ultimately it is for services to the community – I was thinking that cost of living is certainly something that is top of mind. I was not actually at the committee myself, but I know that that definitely is a focus of the state. It goes without saying.

If we look at some of the budget commitments that are very important for Victorians, there is \$400 million for another round of the power saving bonus. I have talked to a lot of constituents, and I am sure my colleagues here who have also had these discussions have noted just how welcome this \$250 power saving bonus is in terms of helping to offset some of the significant challenges in terms of meeting the energy bills that inevitably come along. Some of the other budget initiatives when we are talking about cost of living include \$50 million to help more Victorian families to access public fertility care, with up to 3375 treatment cycles funded each year. It is something that is extremely dear and beautiful, being able to have a child. Therefore making sure that this is truly accessible and that people do not have a barrier of cost in terms of being able to have the best possible chance of achieving this outcome is certainly a priority in our state.

If you look at some of the other budget initiatives, there is \$42 million to install 100 neighbourhood batteries across the state at targeted locations. Again, not only is this good in terms of driving down emissions but also when you are looking at savings in terms of power bills, ultimately. The closer to home that energy is generated but also stored is also a good thing for the community at large.

A further budget-saving measure is \$23 million to provide free period products in public places across the state. Particularly in talking to some of the young women in my electorate, I have found this was received in a most welcome way. Yes, there is the convenience aspect, but also one should not have to feel compromised with something as basic and essential as this because you cannot afford to be able to invest in these products. I know that the installation of up to 1500 free pad and tampon machines at up to 700 public sites, including courts, TAFEs, public libraries, train stations and major cultural institutions, like the State Library Victoria and the Melbourne Museum, just makes good sense and also will help to allay embarrassment. One, it is a cost-of-living issue, but there is also just the convenience – it is there, you know it is there and you can rely on it. This is something that you cannot avoid as a female.

There is \$17 million to expand the Smile Squad free dental program to low-fee, independent Catholic schools from 2026, saving parents time and money on trips to the dentist. We know that teeth – we cannot do without them. We all need them.

A member interjected.

Nina TAYLOR: Apparently not. So this is good. This makes sense. It is a good, pragmatic cost-of-living measure.

There is \$16 million for Solar Victoria to provide interest-free loans to eligible households to install solar battery storage systems in their home. It makes good sense.

A member interjected.

Nina TAYLOR: This is a budget measure, isn't it? That is what we are talking about, and cost of living. This is all highly relevant I would have thought. These are also important things when we are talking about the family bank balance at the end of the day – or the household bank balance, I should say. Let us not overgeneralise. Again, I would like to commend the committee on their hard work. Thank you for what you are contributing to all of us.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Report on the 2023–24 Budget Estimates

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (10:24): I will also speak about the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's report. I am sure everyone in the chamber is very relieved that it has been tabled at long last, because there is a fair bit of leeway for people to get up and speak on committee reports. I was deep in conversation with the minister at the table, the Minister for Environment, at the time that the member for Point Cook spoke. I understand he referred to me as the grandfather of PAEC, which is just typical of the blowouts in rhetoric that we hear from the Labor government. I may well be the father of PAEC but perhaps not the grandfather.

This is an excellent report, and it is a privilege to be on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I have been there for a long time, coming up for – well, it is nine years at least: nine years of public accounts and estimates hearings sessions, plus the forthcoming outcomes hearings which we have as well. It is a critical committee, and there are very few opportunities in public life, in terms of the government, for members of Parliament to actually directly interrogate ministers and public servants about their activity, whether that is directly related to the budget or indeed wider policy issues. And yes, one of the other members said to me during a meeting at one stage, 'Oh, you've got question time; you've got all these other things.' You really do not. There is question time, and then there are the

PAEC hearings, when a member of Parliament actually gets an opportunity to query ministers on what they are doing.

The member for Albert Park talked about the gruelling process that it is. It seemed somehow to be an even more gruelling process this year. It just seemed to go on and on and on and be very, very difficult, and I was frustrated, as I often am, at the lack of accountability of ministers and their departments – aided, I might say, by the running interference by government members, who, when they were directed to, no doubt, by the former Premier’s private office, stepped in with a point of order on something frivolous to try and chew up our time.

I do believe that the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings need reform. It is just totally inappropriate that some portfolios get as little as 3 minutes for, I think, the Greens and non-government members get 7 minutes to interrogate an entire portfolio. In a circumstance where the cleverer ministers can just chew up 7 minutes very, very easily with obfuscation, with ducking, with weaving, with interference, as I said run by their colleagues, it is not enough and it needs to be improved. As I have said, and to reiterate my role – I am sure some members get sick of me talking about it, being the experienced one – this is not just about holding ministers to account; this is the appropriate opportunity for the Parliament to hold the public service to account as well, and it is very important that we have that opportunity properly. So I am very strongly supportive of the public accounts committee, and I think we do need to see some reform on it.

As I said, this is a really good report. I been critical in the past that we have had too much detail. It is still quite a weighty tome, but this time around Caroline Williams and her team, in drafting the basis of it, have done a great job. There was good interaction from all members of the committee, including government members, in making amendments and suggestions to improve it, some of which were blatantly political. But we still ended up with a good report.

The two other issues I want to touch on in particular where there are shortcomings in this report are the issues of the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games and the changes to the school payroll tax situation, both of which occurred after the committee hearings. It was my view that, particularly in the light of the Commonwealth Games, the then Premier, the then minister for Commonwealth Games and all those ministers responsible should have in fact been recalled and we should have had the opportunity to requestion them, because it was only a short time before the decision to cancel the Commonwealth Games that we were interviewing the witnesses and everything was apparently hunky-dory – and yet three or four weeks later the whole games were off and Victorians were left with a massive bill. Indeed recommendations 42 and 43 tackle that issue of the Commonwealth Games.

I do think we also need to improve performance measures. Too often this government is focused on the outputs, not the outcomes. It is irrelevant how much money you are spending; what is the outcome you are getting? But this is a good report, and I commend it to the house.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Report on the 2023–24 Budget Estimates

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (10:29): I too wish to rise to speak about the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee report on the 2023–24 budget estimates. As the member for Point Cook said, sadly I have resigned from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee to give myself some more time in my new role. But it has been a terrific experience being on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, and I do want to thank the chair of the committee, the member for Laverton, and all of the other members. I would not be so presumptive as to call the member for Gippsland South the grandfather of the committee, but I do think that perhaps some long service leave might be in order after such long and distinguished service.

I do want to thank the staff of the committee, Dr Caroline Williams and all her staff, who do a power of work not just in running the committee and the committee process – it is a very intense period of

hearings – but then also preparing in a relatively short time a very detailed and thorough report with, as has been said, 129 findings and 82 recommendations. I am sure that all members of the house are very pleased that this report has now been tabled, because it gives a lot of opportunities for people to speak about all elements of the budget and the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee findings in relation to that. As has been said by other speakers, it is a very important role that the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee provides in reviewing the budget for a particular year, not only as an opportunity to question all ministers of the Crown but also, as the member for Gippsland South said, members of the departments as well.

I was just reflecting on some of the other similar committees that we have around Australia. They are all set up slightly differently, but many of them are only upper house committees, such as the Senate estimates committees, for example, and I believe a similar committee in New South Wales is a Legislative Council committee, which obviously can restrict the ministers that can appear before those committees, whereas being a joint committee does require all the ministers to attend. I think that is a really important part of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee process.

There are, as I said, many good findings and recommendations that have come out of the report, and I am sure that I will be able to speak again on some of the details. I did want to talk particularly about the Department of Education. One thing about this particular report that I really like is that at the start of each chapter there is a summary of each expenditure and how all of that expenditure is broken down. I know with the Department of Education, the infrastructure program there, which is on page 51 of the report, it talks about our massive infrastructure program in schools – \$8.5 billion that is either new expenditure or existing expenditure. I know how much of a difference that has been making in my own community of Box Hill. In particular in this budget there was \$8.8 million allocated to the next stage of the rebuild of Koonung Secondary College and also planning for a new STEM centre at Orchard Grove Primary School in Blackburn South. I note how much of a difference this is making to the schools in my local area, and I know that this \$8.5 billion program and the investment that has gone on beforehand have made a huge difference to schools right across the state. It is really a legacy of the Andrews and now Allan governments that we have put education and investment in schools at the forefront of this government.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Report on the 2023–24 Budget Estimates

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (10:34): I rise to speak on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee report into the budget estimates. As a former member of that committee in the previous term –

Danny O'Brien interjected.

Sam HIBBINS: can I acknowledge all members of the committee for, yes, what is arduous work in both the hearings themselves and then putting together the report as well. Can I echo the member for Gippsland South in his calls for reform to the budget estimates system. I mean, the reality is even having an accounts committee and an estimates committee jammed together is not typical of states. We already have in both houses standing committees that cover a wide range of portfolios. It would be a very, very simple action to either utilise those standing committees or alternatively appoint select committees to then be able to much better interrogate the budget, rather than having these arduous hearings that can only be described as a way for the government to avoid accountability. The government before it came to office committed to reforming estimates to a Senate-style committee and banning Dorothy Dixers. They have not done that; in fact it has probably got worse with the Dorothy Dixers.

But on to the budget itself: prior to the budget the Greens called for the government to make those who are doing very well, the profiteering corporations, pay their fair share of tax and then invest that money into helping people in need, into protecting and restoring our environment, into tackling the climate crisis. The government raised revenue but then left people stranded. The reality is, as has come

to pass from this budget, that people who were already doing it tough are still doing it tough and are doing it worse. It is extraordinary that this government would be raising billions of dollars of revenue over the next decade or so but is only going to pay off the debt. A better approach would be to look at tackling inequality, tackling poverty and reaping both the social and economic benefits of that.

The report itself does make a number of references to inflation – that it is being driven by price rises across a range of goods and services and energy. It is a risk to our economic outlook. It is putting downward pressure on household incomes. There are issues with interest rates and the impact that they are having. Inflation is having a massive, massive impact on people with the cost-of-living crisis. It is causing more hardship. People are skipping meals. They cannot afford the essentials, cannot afford health care. It is creating mental stress and anxiety for so many people. It is reducing people's quality of life. This is a crisis, and it is being driven by profiteering corporations, by supermarket greed – the supermarket duopoly. The question is: what is this government's strategy to tackle inflation? Does it even think it has a role? Is it just adopting the federal government's approach, which is basically to let the Reserve Bank do what it wants, to not introduce super profits taxes and to exercise fiscal restraint instead of investing where it is needed? Is it simply just adopting the federal government's approach?

There was a time in Victoria when Labor governments did see a role for state governments to lower inflation, did see a role for government to take on grocery prices and supermarket prices. In fact it was an express objective once to deter excessive price rises. We need to go back to those times. In fact as recently as the Cain Labor government they had legislation to back it up, and it was successful, and they said it was successful. So we need to go back to that. We need this government to take responsibility in lowering grocery prices and taking on the supermarket duopoly and helping people in need.

Business of the house

Notices of motion

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (10:38): 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

Special Investigator Repeal Bill 2023

Statement of compatibility

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (10:39): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Special Investigator Repeal Bill 2023.

Opening paragraphs

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, (the Charter), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Special Investigator Repeal Bill 2023.

In my opinion, the Special Investigator Repeal Bill 2023, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with human rights as set out in the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Human Rights Issues

Human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to the Bill

Section 15 of the Charter – Right to freedom of expression

Clause 14 of the Bill preserves section 90 of the *Special Investigator Act 2021*, to make it an offence to cause, or threaten to cause, any harm or detriment to a person who assists the Office of the Special Investigator (OSI) or who is or was an OSI officer.

Sections 15(1)–(2) of the Charter provide that every person has the right to hold an opinion without interference and the right to freedom of expression, which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds.

Clause 14 may limit this right to the extent that it makes it an offence to threaten to cause any harm or detriment to a person who assists the OSI, or a former OSI officer.

However, section 15(3) of the Charter carries an internal limitation to the right to freedom of expression, by providing that special duties and responsibilities are attached to the right of freedom of expression and the right may be subject to lawful restrictions reasonably necessary to respect the rights and reputation of other persons or for the protection of national security, public order, public health or public morality.

In accordance with section 15(3)(a) of the Charter, the offence created by clause 14 is reasonably necessary to respect the rights of people who have provided assistance and/or information to the OSI, and the rights of former OSI officers. The offence was originally designed to protect the ongoing safety of OSI officers and people who assisted the OSI, given the nature of the investigations that were conducted by the OSI and the very real risks to the personal safety of persons involved in the events giving rise to the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants.

Notwithstanding the repeal of the *Special Investigator Act 2021*, the risk of reprisal for OSI officers and persons who provided assistance and/or information to the OSI is ongoing. There is a continued need to ensure that such persons are protected from reprisals in relation to their involvement with the OSI. In addition, there is a need to protect people who have provided information and/or assistance to the OSI in reliance on the protections against reprisal contained in the offence.

Further, in accordance with section 15(3)(b) of the Charter, the intimidation of witnesses and law enforcement officers can have serious consequences for the administration of justice, and by extension, public order. Finally, the offence provision at clause 14 does not prohibit legitimate criticism of a person who assists the OSI or an OSI officer that would not otherwise meet the threshold of ‘harm or detriment’ in clause 14.

On this basis, any limitation on the right to freedom of expression imposed by clause 14 is a lawful restriction that is reasonably necessary to respect the rights and reputation of former OSI officers or people who have assisted the OSI, and for the protection of public order.

Section 25 of the Charter – Rights in criminal proceedings

Section 25(1) states that a person charged with a criminal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law.

Clause 14 may limit section 25(1), in so far as the defence at section 90(5) of the *Special Investigator Act 2021*, that is preserved by clause 14, imposes a legal onus on the accused, by requiring the accused to prove on the balance of probabilities that the conduct engaged in was a lawful action to make out the defence.

In my opinion, to the extent that the defence at clause 14 limits the right to be presumed innocent at section 25(1) of the Charter, that limit is proportionate and justified, for the following reasons.

First, the extent and nature of the limitation to section 25 of the Charter is reasonable, on the basis that the accused bears the legal onus only in relation to the defence that the conduct was lawful. As such, even if the defence is not established, the prosecution must still prove all elements of the offence beyond reasonable doubt, including that the action was taken because of the belief that a person was assisting the OSI or an OSI officer.

Second, the limit to section 25(1) of the Charter is also necessary and proportionate to the purpose of the limitation. It is appropriate that the accused bear the onus of proving the exception as it relates to matters that fall peculiarly within an accused’s knowledge – that is, the purpose for which the person engaged in conduct. These matters would be unduly onerous on a prosecution to investigate and disprove at first instance. On this basis, the offence at clause 14 is important to deter people from reprisal against people who assisted the OSI and provide a degree of protection to them for their assistance.

Additionally, placing an evidential onus on a person with respect to the defence of lawful action is not a reasonable less restrictive means to achieve the purpose of clause 14. This is because an evidential onus may be discharged by an accused merely pointing to evidence that may establish a defence, at which point the legal onus would be on the prosecution to disprove the defence beyond reasonable doubt. Imposing only an evidential onus may constrain the ability for these offences to be prosecuted and undermine the deterrent purpose of the offence.

Hon Anthony Carbines MP
Minister for Police
Minister for Crime Prevention
Minister for Racing

Second reading

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (10:40): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I ask that my second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard*.

Incorporated speech as follows:**Overview**

The Special Investigator Repeal Bill 2023 (the Bill) repeals the *Special Investigator Act 2021* (the SI Act) and implements necessary transitional provisions to support the dissolution of the Office of Special Investigator (the OSI).

The Victorian Government established the OSI as an independent statutory office in 2021 with the key function to investigate possible criminal conduct and breaches of discipline related to Victoria Police's use of Ms Nicola Gobbo as a human source. Since its establishment in 2021, government has committed over \$25 million to establish the OSI and for it to conduct its investigations. In establishing the OSI, and providing for the appointment of a Special Investigator, the SI Act delivered recommendations 1, 3, 92-99, 101 and 103 of the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants (Royal Commission).

In June 2023, the government decided that the OSI's ongoing criminal and disciplinary investigations would be finalised, and that the OSI would be decommissioned as a statutory agency. This decision was made on the basis of advice provided by the then Special Investigator, Mr Geoffrey Nettle AC KC, in a Special Report tabled in Parliament under section 99 of the SI Act. In his report, the Special Investigator stated that the OSI's investigations were unlikely to result in criminal charges being filed, and that there was no merit nor public interest in the OSI continuing to investigate whether there was sufficient evidence to establish the commission of relevant offences.

I now turn to the Bill.

Decommissioning and dissolving the OSI

The Bill implements the government's decision to wind-down the OSI by formally repealing the SI Act. The repeal of the SI Act will dissolve the Office of the Special Investigator, provide ongoing protections for OSI records and information, and ensure that oversight of the OSI is thoroughly completed.

Transferring OSI records

The OSI has a significant number of records in its custody, including the Royal Commission records which it is statutorily entitled to hold. The OSI holds highly sensitive law enforcement and Commission records, and there is an ongoing need to maintain these records confidentially. The Bill provides for the custody of OSI records to be transferred to the Public Record Office, in accordance with arrangements approved by the Keeper of Public Records, and obligations contained in the *Public Records Act 1973*. To maintain strict confidentiality over those records, the Bill provides that records must be held and dealt with in the same manner as when they were held by the OSI.

Retaining relevant offences

The SI Act provided for offences to prohibit the unauthorised disclosure and use of OSI information and to protect people who gave information to the OSI. It is important that these offences are retained to ensure that the OSI's information is protected, as well as people who have assisted the OSI and former OSI officers, following the OSI's dissolution.

Section 89 of the SI Act makes it an offence for current and former OSI officers or service providers to use or disclose information about OSI investigations, or the functions and powers of the office, without the express authorisation of the OSI, or a reasonable excuse. To ensure the continued confidentiality of OSI records, this Bill preserves section 89 of the SI Act so that it will remain an offence to make an unauthorised disclosure of OSI information.

Section 90 of the SI Act made it an offence to cause or threaten harm or detriment to any person who assists or assisted the OSI or who was an OSI officer or other specified person. It is important that we continue to shield these persons from reprisal and guarantee the ongoing safety of OSI officers and other witnesses. To ensure this, the Bill preserves section 90 of the SI Act to protect against the ongoing risk of reprisal against people who have assisted the OSI, and former OSI officers.

A continuing role for the Victorian Inspectorate

It is in the public interest that an avenue for complaints and disclosures in relation to the work of the OSI and former OSI officers remains open following the dissolution of the OSI.

This Bill will therefore allow the Victorian Inspectorate to continue to receive complaints relating to the conduct of the OSI and OSI personnel during the six months following the dissolution of the OSI, and for those complaints to receive protections under the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012*. The Victorian Inspectorate will also retain the power to investigate complaints about the OSI and OSI personnel for the 18 months following the commencement of this repeal Bill. If the Victorian Inspectorate wishes to make a recommendation following an investigation, the Bill provides for such recommendations to be made to the Attorney-General and other agencies.

The ongoing role of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission

The Bill also reverts to the prior position that IBAC is the independent body to which public interest disclosures about police are made. As part of this, and in accordance with the Royal Commission's recommendations, IBAC's default right of access to Royal Commission records is maintained so that it can determine and investigate any public interest disclosures that were made to the OSI.

Conclusion

This Bill ensures that the dissolution of the Office of the Special Investigator will be supported by the necessary transitional provisions and includes the necessary provisions to protect the OSI's sensitive records, and to ensure the safety of people employed by, or who have assisted the OSI.

Victorians can be confident that the OSI has fully investigated criminal conduct and breaches of discipline arising from Victoria Police's use of Ms Gobbo as a human source to the extent possible. The OSI has played a crucial role in ensuring the events that led to the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants will never occur again.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (10:40): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Wednesday 18 October.

Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023*Statement of compatibility*

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) (10:42): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023.

Opening paragraphs

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, (the Charter), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 (the Bill).

In my opinion, the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with human rights protected by the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview

The Bill amends the *Casino Control Act 1991*, the *Casino (Management Agreement) Act 1993* and the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003*.

It will deliver gambling harm reforms and improve the implementation of recommendations from the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence (the Royal Commission).

Human Rights Issues

The human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to the Bill are:

- privacy and reputation (section 13);
- right to property (section 20); and
- right to presumption of innocence (section 25(1)).

Section 13 – Privacy and reputation

Section 13 of the Charter provides that every person has the right not to have their privacy, family, home or correspondence unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with.

Clause 7 of the Bill engages this right by requiring a person to have their identify verified before the casino operator may pay out winnings over \$1000. The regulations set out processes for verification of identity and the collection, storage and use of information provided by players. Improved identification was a recommendation of the Royal Commission and is intended to address money laundering through the casino.

If an interference with the right to privacy is lawful and not arbitrary, it does not come within the scope of section 13. In this case, the requirement for identification will be required by law and is not arbitrary as it will apply to all patrons at the casino. The information will only be collected in accordance with the law following the prescribed requirements. Therefore, this clause does not limit the right to privacy in section 13.

Section 20 – Property rights

Section 20 of the Charter provides that a person must not be deprived of their property other than in accordance with the law. This means that where a limitation is prescribed by law, there is no need to demonstrate that it is ‘reasonable’ and ‘demonstrably justified’. A deprivation of property will only contravene the Charter right where it is done unlawfully. The term ‘property’ is not defined in the Charter but can include both real and personal property including land, shares, leases and other rights and interests.

Clause 4 of the Bill appears to engage the right to property because it increases the powers the statutory manager has over casino property.

New section 22I provides the manager with priority over the casino operator in the receipt of net earnings while new section 22L restricts the ability of a third party to enforce rights in relation to managed property, including the ability to terminate or exercise rights adverse to the casino operator in relation to particular classes of contract. Finally, new section 22M provides for managed property to be vested in the manager before the appointment of an external administrator, depriving a liquidator or administrator from accessing the property.

The third parties contemplated by these amendments are unlikely to be natural persons. To the extent that the provisions might restrict a natural person from enforcing their interests or otherwise restrict their rights with respect to their property, these provisions may be regarded as a limitation on that person’s property rights.

Clause 4 is aimed at strengthening the statutory manager regime to ensure casino operations are not disrupted by possible licence surrender, suspension or cancellation. It is designed to make the statutory management scheme more workable. While the amendment might impact upon a natural person in very limited circumstances, as the restriction is lawful, there is no breach of the Charter.

Section 25(1) – The right to be presumed innocent

Section 25(1) of the Charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law. Any new offence that includes an exception, exemption, excuse or other defence may affect rights under section 25(1).

Clause 4, at new section 22K(2), inserts an offence provision creating an obligation on officers of the casino operator to facilitate the conduct of casino operations and provide the manager with access to the casino premises. While this offence captures natural persons, as it does not include an exemption or defence it does not engage the Charter.

For the reasons set out above, I consider that the Bill is consistent with the Charter.

Second 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) (10:42): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I ask that my second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard*.

Incorporated speech as follows:

On 16 July 2023, I announced Australia's most significant package of gambling reforms. These reforms will improve the protections afforded to all Victorians that gamble, with a specific focus on helping those who experience harm.

Our reforms include:

- mandatory closure periods for gaming machine areas outside of the casino,
- a reduction in load up limits on gaming machines from \$1000 to \$100, an increase in spin rates to slow the rate of play on new gaming machines, reducing the speed at which money can be lost or laundered, and
- state-wide mandatory pre-commitment and carded play, putting the power in the hands of patrons through an important safeguard to prevent people spending outside their limits, and stopping money laundering in its tracks.

Today, we introduce legislation to deliver on the first of these reforms. This legislation will make sure that all electronic gaming venues outside the casino are closed between 4:00–10:00am. There will be no more staging of closing hours, providing people with an important break in play.

The government is currently consulting with stakeholders, including harm reduction stakeholders, academics, law enforcement and industry to make sure these reforms are effective as possible.

We need to make sure we get this right, and they are delivered as quickly and effectively as possible and I look forward to providing more information about the next stages of these reforms soon.

The announcement follows the introduction of some of the strongest casino laws in the world which implemented recommendations from the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence.

The reforms coming out of the Royal Commission were complex and we knew that work would continue beyond the major legislation I introduced last year.

The Bill will enhance the workings of the *Casino Control Act 1991* to strengthen the role of a statutory manager in the event the casino licence is cancelled, or the operator becomes insolvent.

Finally, it makes technical amendments to the payment of winnings and to provisions governing the casino operator's liability for network outages.

I now turn to the provisions of the Bill before the House, which marks the beginning of a significant package of gambling reforms and the continuation of the important work of implementing Royal Commission reforms.

Minimising gambling harm in Victoria by extending and standardising closing periods

While the law requires venue operators to provide no more than 20 hours of gaming each day, we have seen that some gaming operators have been staggering their opening hours to allow patrons to move between venues in one area and continue gambling.

Research shows that gambling late at night is strongly associated with gambling harm. Having a break from gambling is an important gambling harm reduction measure, as bringing a person 'out of the zone' increases their awareness of the decisions they are making.

The Bill will stop this practice by extending the time that venues must be closed for an extra two hours and standardising the hours they must be shut. It will prohibit gaming venues from operating between 4am and 10am and introduce penalties for those gaming operators who break the law.

Extending contingency offences to interstate gaming providers

While the Minister currently has powers to ban betting on contingencies with a wagering service provider, offences relating to the ban are limited to activities in Victoria. This prevents the prohibition from being enforced in relation to interstate events that are not in the interest of Victorians.

We have seen wagering service providers offering bets on minors and amateur sports. This is clearly out of step with community expectations. Most of these wagering service providers are licenced outside of Victoria, with these events occurring outside Victoria.

The Bill will extend the offence provision to capture betting on events that take place outside of Victoria. This will allow the Minister to respond to betting contingencies that are not in the public interest, even if they are offered interstate.

This legislative change will ensure betting practices that are not in line with community expectations cannot be offered to Victorians by giving the Minister the power to respond to emerging inappropriate practices in the wagering industry.

Cleaning up complex legislation to make sure the regulator is not impeded in any decisions on casino suitability

The Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence outlined shocking behaviour from Crown Melbourne. The government moved swiftly to implement the 33 recommendations of the Royal Commission.

The work has not stopped there, and as we move towards the gambling regulator's decision on the suitability of the operator, we need to ensure they are unimpeded in their ability to make their decision.

I want to be clear that this does not indicate the likelihood of a 'yes' or 'no' decision. The independent gambling regulator will make this decision by themselves.

The Bill will ensure the casino is able to keep operating if the current or a future casino licence is cancelled, suspended or surrendered.

It includes provisions that:

- vest managed property in the manager to facilitate operations following the appointment of external administrators,
- protect the manager from third parties who might enforce a security interest over managed property,
- protect the manager from exposure to legal action and personal liability,
- allow the manager to be paid out of net earnings before the casino operator, and
- provide the manager with access to shared services across the casino complex.

Clarifying 'payment of winnings' provisions

As Members would be aware, the Royal Commission uncovered significant failures by the casino operator to address money laundering and other forms of financial crime.

Amendments passed last year restricted the payment of cash winnings to a maximum of \$1,000 in a 24-hour period.

To improve the workings of these reforms, the Bill will amend the payment of winnings provisions so that they commence at the same time as carded play on all games at the casino, including table games.

This will ensure the casino has time to implement the world-leading technology required to track cash across the whole gaming floor – including world first technology for table games which needs to be invented.

These amendments align with the intent of existing legislation.

Managing downtime

From December 2023, any person who plays a gaming machine at the casino will be required to track their play using the pre-commitment system, YourPlay.

Recent reforms introduced significant penalties for where the casino operator fails to implement mandatory pre-commitment framework.

This will leverage the state-wide pre-commitment framework – YourPlay – which is provided on every gaming machine in the state and is operated by a third-party licensee.

As we have moved towards the soon to commence start date, there is a need to update the existing framework to account for 'downtime', when technical outages occur in the system which are outside the casino operator's control.

The Bill will ensure that the casino is not unfairly impacted in the occurrence of a period of downtime that is outside their control.

This would be enabled through a Ministerial Direction, which will provide strict directions around when such periods may be approved to ensure the framework only applies in limited circumstances.

This is not a reform, rather an administrative fix that needs to be addressed in the new legislative environment.

Conclusion

This legislation is a first step at implementing our recently announced major gambling agenda, as well as making technical amendments to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission.

Although this is a significant step, there is more to come.

This government is serious about addressing gambling harm and I look forward to working with Members, harm reduction stakeholder, people with lived experience and industry as we progress our gambling reforms.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (10:42): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

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) (10:42): I move:

That the debate be adjourned for 13 days.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:42): Two days into a new government and we have seen this new government show their true colours. Thirteen days – what an outrage. We thought that when the Premier resigned from Parliament – the former member for Mulgrave – the lack of integrity that he would show to the Australian people would not be displayed by the new government. Two days into this government – two days in – we have seen –

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I think we can do this quietly.

James NEWBURY: I can understand why the government would be trying to hide the fact that they are trying to ram through bills in this place. I can absolutely understand why the government would be trying to do that. That is what they are trying to do. It is sneaky. It is sneaky to be pushing bills through this chamber without allowing Victorians the chance to see them. And haven't we seen it this week: a raft of new taxes that the government was not even aware of, that the Premier was not even aware of. Outrageous!

Now we have a bill introduced into this place and the government is trying to ram it through. This government sells itself as a new government with a new Premier, and all the problems of the past supposedly have been washed away. Well, we have seen today that is absolutely not the case. This week we have seen that is absolutely not the case. We have a bill that has just been introduced into this place. This bill may include many measures that the community would embrace, that the whole chamber would support. I do not know, because the bill is so hot off the press it is still warm in my hands. It has come off the photocopier hot. It is warm. We are all warming our hands on this new bill that has just been printed off the photocopier. It was handed to me one second before I stood to speak. We have not had the chance to see it. And that is the point. The point is the community deserve the right to see what the government is proposing to do to them. It is not a big ask to consult with the community.

It is not a big ask to consult with industry groups – and haven't we seen the lack of consultation with industry groups in the last 24 hours? We have seen the property industry talking about the burning, the torching, of the government's relationship with the sector – outrageous. Two weeks after signing an agreement with industry, they have torched it. That has got to be, I would say, record time to burn – not my words, theirs – a relationship. And if you think those words are too strong, another peak body described the decisions of this week as 'disgusting'. I mean, these are words that you do not hear from peak groups.

So we stand here today saying the government has an obligation in terms of consulting with the community. It is not too much to ask for. The parliamentary historical precedent of this place has always been to do that, but it is not just this place. For the best part of 100 years our Westminster system has ensured that bills are laid on the table for two weeks so that the community has an opportunity to see them, so that affected people have an opportunity to read them. That is not too much to ask for. That is why it has been a precedent for the best part of 100 years – until the Andrews government, until the Allan government. We are seeing an outrageous abuse of parliamentary process. Only two days into the parliamentary sitting under a new Premier we have seen the government display the same behaviour as the former member for Mulgrave in terms of the way that this government and this Parliament are run. It is outrageous, and the opposition will be opposing this

attempt to ram through what could be important changes to the community without allowing the community a chance to read it.

Darren CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (10:47): It is with some disappointment that I have to rise to make a very small contribution on this particular matter. For those that are listening to this debate, this is a very narrow debate as to whether this bill will lie on the table for 13 days or 14 days. It is a very, very narrow debate. The reality is that this piece of legislation is important. The government considers it appropriate that the bill be on the table for 13 days. That provides a more than appropriate amount of opportunity for legislators in this chamber to go out and consult with a very limited number of stakeholders.

This bill deals with some very, very important matters and very, very important law reform to ensure that we have a system in place around gambling and gaming that is appropriate. We know that globally a well-regulated system provides fairness and appropriateness both for the sector and also for those that wish to wager and gamble, and we think 13 days is more than appropriate to consult with the Victorian community and the very limited number of participants in this sector. The reality is of course we know that the sector is broadly supporting this bill. We think 13 days is more than appropriate. What I have constantly said –

Members interjecting.

Darren CHEESEMAN: If the opposition want the opportunity to determine 13 days or 14 days for these bills, go and get some seats. Go and win some seats and become the government.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this is a procedural debate, not an appalling opportunity to somehow boast about the Parliament. This is a tight procedural debate, and I would ask you to bring the member back to the question.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would encourage the member for South Barwon to come back to the procedural motion.

Darren CHEESEMAN: This procedural motion of course sets out whether we ought to be dealing with it for a 13-day debate or a 14-day debate, by which time people can go off and consult. The point that I want to make is that this is a government chamber. That is the reality. Those that can muster 50 per cent plus one get to determine the agenda for the sitting week and the agenda for this Parliament. That is and has always been a hallmark of the operation of this chamber. If the opposition wish to determine whether it be a 13-day debate or a 14-day debate, the point that I was trying to make is, go and get sufficient numbers to do that and be the government.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, speaking in the people's chamber, which this is, I would ask you to ask the member to adhere to your ruling.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please continue on the procedural motion, member for South Barwon.

Darren CHEESEMAN: The procedural motion is very simple. It is whether it be a 13-day debate or a 14-day debate. The government has determined that 13 days is more than sufficient time for them to consult. I would encourage the opposition not to, as they do almost every week, frustrate the legislative passage of important matters through this chamber by these frivolous and unnecessary procedural debates.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (10:53): I rise to make a contribution to this procedural debate, which seems to happen more often than not. I think what we have is a period of adjournment which typically, for 90 years, has been 14 days.

James Newbury: Not just here.

Cindy McLEISH: Mostly here it has been that – for 90 years, 14 days, unless there is a good reason. And we need a real reason, not just because the government thinks it is appropriate. Why do

they think it is appropriate to ram this through? Why do they think it is not appropriate for the typical 14-day period? This is really disappointing, because we have just commenced a new premiership with Premier Allan. We had hoped that things were going to change, things would be a little bit tighter and things would be more organised and more transparent, but we can see that, no, that is not at all the case. It is the same government and the same lack of organisation and a lack of regard for this place and the processes that have been in place for a very long period of time.

We cannot see that there is a real reason for this to be 13 days and not the conventional 14, other than that the government are just not organised. They have had a four-week period over September, which they knew about. They brought a couple of bills in before we went on the break, but they probably should have brought a few more in so that they have got something to talk about, because we know in the other place they have got nothing to talk about because of the lack of bills that are coming through. The government need to be organised here, and it should not be that the conventions of the house are compromised because the government is just not organised. The contribution from the member for South Barwon, who really did not tell us much at all, is making me think that what is happening is that they want to change the conventions of the house. They want to change that 14-day convention and bring it back to 13 days. We have seen so many times, all too often, when it has been 13 days. We have had six days as well, when they have been really disorganised, and even worse than that, on 30 May, with the State Taxation Acts Amendment Bill 2023, one day. We had not even seen the bill and the government were wanting us to pretty well front up and debate.

As we have seen here with this bill, it is hot off the press. It was actually warm when it was given to us not so long ago, probably 13 minutes ago. We have not had a chance to look at it. We do not know what is in it. We need to have a look at it, we need to go through it and then of course we need to start the process of stakeholder consultation. What does that entail? That is a two-way process. Stakeholder engagement and consultation is not what the government think it is – that you tell them what is happening. Stakeholder consultation means you get feedback. You go to the stakeholders – and there will be various stakeholders – and you ask them, ‘Can you please have a look at the bill? Look at the gremlins that are invariably hidden in there. Look at the things that are nasty that might not work well for you or might work well for you.’ We need the pros as well as the cons with every bill, and we need to determine that. Now, it is not always possible for the stakeholders to come back to us in that period of time. They often need a longer period of time, which makes it very difficult for us as an opposition to land on a position, because we do need to be landing on a position here. But sometimes we get at the very last minute the information back from the stakeholders, because they need time.

It is not a simple process to digest a bill and to go through it clause by clause. I can tell you right now the government members do not go through these bills on a clause-by-clause basis. I know if I am leading a bill’s debate it is something that I do. You go through each clause. You understand the bill. You look for the gremlins. This is what you need to do. The government members do not do that work. I bet none of them have done that work. I can see the member for Bentleigh is champing at the bit, ready to jump up and speak, and I bet he has not read it and I bet he is not going to read every clause in this bill and understand what they mean and why they mean that.

A member interjected.

Cindy McLEISH: I usually do. If it is my bill, the ones that I lead, I do. I think that the government here are just continuing to show their lack of regard for conventions of the house and lack of regard for stakeholder consultation and Victorians. We will be opposing this certainly.

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (10:58): Thank you, member for Eildon. I was champing at the bit to get up on this. Once again in this august chamber we are finding ourselves debating the merits of 14 days over 13 days. For those listening at home, it might sound mundane and dry and unimportant, but here we are. We are talking about introducing the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, so I am going to put a wager that the government is going to win this division. The government will

win this vote, and the reason why the government are going to win this vote is because our seats start over there, they go right around and they end way over there.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this is a tight procedural debate. This is not an opportunity for the second government speaker to prove how arrogant they are.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would appreciate if points of order were succinct. The member to continue on the procedural motion.

Nick STAIKOS: The frivolous points of order from the member for Brighton just keep going. The point I am making is that this stunt – they are talking about needing more time – is actually wasting their own time. If you need that extra day, do not waste your time on a stunt when you are going to lose this vote anyway. Get to work. Have you ever heard of that? Actually get to work. Here we go.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this debate is an opportunity for both sides to debate the question before the Chair. The member has not even come to that question. I would ask you to bring him back to it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order on that.

Nick STAIKOS: I am speaking consistently on the question at hand, and no amount of frivolous points of order from the member for Brighton will change that. The member for Eildon talked about consultation, but who on earth talks to this opposition? Who actually talks to this opposition? I mean, this is the worst opposition in the history of this state.

Michael O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, I understand the member for Bentleigh is disappointed at not making the ministry, but for him to turn a procedural motion into an attack on the opposition is entirely inappropriate. I ask you to bring him back to the question before the Chair.

Steve Dimopoulos: On the point of order, Speaker, you may have been watching from your office, but the lead speaker on this on the other side was far, far more offensive in many respects than the current speaker.

James Newbury: On the point of order, Speaker, for the 5-minute contribution I note the member did not stand up and make a point of order at any time. The current speaker has not yet spoken to the question, the tight procedural question before the Chair, and I would ask you to draw him back to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order, Manager of Opposition Business. However, on the member for Malvern's point of order, I would ask the member for Bentleigh to come back to the procedural debate before the Chair and remind members that these procedural debates are not an opportunity to have a sledging match across the chamber. They are about a procedural matter.

Nick STAIKOS: Thank you for that guidance, Speaker, and I believe I have been speaking consistently on the question at hand. We are debating the merits of 14 days over 13 days, and what I was just demonstrating was that this stunt is absolutely wasting the Parliament's morning. And you know what – I am doubly offended by this because I want to get stuck into the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023. My electorate has a significant community of Holocaust survivors, so my electorate is very, very interested in this bill. I want to give a contribution on this bill because this bill is very, very important for frankly the cohesion and the safety of minorities in Victoria. So I absolutely want to get stuck into debating this bill, and I am interested in hearing well-considered contributions on this important piece of legislation from both sides. That is why I think that this stunt is just a stunt. It is wasting the Parliament's time. There is little difference between any outcomes that could be brought about in 13 days as opposed to 14 days. I think that this is just a stunt from the opposition, and we are used to seeing these stunts from this rabble of an opposition.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (11:03): I am pleased to speak on this and reiterate our objection to the shortening of the consultation period. If the member for Bentleigh wants to get on with the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023, he should have spoken to his side of government and said, make sure we adhere to the forms, traditions and processes of the house. Fourteen days has been the tradition of this house for 90 years, as the member for Eildon said, and what this is about is a complete disrespect for this chamber, disrespect for the stakeholders involved in this particular piece of legislation and disrespect for the people of Victoria.

We are seeing it here today again. Despite what we said, the member for Brighton and I get very disappointed. We spoke yesterday on the government business program, and we were surprised that at long last we actually had three bills to debate. After an entire year where we have been filling the government business program with motions, we have some bills this week. But one day later they have reverted to type. They are so disorganised, this government, that they are having to break the conventions of this house and shorten the period of consultation.

To highlight just how all over the shop the government is, not just on this management of the house but on indeed these reforms that the government is talking about, these reforms were actually announced on 16 July by the then Premier. That was more than three months ago. The government has had plenty of time to prepare this first tranche of the legislation. But what are we seeing in the interim – we are seeing now the government trying to rush this legislation through. Just last month stakeholders received an email from the department about this legislation six weeks after the Premier had made the announcement about these reforms. It indicated an attached policy paper, and it said this paper will:

... assist with the early stages of policy development.

How can you have the department saying they are trying to help with the early stages of policy development six weeks after the Premier has already announced what the government is going to do? It is just emblematic of what a chaotic government this mob is in terms of actually introducing policy, giving the community the opportunity to understand it and giving stakeholders the opportunity to provide their feedback, and now we get this disrespect for the chamber and we get this disrespect for the stakeholders and disrespect for the people of Victoria through abusing the forms of the house, just because it is so disorganised that it does not have a legislative agenda to go ahead with.

I would like to take up the member for South Barwon's commentary. The government was elected to govern; it was not elected to rule. It is not here as a dictatorship. It is not here is an opportunity to say, 'Well, we've got all the numbers, so we'll just do whatever we want'. This is a Parliament.

Sam Groth interjected.

Danny O'BRIEN: As the member for Nepean indicated a moment ago, this is the people's chamber. This is the chamber where the people of Victoria get to have their say – not where the government simply rules over us from on high. It is an opportunity for the government to share with the people of Victoria its agenda and to socialise its ideas and indeed its legislation. We get this government time and time again abusing the forms of the house and abusing the traditions that the Parliament has adopted for decades, and now we have to put up with this rubbish because the government is so disorganised. They are so disorganised on that side that they cannot actually deal with this properly.

The government should treat this Parliament, this chamber and it should treat the stakeholders involved in this industry, the entire industry, those who have businesses that are involved in gaming and also those in the gaming reform area – they need the opportunity to properly access the legislation, to assess it and to understand what the implications of it are, because this is not simply about a change in opening hours. There is more to this legislation, which was not previously announced by the government until a press release yesterday. What the government is doing is a sign of its chaotic nature, its disorganisation and indeed its disrespect for this chamber. I strongly oppose the government's decision

to try and short-circuit the consultation period on this legislation. As the shadow minister, I want the opportunity to look at it properly. The government is in chaos, and I do not support the adjournment of this for a 13-day period.

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, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (31): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Gabrielle de Vietri, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, Sam Hibbins, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Tim Read, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Ellen Sandell, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallenge, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Jess Wilson

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned until Tuesday 17 October.

Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (11:14): I rise to speak on the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023. This is an important bill. Its purpose is to amend the Summary Offences Act 1966 to 'make the public display or performance of Nazi gestures an offence' and also 'extend the application of the offence of public display of Nazi symbols'. In our state, which has always been a proudly tolerant, multicultural state, we have seen some recent quite disturbing instances of public antisemitic behaviour – I think an increasing amount and level of public antisemitic behaviour. Just recently the Federal Court of Australia made a finding in favour of a number of former students at Brighton Secondary College, who were Jewish students who had been subjected to horrific antisemitic behaviour in school. I think we all know, either from our own experiences of going through the school system or that of our children, that school can be a difficult time for people, but there is absolutely no excuse for students having to face the horror of antisemitic behaviour when they go to their place of learning. The fact is that this judgement of Justice Mortimer, who I should say is now Chief Justice of the Federal Court, was in favour of those students and against not just the leadership of Brighton Secondary College but against the state of Victoria. The state of Victoria was found liable for the actions against those students.

Can I just say, as a side note, the fact that the state government threw millions and millions of dollars at defending what the Federal Court found was indefensible was appalling. It should not have happened. The state government should have listened to those students. The state government should have sat down with those students and found out the truth without forcing them to go through the courts for years and at great personal and financial cost. Now we know the court has found that those allegations were warranted and were upheld. Damages have been payable, costs have been payable. So, yes, in regard to the state government's intransigence in fighting these Jewish former students from Brighton Secondary College, the financial cost is significant, but the emotional cost, the emotional

trauma they have had to go through, not just from what they experienced at school but then having to relive that for the purposes of the litigation, is really an indictment on this Labor government.

They talk a big game – and I am sure that their hearts are well placed when they say that they are completely opposed to antisemitism – but we need to see more in terms of actions as well. I think the actions of the state government and the way in which they dealt with that litigation in Federal Court against those Brighton Secondary College students was appalling. I think the state government needs to take a very hard look at itself and how it dealt with that matter, and the next time the government is faced with allegations of antisemitism and its own liability in relation to that, it should take a very different approach. That appalling way in which the government handled that litigation is a discredit to this government because it not only increased, massively, the financial cost to Victorian taxpayers and more importantly to the plaintiffs, but also increased the emotional trauma that those students had to endure.

Sadly, that is not the only recent incidence of antisemitism we have seen in the state. We have seen a number of protests and demonstrations where black-clad neo-Nazis or neo-Nazi wannabes – it really does not make much difference whether they are or want to be – turning up and performing Nazi salutes on the steps of our Parliament.

Tim Bull: Disgraceful.

Michael O'BRIEN: Absolutely disgraceful. There have even been reports that neo-Nazis or neo-Nazi wannabes are gathering together in their costumes at restaurants.

A member: Losers.

Michael O'BRIEN: Losers, absolutely. Let me just say at the outset that the opposition is supporting this bill. Now, 'Why legislate?' is a question I have had in my consultation, and I will come to that in a minute. Some people say, 'Look, we need to focus on education.' I do not think you need to make a choice. I think you can educate and you can legislate. You can do both, and we need to do both. My message to the government is: do not think that by passing this bill – which you will, with our support – that that fixes the problem. It does not fix the problem. It may contribute towards a fix, but it is not enough in itself.

I was recently in the United States of America on a parliamentary visit – and I know that any time any of us travel beyond the confines of our own electorates, we have our great friends in the press gallery waiting to write up stories about what a lark it all is and what a junket it all is. When I was in Chicago, I spent half a day at the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center. Can I say, I do not think I have had a more impactful and emotionally harrowing half a day in my life compared to the time I spent there. It was absolutely extraordinary. We have a wonderful Holocaust museum here in Melbourne, but I do have to say that the one in Illinois is something else again, incredibly impressive and a great testament to the founders and the supporters of it. I think this deserves to be in the record; as you enter the exhibition there is a plaque on the wall, and it says this:

The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored murder of six million Jews by the Germans and their collaborators. Jews were the primary, but not the only Nazi victims, and all are remembered and honoured in this Museum.

The *Shoah* was unprecedented. Never before had a government, motivated by racial ideology, undertaken to murder an entire people. Spanning some 20 countries over 12 years (1933–1945), it is a defining event of the 20th century – with significant implications for our future.

Murder did not just happen. People perpetrated it. And real people endured it.

Through the words, voices, photographs, and artifacts of Chicagoland survivors and eyewitnesses, this Exhibition portrays the human dimension of the Holocaust, particularly the struggle of Jews to comprehend, cope, and resist. It empowers survivors to fulfill the promise they made to those whose lives and vibrant communities were destroyed: "Remember, and Do Not Let the World Forget."

This is why legislation like this is important, because we say as a Parliament, ‘Never again’. And we are not about to stand by and watch while Nazi sympathisers or neo-Nazis spread their hate in our state. It is just not on.

I was aware this bill was going to be brought in when I visited the Illinois Holocaust museum, but I would recommend to any members, or any members of the public, who happen to visit it in Chicago to take the time. I had allocated a couple of hours and I stayed for four, because it was compelling. To stand in one of the actual transportation carts people were herded into and sent on railways to industrialised murder was unbelievably emotional. It is a reminder that there is evil out there and we cannot stand by and wash our hands of it, and we cannot fail to act. That is why we support this bill.

I did mention before that some people have questioned: is legislation the right approach in matters such as this? As part of my consultation on this bill I wrote to a number of legal, civic and community organisations, as you would expect, and one of those was Liberty Victoria, formerly the Victorian Council for Civil Liberties. I acknowledge that Michael Stanton, the president, is very clear. He says:

... we understand the important motivation for the Bill ...

He says:

We understand that the display of Nazi symbols is highly confronting and offensive, particularly to the Jewish community and other minority groups that have been targeted by Nazi ideology.

Liberty Victoria is not for one second seeking to defend those who are out there trying to perpetrate Nazi ideology. However, he says that they do oppose the bill, and he gives give some reasons. There are some issues in relation to drafting. I will come to that, and I will be moving some amendments to, I think, improve and strengthen the bill in relation to drafting. But Mr Stanton says this:

... the focus of addressing the emergence of extremism should not be on expansion of executive power and censorship; it should be on education and addressing the root causes of why some people are attracted to such ideologies in the first place, including social isolation, growing economic insecurity and mistrust in government and the media. The proposed prohibition of symbols and gestures is a band-aid solution to a much deeper societal problem resulting the re-emergence of extremism.

I do not disagree with what Liberty Victoria says in terms of the need to also tackle root causes, but I do not think that is a sufficient reason to oppose legislation of this nature, because I think there is absolutely a demonstrated need by what we have seen on the streets of our cities and in fact what we have seen on the front steps of this very Parliament in recent weeks and recent months. There is a need for the law to take action, and this is why we are debating this bill today.

Turning to the bill itself, as I outlined, it has two primary purposes. The first is to amend the Summary Offences Act 1966 to make the public display or performance of Nazi gestures an offence. Secondly, it is to extend the application of the offence of public displays of Nazi symbols. Let me refer to the first aspect, making the public display or performance of Nazi gestures an offence. Of course that leads to the question: what is a Nazi gesture? The bill seeks to deal with that question as follows. It defines ‘Nazi gesture’ as the Nazi salute, any other gesture used by the Nazi party, including gestures that so resemble Nazi gestures that they are likely to be confused with or mistaken for those gestures. I think we all know – I would be very confident we all know – what the Nazi salute is. Then it goes on to say:

any other gesture used by the Nazi Party ...

I think that our police, who will be tasked with enforcing this law when it passes, will need to understand what ‘any other gesture used by the Nazi Party’ would mean. When we are creating laws in this place, we need certainty, and that is particularly so when we talk about criminal offences. People do have a right to understand what the law is. I understand that the government is not trying to be too prescriptive in its definition of what is a Nazi gesture. The Nazi salute – everyone knows what that is. And then it says ‘any other gesture used by the Nazi Party’ or a gesture sufficiently similar that it could be mistaken for it. I am not quite sure what that is. It would be helpful I think at some stage, whether

it is in the second-reading debate or in the other place or whether it is through educational material, for the government to perhaps explain what it means by ‘any other gesture used by the Nazi Party’, just for the purposes of police, to assist them in enforcing this new law, but also for the public.

In terms of Nazi symbols, the bill expands the definition of ‘Nazi symbol’. Previously, when we passed legislation to outlaw the public display of the Nazi swastika, otherwise known as the Hakenkreuz, that was what was defined as the Nazi symbol. This bill expands it, so it goes beyond the Hakenkreuz to include any other symbol used by the Nazi party. I think that there is an issue with this definition, because it says:

any other symbol used by the Nazi Party ...

I think that is extremely broad and it actually undermines the purpose of the bill. What the bill is trying to do, correctly, is outlaw the public display of symbols that are associated with the Nazi party, that are emblematic of the Nazi party. The fact the Nazi party may have used a symbol does not necessarily mean that that symbol is associated with the Nazi party. This is probably as useful as any time to advise the house under standing orders of amendments to this bill, and I request that they be circulated.

Amendments circulated under standing orders.

Michael O’BRIEN: The amendment that I seek to make in relation to this definition is to add in words so that, rather than reading ‘any other symbol used by the Nazi Party’, it reads, ‘any other symbol used by and associated with the Nazi Party’. I hope that members opposite understand the intention behind this. It is to actually make sure that the definition is in line with what we are seeking to do as a Parliament. The fact that the Nazi party may have used a symbol does not matter unless it is associated with the Nazi party, because that is what we are seeking to limit, that is what we are seeking to regulate and that is what we are seeking to proscribe.

It is the public display of symbols that are associated with the Nazi party. That is why the first amendment that I have circulated is there, and I do hope that the government takes it up. This should not be a question of partisan bickering. We want this to be a good law and we want it to be a workable law, and we think that this amendment will make it a better law, because it goes to the heart of what the intention is, and it is to proscribe the public display of symbols associated with the Nazi party. Unless you have those words ‘associated with’ in there, we do not believe the law will be as strong as it could or should be.

In relation to Nazi gestures the bill prescribes that:

A person must not intentionally perform a Nazi gesture if –

- (a) the person knows, or ought reasonably to know, that the gesture is a Nazi gesture; and
- (b) the performance –
 - (i) occurs in a public place, a non-Government school or a post-secondary education institution; or
 - (ii) occurs in sight of a person who is in ...

one of those places.

The maximum penalty prescribed is 120 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months or both. We are supportive of this. There are exemptions, and of course we do have to be careful because, for example, the very Holocaust museum that I visited, which had pictures and videos without an exemption – that sort of public display would actually be contrary to this bill. Clearly, there is no intention to try and stop Holocaust museums from doing the magnificent work they do in educating people about the horrors of the Shoah. So it is important that there are appropriate exemptions. The bill provides this where:

... the display or performance was engaged in reasonably and in good faith –
so there are two qualifiers there –

(a) for a genuine academic, artistic, educational or scientific purpose; or

...

(b) in making or publishing a fair and accurate report of any event or matter of public interest.

Those matters are covered in terms of the display or performance of a Nazi gesture. In relation to a Nazi symbol, it is where:

... the display of the Nazi symbol was engaged in reasonably and in good faith for a genuine cultural or religious purpose.

On that point let me just again note that there can be some confusion between the Hakenkreuz, the Nazi swastika, and the swastika that is used by other cultural communities absolutely legitimately. In fact, arguably it was the Nazis who tried to take and pervert what had been a genuine cultural and religious symbol of other communities – Hindu communities, Jain communities et cetera. So it is absolutely appropriate that there be an exemption in relation to reasonable and good-faith displays for a genuine cultural or religious purpose. There is also an exemption where:

... the display of the Nazi symbol ... was engaged in reasonably and in good faith in opposition to fascism, Nazism, neo-Nazism or other related ideologies.

For example, if somebody was to have a picture of a swastika with a circle and a red line through it to indicate their opposition to Nazism, that would be covered by the exemption, and clearly that is appropriate. We look at these exemptions and they do appear to be reasonably drafted and appropriately drafted, and I have not had any correspondence from the various groups with whom I have consulted to indicate otherwise.

I do note that Liberty Victoria raised some concerns about the lack of particularisation of the definitions of Nazi symbols and Nazi gestures, and I referred to that earlier. I think it would be helpful if there was some guidance given to both police in terms of enforcement but also more broadly the public. I understand the government not wanting to necessarily have to explicitly define every single Nazi symbol and every single Nazi gesture, but it may be that the courts ultimately have to determine how those definitions are actually applied. In terms of how it is enforced, the bill provides a directions power to police:

A police officer may give a direction to a person to remove from display a Nazi symbol or Nazi gesture if the police officer reasonably believes the person is committing an offence against section 41K(1) ...

And further:

A police officer may give a direction to a person to remove from display a Nazi symbol or Nazi gesture if –

(a) the person is the owner or occupier of a property on which the Nazi symbol or Nazi gesture is being displayed; and

(b) the police officer reasonably believes an offence is being committed against section 41K(1) ...

There does seem to be a gap in these directions, because the directions power as drafted does not extend to giving the police the power to give a direction to a person to cease performing a Nazi gesture. If we think that one of the reasons why this bill is before the house – because of the morons in their black pyjamas out on the steps of Parliament House throwing up right-armed salutes – yes, under this bill that would be an offence. But police are being given a directions power in this bill for a reason. It is not enough for somebody to have committed an offence. We also want to give police a power to direct them to cease doing it, and while the directions power in this bill allows for police to direct somebody to stop displaying a Nazi symbol or stop displaying a Nazi gesture, there is no power for police to direct somebody to stop performing a Nazi gesture. There is a difference between displaying and performing. If we are talking about the wannabe neo-Nazis on the steps of Parliament throwing up their right-armed salutes, I believe, and the opposition believes, that the police should have a power to direct people to cease performing Nazi gestures, contravention of which would be a further offence. That is why I have moved amendments 2 and 3, which provide that:

A police officer may give a direction to a person to cease performing a Nazi gesture if the police officer reasonably believes the person is committing an offence against section 41K(1A) by performing the Nazi gesture.

Again, I hope that the government will look at these amendments in the spirit in which they are brought before the house. It is not about scoring any points, it is about saying we support the intent of this bill, and we think our amendments will make it better and stronger and more effective. I would be very disappointed if the government did not seriously take on board these amendments, because they are there to improve things. I think there is no difference between where the government or the opposition are in our opposition to Nazism and neo-Nazism and our absolute desire to protect vulnerable communities from that ideology of hate. So let us work together; let us make this bill better. I would urge the government to seriously look at the amendments that I have put forward, which are very reasonable and improve the drafting and will lead to a better outcome for Victorians.

It is a shame that we are in this situation – that we need as a Parliament to legislate on these sorts of matters. I think it is perhaps a bit of an indictment maybe on people’s understanding of history, a bit of an indictment on people’s understanding of the horrors of the Holocaust – what was perpetrated not just against Jewish people but against a whole lot of other vulnerable communities, many of whom are in this state today. They deserve to be protected, they deserve to be respected and they do not deserve to have their humanity called into question by morons parading around as wannabe neo-Nazis.

But that is where we are. We need to legislate for the world as it is, not as we would want it to be, because we have to be practical. We do have a problem in this state with neo-Nazism and antisemitism. While I understand the concerns of organisations such as Liberty Victoria, I do not think that education and addressing root causes is enough. It is important and it needs to be done, and as I said, the appalling occurrences at Brighton Secondary College and the appalling way in which the government dealt with that particular piece of litigation is evidence that a lot more needs to be done, not just at that school – I am not singling out Brighton – but right across the education system and right across the community, because this is too important an issue. As somebody who has got great respect for our Jewish community in the state as well as all the other communities who are targets of the Nazis, I think that this bill is important. It is important that we send a very clear message as a Parliament that we will not stand by silently while hateful ideologies seek to gain a foothold in our community. To again quote the words at the entrance to the Illinois Holocaust Museum, we will:

Remember and Do Not Let the World Forget.

With those words I commend the bill to the house.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (11:42): I too rise to make a contribution on the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023, which seeks to amend the Summary Offences Act 1966 to make the public display or performance of the Nazi salute and other gestures used by the Nazi party an offence and to extend the application of the offence of public display of Nazi symbols and for other purposes. Can I at the outset first acknowledge the work of the Attorney-General to bring this really important bill to the Parliament and also acknowledge the contribution from the member for Malvern. I do appreciate that the opposition will not be opposing this bill, and I know that the words of the member for Malvern and his commitment to this issue are genuinely heartfelt and I appreciate that.

I do also just want to start by making my own reflections of museums as the member for Malvern alluded to. Can I also give a shout-out to the Melbourne Holocaust Museum. Melbourne is home to the largest Holocaust survivor community outside of Israel and it has a wonderful museum that still continues to this day to have survivor volunteers that take school groups and other visitors through the exhibits and explain some of the horrors that occurred during that period. I would urge all members and all those watching today to make the effort to visit the Holocaust museum in Melbourne.

I also want to just reflect briefly on the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem, Yad Vashem. For members who do have the opportunity to travel to Israel, I would strongly recommend that they visit the museum.

One of the most moving exhibits in that museum is the wall of towns. There are the names of all of the towns in which Jews were exterminated. When I was there I found the name of the town that my grandmother's family had come from, and that is Staszow in Poland. I have not been to Poland, but my sister recently had the opportunity to visit Poland for the first time and did visit Staszow. All evidence that there was ever a Jewish community in that town has been completely wiped off the map. There are no Jews there. There is no evidence that Jews ever lived there – hundreds and hundreds of years of history in that place and there is no evidence. I was really horrified and shocked at the reports that she came back with about the level of casual antisemitism that still occurs to this day in Poland and in those communities.

Previously I have talked about my family history in relation to the Holocaust, but I do really want to focus today on what it means in contemporary Victorian and Australian society. It is really shocking that we have to deal with a bill such as this. It was only 12 months ago or so that we dealt with the banning of the Nazi symbol and the Nazi flag. While the Legal and Social Issues Committee report – and I note that the chair of that committee, the Minister for Small Business, is at the table and also that the member for Caulfield was a contributor to and active member of that committee – did flag that there may be other possible infringements and enforcements that would need to take place to combat the rise of antisemitism and other forms of vilification, I do not think that we would have expected that this would have had to come up so quickly.

Obviously it was submitted as text, but the second-reading speech did go into quite a few examples of where Nazi gestures have been used in recent times. I do want to actually read that into *Hansard* again and have that publicly stated on the record so people can see and just appreciate how frequent this is becoming:

- In mid-January 2023, a group of 25 males gathered at Elwood's Ormond Point lookout and performed the Nazi salute –

obviously that is an area with a high concentration of the Jewish community.

- On 26 January 2023, a group of people performed the Nazi salute at a Merri-bek First Nations mourning ceremony.
- On 18 March 2023, a group of about 30 people marched along Spring Street, repeatedly performing the Nazi salute after an event ...

that has been very well publicised.

- On 10 April 2023, a group of six men performed the salute outside the Melbourne Knights soccer club.
- On 20 April 2023, a group of people performed the Nazi salute and posed for photographs at a Bavarian restaurant in the Knox City Shopping Centre ...

20 April being the anniversary of the birth of Adolf Hitler.

- On 13 May 2023, a group of about 25 people gathered outside parliament to stage an anti-immigration rally, repeatedly performing the Nazi salute.
- On 4 June 2023, two people performed the Nazi salute in front of police outside the State Library ...
- On 15 July 2023, eight men stood at the steps of Geelong's City Hall holding up a white supremacist banner and performed the Nazi salute; and
- On 29 July 2023, a group of people held a "white powerlifting competition" at a boxing gym in Sunshine West and performed the Nazi salute ...

Obviously, even in the time since this has been released we have seen another horrific incident just a couple of weeks ago as part of, I guess, an unofficial 'no' campaign event, where the neo-Nazis felt that there was an opportunity for them to get up and further spread their message of hate.

In recent months there has also been a study which has been published by the Zionist Federation of Australia and the Australasian Union of Jewish Students which talks about the campus experience for Jewish students. Not only the numbers and the percentages but just the specific incidents that were occurring are really horrifying. Of the students participating in the study, 64 per cent reported that they

had experienced antisemitism, and of the types of antisemitism experienced 37 per cent of the experiences related to traditional antisemitic tropes, 30 per cent involved Holocaust denial or minimisation and 37 per cent involved comparing Israel to Nazis.

There was an ability for students to document specific examples in detail, and there were comments that were recorded, such as:

Nazis were good people ...

and

A person in my class heiled Hitler to me and not a single professor/tutor or student did anything. The uni needs to step up.

This is happening across all facets of our society, unfortunately. I think the original ban on the flag stemmed from an incident in north-west Victoria, which is far away from metropolitan Melbourne, but having those incidents at a public rally on a weekend, on the steps of Parliament, is the most confronting and in-your-face way of trying to demonstrate this hatred and vilification. Some of these incidents have made me consider and think about why this is occurring. What are the circumstances that we have created that have allowed this to become more occurrent? I really wonder how we have been allowed to – it is not just about the Jewish community but about all vulnerable groups, and I think everybody has a responsibility to have a look at what they are saying and which other groups they are attracting with such speech.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (11:52): I want to commend the member for Box Hill for his contribution, and the member for Malvern. I have spoken about this particular issue a number of times in this Parliament. I acknowledge the fact that there have been many times where I have had the opportunity to visit Holocaust centres both here and in other parts of the world, including Yad Vashem in Israel. The first time that I visited Yad Vashem in Israel with my then soon-to-be wife Hayley, it was very confronting to go through and see the imagery, to see the photos and to see the home movies that the Nazis made documenting the extermination of some 6 million Jews and many millions of others. But the thing that ultimately tore me apart was the children's memorial, which is a cave-like area. You go downstairs to a room that is dark, pitch-black, with candles signifying the many children that were murdered by the Nazis – the 1.5 million children that were murdered by the Nazis – the reflection of those lights never ending. And in the background there are the names of the children that were murdered, where they had come from and their ages. That brought me to tears then, and I still recall and will never forget the fact that these horrible individuals sought to exterminate a race – exterminate people – just because they did not like who they were and the way they meticulously went about what they did.

If you think about where we are now, the fact that we are still in this Parliament talking about banning symbols and talking about banning Nazi salutes and that we have certain individuals – as few as they may be but as extreme as they may be, hateful and hurtful as they are – demonstrates that we have more work to do. The work is about having laws, and the work is also about having the education that goes with that. So I commend the work that is being done in this Parliament in a bipartisan way to ensure that we have the laws to protect those who are vulnerable. This is not just about Jews, and it was not about Jews back then. I want to quote someone, a Holocaust survivor that tomorrow turns 99, Abe Goldberg. He says:

If we will dismiss it, so who will remember? Never let people forget ...

and:

... when you will survive, wherever you will find yourself, you should tell people what actually happened.

These are quotes from Abe Goldberg, and when I spoke to his son only moments ago, as he is preparing for a celebration of his life, he said that it all starts with words. It all starts with symbols. He is flabbergasted, at 99, that it is still happening today. Abe is a survivor, who made a promise to his mother that he would spend the rest of his life, should he survive, educating others. At the time when

the Łódź ghetto was liquidated, he literally gathered together whatever materials that he could get, decrees from the Nazis, information, buried it in two boxes and said, 'I'm going to come back. I'm going to survive, and I'm going to make sure the rest of the world knows what the Nazis did'. He survived, and his mother did not. His mother was gassed literally the day she arrived in Auschwitz. He fought and he survived, and tomorrow he turns 99.

To Abe and to the 19 other Holocaust survivors that are museum guides at the Melbourne Holocaust Museum, thank you, because you are doing what Abe is doing – you are ensuring that those stories survive. We will ensure that this atrocity never happens again, but there is work to do. And so I say to those 19 Holocaust survivors – many of whom are absolutely ageing, and I wanted to briefly mention them if I could – including Abe Goldberg OAM, Lusia Haberfeld, Szaja John Chaskiel, Viv Spiegel, Joe Szwarcberg, Henri Korn, John Lamovie, Sarah Saaroni OAM, Paul Grinwald, Andy Factor OAM, Irma Hanner OAM, Guta Goldstein, Dr Henry Ekert OAM, Professor Gilah Leder AM, Dr Jack Leder, Garry Fabian, Charles German, Peter Gaspar and Bep Gomperts: thank you.

To think that we had to have a Holocaust survivor that left Melbourne, that left Caulfield, that wanted to spend his retiring days in Beulah – 312 people in that town – who woke up one morning to a Nazi flag being flown effectively in his backyard. I found out about this, and I rang him. At that time we spoke about bans, and we were talking about it, but this never really kind of got the traction until we saw something that was taken into rural Victoria, a place you would never expect something like this to happen. And what did Peter say? Peter said, 'It's okay because I will make sure I won't leave my home to have to see that symbol, to see that flag.' The fact that the small community of non-Jews banded together – the local police and the local council worked together to ensure that flag was taken down without the laws, worked with bluff and bluster to get that flag taken down – shows the fact that we can rally together, but we do need the laws. We do need the protection. Peter is unwell. We wish him all the best at the moment. I checked in just this morning to see how he was going, but this is a tribute to him because Peter is a Holocaust survivor. It took that to talk about what we are talking about today, to get the action for us to do the work that we see today.

As the member for Box Hill rightly said and others, it was the committees and all the work that we did, it was Peter, it was the Holocaust survivors and it was the broader community. I want to say the targets in the past were not just about the Jews, they were about anybody that was different to the Nazis. There were the symbols that they used to identify different people – not just the Star of David on the Jews' lapel but the other symbols, whether you were gay, whether you were from different backgrounds, the Gypsies, the Jehovah's Witnesses, all of those – but today we have the same thing. On the steps of Parliament, the fact that you have got people Nazi-saluting not once, not twice and not to Jews but to people from LGBTI backgrounds, people from different backgrounds, is atrocious, it is appalling, it has got to stop and we got to have the laws to protect those individuals. That is why this is so important. Unfortunately, it is disgraceful that these people would seek to hurt people, but we do need those laws and the police do need those powers and we have got to work in whatever way we possibly can to support them.

I want to finish by thanking a few people, including Dr Dvir Abramovich from the Anti-Defamation Commission, who has spent a lifelong campaign fighting hate and antisemitism; the Holocaust survivors and the Holocaust museum, which I have mentioned; and Joe Szwarcberg. I took John Pesutto down to the Holocaust museum the day after these haters were on the steps of Parliament to meet Joe Szwarcberg, a Holocaust survivor, who shook John Pesutto's hand, looked him in the eye and said, 'John, please make sure this never happens again'. That is what that Holocaust survivor said, and that is our obligation in this Parliament – to make sure this does not happen again. Thank you to the Australasian Union of Jewish Students, who are tackling antisemitism on campus each and every day, and we need to ensure they have support and powers; to the Brighton Secondary College students that fought a campaign against antisemitism; and to the Jewish Community Council of Victoria and the many others that have stood up in their fight against antisemitism. We have work to do as a Parliament. We have work to do as a community. But this is a very, very important step in the process.

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (12:02): It is an honour to speak on the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023. I would like to begin by acknowledging the powerful contributions today in this place from the members for Malvern and Caulfield and you, Acting Speaker Hamer. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Attorney-General and all those who have worked so hard on this important legislation as well as the previous legislation which banned the Nazi Hakenkreuz last year. We were the first government in this country to do so. Once again we were leaders and we were not laggards, and we continue to ensure that Victoria is a place where people are respected and where diversity is recognised as a strength.

This bill goes another step further to address the performance and display of the Nazi salute as well as Nazi gestures and symbols in public. Many of us here – I am sure all of us here – remember the egregious display of this offensive and repugnant gesture, being the Nazi salute, by the members of the National Socialist Network on the steps of Parliament back in March. We were all shocked, as well we should have been. As a government at that point in time we committed to banning that salute, and that is what this bill proposes to do. It will also ban the public display or performance of any symbol or gesture used by the Nazi party and its paramilitary, including the Schutzstaffel, the SS, the bolts symbol; the Totenkopf, which is the Nazi skull used by the SS; and any symbol of the Nazi paramilitary organisations such as the SA or Sturmabteilung – excuse my poor pronunciation – the National Socialist Motor Corps and the National Socialist Flyers Corps.

Whilst I am incredibly proud to be part of a government which calls out hate and division in our society and commits to doing something about it – and I am incredibly proud of the bipartisanship which exists for this too – I am also profoundly disturbed that a need exists for us to have to do this in the first place. It is incongruent to me that in this beautiful state of Victoria and in one of the most multicultural and livable cities in the world we have neo-Nazis. That anyone would glorify, even deify, the Nazis and Adolf Hitler and adopt their symbology to intimidate and incite fear and hatred is baffling to me, but here we are. I support this legislation with every fibre of my being. The standard you walk past is the standard you accept, and here in Victoria the previous Andrews and the current Allan Labor governments have stated quite forcefully that we simply do not accept these displays of hate, division and racism in our society, especially when the intent behind them is to incite fear and foment unrest. I have said it before, and I will say it again: our diversity is our greatest strength. Division merely fractures a society and leaves devastation in its wake.

Acting Speaker Hamer, thank you for sharing your compelling arguments and stories for why this legislation is so vitally important. I was listening to the list of the performance of Nazi salutes, and it was far too long. It was staggering in its length. The experience of Jewish students being subjected to antisemitism is truly awful. As a former teacher, there is nothing worse than seeing children throw around words that they should not use. Thankfully in my time I did not hear it, but it is rising now, and the question was posed – why – by you, Acting Speaker. That is a question we all do need to ask ourselves: why? I feel that probably part of the answer is that these children are so far removed from the generations who experienced it. I am the granddaughter of a World War II veteran. His story was part of my story, so it was spoken about in the family. I will talk about him a little bit more. My children were not around to even meet him or know him, so they are a generation removed. That is why education, as has been mentioned in here today, is so vitally important. The legislation is important – the education equally so. I will talk on that a bit more as well.

The member for Caulfield's discussion of the Holocaust survivor Abe was particularly touching, and I would just like to pay my respects to Abe – and I wish him all the best on his 99th birthday tomorrow – as well as the other 19 Holocaust survivors, who have, I am sure, pushed through trauma in order to continue telling their stories. It is incredibly painful to revisit things like that, and the courage that they have displayed and continue to display to keep the memory of the atrocities alive so that we do not forget is something to behold. We must remember or be consigned to repeating the mistakes of history if we do not become good historians and learn from them.

The bipartisanship here today sends a clear message to those out there who identify as neo-Nazis, that their symbols of hate, division, racism and death will not be tolerated in our state of Victoria. Their numbers, we have to remember, are minuscule, and their ideology is abhorrent to the vast, vast majority of Victorians. There is simply no place for that salute or their symbology in our society. Almost a million Australians, both women and men, served in the Second World War. Across Monbulk, in my district, there are six RSLs with a proud history and a significant veterans community. There are still a few World War II service personnel with us here today. They have fought against the Nazis, both literally and figuratively. Seeing neo-Nazis on the steps of our house, our Parliament House, our symbol of democracy in this state, is an affront to them, is an affront to all those they are related to who were persecuted and is an affront to those who survived the persecution. It is an affront to us all.

I know my nonno, who fought in the Second World War as a conscripted soldier in the Italian army, would have been appalled. Despite the fact that Italy was originally in the Axis group with Germany, most of my nonno's compatriots despised the Nazis. They saw their brutality and immorality. I know that my husband's grandfather, the son of a German Jew who moved to England, would have been disgusted. He was born in England, but his father was a German Jew, and he fought in the Second World War. For him it was even more personal. He had Jewish relatives back in Germany, many of whom did not survive the Nazi regime. It so happened that my husband's grandfather was in the British battalion that liberated Bergen-Belsen. It took him half a century to mention it to his family. He could barely talk about the horror that he saw. Thanks to the British archives I have actually listened to the firsthand accounts of those who were there to liberate the 60,000 prisoners who were on the brink of death. In fact about 19,000 of them died shortly after liberation; they could not be saved.

All I can wonder is what they would make of the cowards who call themselves neo-Nazis and adhere to the philosophies of one of the most hated and murderous regimes we have ever known. That is why I think it is important that we address the history behind these symbols and salutes – so that we do not forget. It was murder on a level never seen before. It has already been explained: 6 million European Jews were killed. To put that into context, greater Melbourne's population this year is estimated to be 5.235 million. The population of Victoria is 6.78 million. It is pretty much wiping out all of us. And it was not just the Jews who were targeted and murdered, as has also been mentioned. They were responsible, the Nazis, for the persecution of many other groups of people. Poles, Sinti and Roma were viewed as racially inferior and were subjected to death in labour camps. Church leaders and Jehovah's Witnesses who refused to salute Hitler or opposed Nazism were rounded up. Gay men and transgender women were arrested. Some were sent to concentration camps. Lesbian communities were harassed and destroyed. People with mental and physical disabilities were also killed as part of a euthanasia program, part of the Nazis' belief in eugenics and eliminating people with so-called 'inferior genes'. They also persecuted political opponents, revolutionary authors and artists, Red Army political officers and Soviet prisoners of war, to name a few.

In total, it is estimated that in addition to the 6 million Jews who were murdered, another 6 million to 11 million non-Jews were also killed. That means the Nazi regime murdered somewhere between 12 million and 17 million people. So it is vitally important that our younger generations are aware, and a significantly important reform we have made in education is the requirement that all Victorian government school students must be taught about the Holocaust in their year 9 and 10 history curriculum program. Our future adults need to know about the horrors of the past to inoculate themselves from history repeating itself. So when we see those symbols and gestures and we feel that revulsion, we need to ensure that our younger generation feels that revulsion with us as well. We will not stand for that here in Victoria, and I am proud to be a part of this government.

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (12:12): It is very difficult to follow some of the speeches from some of the members who have presented on this bill today, particularly the member for Monbulk, who as a relatively new member I think has delivered a magnificent speech to this Parliament on why this bill should be supported.

I want to begin by just acknowledging the Jewish Community Council of Victoria and the Anti-defamation League and Dvir Abramovich and the work they do to combat antisemitism. I remember when I was in year 12, in 1991, in a state government school, back then we had members from the Holocaust Museum come and speak to us – in year 12 politics, I think it was – about what they had lived through. They were Holocaust survivors. As we know, Melbourne was one of the largest – I think the largest outside Israel – centres for Holocaust survivors. It was exceptionally powerful, and it is something I remember even to this day, the man who came and told us firsthand what he lived through.

But in keeping with the theme of a number of the previous speakers, I too want to reiterate why it is so important for us to support this bill. While it is obvious that for the Jewish community we must do this, it is in fact about all of us. As the member for Monbulk said quite rightly, for the veterans in this country who are not Jewish who fought against the Nazis and for so many other communities who settled after World War II in this city, along with our very strong and proud Jewish community, while we all must come together to not forget the horrors of the past and to support this legislation, it is a great testament to this house that on matters like this we do come together to debate and, as the member for Malvern has done, even try and improve on a bill which we know is without a doubt the right thing for all us to do. That we have to come, though, and pass this legislation is in many ways shameful, and the shameful displays of what we have seen in our state over the last few years are just that. But that is why we are here as parliamentarians – to protect Victorians who need it at the time. They need us to stand up.

I have been with the member for Caulfield to Yad Vashem in Israel. It is without doubt one of the most powerful experiences I think any human can see. I have been through Auschwitz with the former Senate President Scott Ryan, through Warsaw and seen the remnants of the ghetto where the Nazis housed Polish Jews and through Berlin and seen the Holocaust memorial that now exists in that city so as to never to forget what was perpetrated from that capital city upon so many innocent men and women and children. Never forget that through the death camps in Eastern Europe a million children – a million Jewish children – were murdered.

But as I say, this is something that all of us in Victoria from many different communities must remember. It is a piece of legislation where we must make sure all of us, all of our communities, understand why it is being passed. It is there to protect all of us. Quite obviously the persecution and the hate directed towards our Jewish community is something that must end, and this legislation will be another part of our state's armoury to help do that. I put on record my admiration for the Jewish students who had to go through court proceedings to stand up for their rights and the support they received from their community. I think those students are – admirable is an understatement. They stood their ground, and now as a Parliament so should we.

I say this on record: Victoria is home to many, many people of Polish descent – Christian Poles, of which a quarter of the population was murdered by the Nazis during World War II. There are Italians; one in six Victorians has an Italian heritage. As the member for Monbulk just said, they rightly will never forget the Ardeatine Caves massacre, the greatest massacre in that country's history during World War II, the chief perpetrator of which, Erich Priebke, was found in San Carlos de Bariloche in Patagonia in 1994 and ultimately brought to trial. There are Czechs in this state, and they will not forget what their families went through: displacement through the Sudetenland and through the reign of Reinhard Heydrich during his reign of terror in Prague through World War II. There are many Greeks in this state – we know there are many, many loud and proud Greeks, like the member for Northcote – who know what their countrymen and their grandparents would have fought through, gallantly against the Nazis, and the oppression they sustained.

I take the member for Malvern's point about those in the press gallery who look scornfully at our trips overseas as members of Parliament. The member for Caulfield and I went through the synagogue in Thessaloniki, which was once a thriving Jewish centre, the second-largest centre in Greece, where the local Greek population sought to hide the Jewish population to save them against the Nazis, who came in there and wiped them out. So the history of Greeks and Jews in that city is that they did everything

they could to save their fellow Greek Jews from the Nazis. It was a very powerful experience that we went through when we were in Thessaloniki.

For those of English background who lived through the Blitz, this is the most obvious sign. I find it quizzical when people of English background stand up and say – a very small percentage, I note, but obviously they are using these symbols that we seek to ban – this is somehow a positive symbol for them. Well, the Blitz was certainly not, and the efforts from those in the United Kingdom to withstand the German onslaught were certainly not.

For my own family in Eastern Europe where my great-grandfather was murdered by the Nazis, where my grandparents were put in a labour camp and had to wear a badge which said ‘OST’ and were taken back at the end of the war to a Nazi labour camp – Ostarbeiter, Eastern workers. My aunty was denied medical attention and died because she was considered Untermensch – subhuman, because they were Slavs – by the Nazis in a labour camp.

This bill is about all of us. It is about us as parliamentarians standing up for so many different communities – for the gay community that was persecuted and made to wear pink triangles and ultimately also sent to death camps. We cannot forget what happened in our grandparents’ lifetimes and in some cases our parents’. As the member for Caulfield said, ‘Those who forget history are doomed to repeat it.’ That is why this bill is important. That is why – and it is not a debate – these contributions are so important, because we are not forgetting it as parliamentarians either, and from so many different backgrounds and so many different communities. It is a testament to this Parliament that we come together to support this legislation and seek to better it and do what we can for so many in our multicultural society today.

I do just want to conclude, if I can, with my observations of Victoria’s Jewish community. We should be so proud that so many Jews who left Europe and came with absolutely nothing – and some were only days and weeks from being murdered – came here to find their sanctuary in Melbourne, Australia. Outside of Israel, per capita, more than any other city in the world, this was their sanctuary – Melbourne, Australia. Some have gone on to have incredible careers: business careers, careers in government, as thespians, in the law. The contribution is immense, and their families’ contribution is unbelievable. For the communities I have mentioned if anything, for those people, we owe this to them. We owe it to them to say, ‘You found your sanctuary in Melbourne, Australia, and 80 years on the Parliament of Victoria, all sides in this chamber, will never forget, and we also will make sure that the sanctuary you found for your family from the murderous regime in Europe will never be forgotten.’ We on both sides of this chamber will proudly always stand up to protect them and future generations, as we will every other community. I am very proud to support this legislation.

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (12:21): It is really hard to come after so many fabulous speakers on this topic – well, it is not tricky at all. It is quite simple, what we are doing today. It is great to have the bipartisan support and to hear all of the reasons why we should do this, and it has been wonderful to hear the speakers.

I rise today in support of the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023, and I would like to start by acknowledging the remarks already made by my parliamentary colleagues. It is quite an emotional thing we are talking about, and I will try and stick to what has been said, but it brings up a lot of feelings of how hurt people have been. It takes a toll on the people who have spoken today, particular people from that community, such as you, Acting Speaker Hamer, who have felt that hatred and bigotry directly. It is unfortunate that circumstances compel us to take these steps, but after members of the National Socialist Network repeatedly performed the Nazi salute I believe it is our collective responsibility to stand against such vile and offensive acts of hatred. While this bill is part of a much larger anti-vilification reform agenda, it is important that the Parliament urgently sends a clear message that hate speech and symbolism will not be tolerated in Victoria. In this state diversity is not just a passive presence; it is actively celebrated and protected at every level.

Living in Glenroy, I have been privy to almost every wave of migration to Australia since the 1970s. I have personally witnessed the richness each culture brings. My own electorate of Broadmeadows showcases the best of diversity in Australia, and it is an honour to represent such a diverse multicultural and multifaith electorate. I love attending our cultural celebrations and having the opportunity to listen to and learn from so many different experiences and life stories. I love how we all come together to take part in each other's festivals and celebrate important milestones and religious occasions. Whilst we do not have a large Jewish population in Broadmeadows, I spent a lot of my teenage years reading about Jewish history through my Catholic education, and I also went to Israel when I went overseas and loved my time there and learned a lot.

Our inclusivity fosters an environment where new ideas are born and all people progress together. Victoria's status as the Education State is also strengthened by the diversity of thought and ideas that we foster. Victoria's diverse student population benefit from exposure to a wide range of perspectives, preparing them for an increasingly interconnected world. We are able to shape global citizens. My kids were so fortunate to attend one of the most multicultural schools in the state, and I am forever grateful for the richness that this has brought to our lives. We love that they went to school with kids from over 30 countries who speak more than a dozen different languages, including Arabic, Nepalese, Urdu, Turkish, Syrian and Malayalam, and they learned some Sinhalese from our beautiful family day carer Sureka.

In our Victorian way of life there is so much to take pride in and so much to fight for and protect. This is why we must stand firmly against any display of hate towards any of our communities – our Jewish community, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, our LGBTIQ community, people with a disability and all our multicultural and multifaith communities. The display and performance of these symbols and gestures causes direct harm to our community. This government has already made it an offence to publicly display the Nazi swastika symbol. However, the increasing frequency of Nazi salutes and the performance of the Nazi salute on the steps of Parliament House have clearly shown the need for further prohibition of the popular Nazi symbols that are often used to incite hate. Unfortunately I witnessed it directly at the renaming of Moreland to Merri-bek. These guys turned up and were so hateful, but also disguised themselves so that they could not be seen. They were absolute cowards. It was hateful, it was intimidatory, and they were just trying to create fear – that is exactly what they were doing. It was frightening for us, but I can only imagine how frightening it is for people of the Jewish community who have all the trauma behind the Nazi symbols and salutes. It was disgusting.

These acts are deeply antisemitic and bring back pain and trauma for so many. Incitement of violence, hate speech and the promotion of hatred and discrimination should not be protected forms of expression in democratic societies. Banning Nazi hate symbols is consistent with these limitations and is a necessary step in protecting the safety and wellbeing of our communities. It is important to note that this bill is only targeting the symbolism associated with the historic Nazi party and not with contemporary neo-Nazi movements. This temporal aspect of the definition of Nazi symbols and gestures to only relate to the historic Nazi party has been developed in consultation with the police. The broader work being done by the government as part of its anti-vilification reform agenda will be more suited to tackle the underlying harm caused by contemporary symbols associated with fascism and the Nazi ideology.

It is also important to note that this bill includes exceptions for the use of symbols associated with the Nazi party for cultural, religious, educational, journalistic and artistic purposes, and it is important to highlight these exceptions. The swastika, for instance, has long been a symbol of auspiciousness and prosperity in Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and other religions. The community naturally feels that the Nazis have appropriated their holy sign for something so abhorrent. This government is committed to ensuring that we put forward legislation that is culturally sensitive for all Victorians, and I am so glad to see that this bill is sensitive to such issues and has differentiated between a symbol of hatred and a symbol of peace and purity.

Nazi hate symbols have regularly been adopted by hate groups, white supremacists and neo-Nazis. These people promote ideologies that directly contradict the principles of equality and tolerance. These symbols serve as rallying points for such groups, providing them with a sense of identity and purpose. They are used in recruitment calls by fringe groups, and we often see young people getting carried away by the passionate speeches and symbolism that these groups use to promote their ideology without any thought for what harm they are doing to the young people who get sucked in by this. They are also used to intimidate and spread fear among marginalised communities, and we have seen that so many times.

Countries like Germany, where the horrors of the Nazi regime are still remembered, have implemented strict bans on Nazi hate symbols. These bans have not resulted in the erosion of freedom of speech but rather have been essential in combating hate and extremism. The German example shows us that it is possible to strike a balance between free speech and the prohibition of symbols that perpetuate bigotry and violence. It is essential to recognise that banning Nazi hate symbols is not about erasing history. We must remember and learn from the atrocities of the past to ensure that they are never, ever repeated. However, groups like the National Socialist Network are not using these symbols for any educational or historical purposes, as we know. Their only aim is to fearmonger and intimidate marginalised communities. Museums, educational materials and academic institutions play a vital role in preserving and disseminating the historical record. This ban on these hateful symbols in public spaces in everyday life is to prevent them from being used to glorify hatred in the present – it is not to erase our memory of the past.

Allowing Nazi hate symbols to persist in our society risks normalising extremist ideologies, something that worries me every night. When hate symbols are openly displayed, they can influence vulnerable individuals and make them susceptible to radicalisation. Banning these symbols sends a clear message that we will not tolerate the spread of hatred and extremism in our communities. In addition to the moral and ethical reasons to ban the Nazi hate symbols, there is also a pragmatic reason to do so: to prevent violence and hate crimes. Extremist ideologies often lead to acts of violence. We have seen this in countries across the globe, where neo-Nazi rallies are often followed by weeks of unrest and turmoil. History has shown that when hate is allowed to fester and spread unchecked, it can have devastating consequences. Banning these symbols is a proactive measure to prevent such violence from occurring. When we allow these symbols to be displayed openly, we fail to protect those who have already suffered so much. Banning these symbols is an act of solidarity with these communities, a strong statement to highlight that Victorians will not stand by and tolerate the perpetuation of their trauma.

This government has already undertaken extensive consultation to make sure that innocent gestures are not criminalised as a result of this legislation. That is why the context in which the gesture is performed is critical to understanding whether an offence has been made. Built into the provision – *(Time expired)*

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (12:31): I too rise to make a contribution on the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023, noting our lead speaker's contribution and that we will be supporting this bill. Since the passing of the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Symbol Prohibition) Bill 2022 there have been several incidents, including protests outside this Parliament, involving the use of the Nazi salute. As previous members have mentioned before me, it is a shame to some degree that as a Parliament we have to stand here and introduce and debate the merits of this bill, something that you would think in a civilised state and nation would not be required. Unfortunately, these incidents that have occurred highlight that the existing law did not deal with Nazi gestures, which has led to this bill to make the public display or performance of Nazi gestures an offence.

What this bill does is go to the heart of just being basically respectful and respectful to others. It is something that our society could do with a good dose of on a whole range of fronts at the moment. My family – my grandfather, my great-grandfather – came from the maritime industry, and it was interesting to hear from them that the swastika was originally used for a number of purposes, and it was emblazoned on the anchors of a lot of ships that plied our oceans in the 20th century. The swastika

was then recognised in the maritime industry as a symbol of good luck or good fortune for those who were sailing on that vessel. That the symbol was originally used in relation to being conducive to the wellbeing of others makes it even sadder that it was adopted and used by a party that almost literally wiped out an entire culture, an entire race. It has also become in more recent times, as we know through particularly the Second World War, the symbol for Nazism and white supremacy, and it has no place in society.

Growing up as a young fellow in a little place called Metung, there were seven people in my entire primary school, and whilst I had heard of the Holocaust being mentioned in conversation – you know, when I was around adults talking about these things – I did not truly understand or recognise what it was until I got to secondary college and we had a lady come to visit our school in Bairnsdale. I remember this quite vividly, although it was over 40 years ago. Her name was Sarah Saaroni, and she was a Holocaust survivor. I can remember Sarah telling her story to us year 10s, and I just could not comprehend or get my head around what she was telling me. It was one of the most confronting speeches and talks I have ever listened to.

Following on from that, I have had the pleasure in latter years of visiting Israel with my friend and colleague the member for Caulfield, where we visited Yad Vashem, the Holocaust centre, and that too was an extremely confronting experience. The member for Caulfield I think in his speech spoke about the children's area. I do not think there was anyone on that particular trip that walked out of that area without tears running down their cheeks.

The member for Bulleen also spoke about the fact that the Nazis declared not only war on Jews but their hatred for not only other races of people but other cohorts of people. My father is a World War II veteran. He was in London for the bombings. Despite being on a naval ship later that was sunk with 83 hands lost – and there were some graphic scenes there – my father said the most horrific and confronting scenes he saw throughout the war were in the London bombings. I also have an uncle who was killed by the Nazis in a little village, a town called Bayonvillers in France – an uncle that I unfortunately never got to meet. But all members in this chamber, regardless of which side they sit on, if they do not have members of their own personal families that were killed at the hands of the Nazis, would certainly have multiple families living in their electorates whose lives were torn apart at the hands of the Nazis. The grief and loss that that generation went through and those families are still living with in all of our electorates are unheard of. Therefore it is very, very extraordinary and difficult to get your head around that we can come down here to Parliament and have idiots out the front giving the Nazi salute on the steps of our Parliament. It is just crazy. Then the fact is that we have to come in here and move legislation like we are doing to outlaw certain actions.

The bill has got the support of both sides of the chamber. I just want to quickly make comment on the amendments moved by the member for Malvern on this bill. I do think that those amendments make the bill better in that they change the definition of 'Nazi symbol' to insert the words 'and associated with', so it will now read 'any other symbol used by and associated with the Nazi Party'. I think speakers on both sides of the chamber have said enough today to acknowledge the fact that this is an important bill that is being moved with the goodwill of both sides to make improvements to wider society. I would hope that, if not today then perhaps between houses, the government could consider those I would call very commonsense amendments by the member for Malvern and have them adopted to provide even greater strength to this bill.

The second amendment that was moved by the member for Malvern relates to the provision for a police officer to have the power to direct a person to cease performing a Nazi gesture in a public place with the same criteria applied to that first amendment – with the words 'associated with' included. I would certainly hope that as a Parliament we can work together on this one and we can give that strong consideration and come out with the best possible result.

While the increase that we have seen in antisemitic behaviour in certain locations in this state is of concern – and it is appalling behaviour – we also need to recognise, as others have mentioned, that it

is a very small minority, this group of people. I think that it is important that as a Parliament we stand united to send a clear message to that small, abhorrent cohort, which the speakers today on both sides of the chamber have done great justice to. We are very much a multicultural state and we have a great reputation for being a multicultural state, Victoria, that is welcoming to all. Indeed we are a multicultural country. This sort of behaviour, antisemitism, has no place in our society today.

I talked to my young daughter who is currently doing her VCE – I think it is still called VCE, isn't it, year 12 or whatever it is. I remember what she said to me a number of months ago when she saw this protest. I was down here – and I ring home most nights – and she said to me, 'Dad, what were those idiots doing on the steps of Parliament?' This is a year 12 girl wanting to know about the fact that she is exposed to this sort of stuff. I said, 'Darling, I can't talk to you about that in 2 minutes. We'll have a chat when I get home later this week.' I walked her through the whole process starting at the Holocaust and the campaign of hate, and it was staggering to her that in today's society where we promote understanding of all and we promote respect to all we can still have a cohort that displays those behaviours on the steps of this great place which has served this state so well.

This bill does send a clear message on behalf of the Victorian Parliament. I commend the speakers who have made contributions on both sides of the house. We have some people in here that have great knowledge, and they have a great authority to be able to speak on this subject through lived experiences and family history experiences. This bill is supported by both sides of the chamber, and I have no hesitation in commending the bill to the house.

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (12:41): I am pleased to rise to contribute to the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023, and can I also acknowledge the many powerful contributions we have heard in this place today and certainly acknowledge those that do have that lived experience of family members. That cultural trauma has been handed down through generation after generation, and it is disappointing that we have to be in this place discussing these things and passing laws. But I think, you know, it is one of those things that as leaders we need to do, and we need to stand united, as we are in this place, to ensure that we do not allow this unacceptable behaviour to continue in our community without having penalties in place.

For many people this is very welcome. There is a small minority, I believe, in our community that are doing these hateful things – particularly what occurred out the front of Parliament not so long ago. I really struggle to comprehend what these people are thinking. I mean, I learned about the Holocaust and the horrific things that happened through that period, the impact on the Jewish community, but I still cannot understand how anybody else cannot accept that and that they go ahead and do these hateful, horrible things that impact so strongly on the Jewish community and on everyone. As I think we have heard here today, people felt sick when they saw what was happening out the front of Parliament. I agree. I also felt sick over that. But I cannot imagine the impact it has on those that are directly impacted by what happened throughout the Holocaust. Victoria needs this bill to address the harm that is caused by public displays of Nazi symbols and gestures that are being used to intimidate and harass. This bill will give police a legislative tool to prevent and cease the use of Nazi symbols and gestures.

I had the privilege of being a member of the Legal and Social Issues Committee that undertook the inquiry into the anti-vilification protections in the last Parliament, with a report that was tabled back in March 2021, and this inquiry received 60 submissions and conducted public hearings and site visits. Many of those contributions came from the Jewish community and talked about their painful and traumatic experiences. The committee found it was unsettling to hear of how people were targeted. Sitting there listening to that evidence – you think you do understand and know those impacts on the Jewish community, but for me it was a real learning experience on top of what I already knew.

The committee also heard that the victims of vilifying conduct are likely to experience various mental health impacts as it undermines self-worth and heightens vulnerability and isolation, so the report clearly laid out the harmful impact of vilification. As I said, we heard of those experiences. Although

they were very difficult to hear, I very much appreciated the courage that it took for those from the Jewish community to give evidence, not only about what happened to their families but also what they were experiencing in our community, in this modern day, that you would not expect to be happening, but it was certainly there. We cannot forget that. We cannot forget what happened, and we cannot stand by and not do anything about what is going on right now. As a community we have a responsibility. I know in my community of Geelong there was absolute horror expressed when we saw the Nazi salute happening on the front steps of Parliament. I think, generally speaking, the vast majority of people in this state do not accept that – they do not think it is okay. You have those cowards, the gutless people out there that are doing the wrong thing and attacking the Jewish community, basically. That is what they are doing.

The bill bans the public display or performance of any symbol or gesture used by the Nazi party and its paramilitary arms. The bill forms part of the anti-vilification reform package in addressing hate speech and hate conduct in Victoria. The reform package is being developed in response to the parliamentary inquiry, which I have already mentioned. Although we would prefer not to have to legislate to address and prevent this kind of hateful behaviour, these reforms send a clear message that Victoria will not tolerate hateful conduct. The reforms are complex and require time and proper consultation to get it right, and we are currently consulting on the anti-vilification protections. The consultations are due to close this month. Victoria's diversity is one of this state's greatest strengths, and we are proud of how we welcome multicultural communities into our community more broadly. I know we do in Geelong. But we also know that we have to fight for it, we have to keep it. A lot of work every single day goes into keeping that diversity in our community and keeping that hate out of our community. We have all referred to various unacceptable activities across this community.

I often say to my community in Geelong that we need to continue to fight to keep that diversity and inclusion in our community. It is something that I am very proud of in Victoria, but also in my own community of Geelong, that we continue on that path. One of the things that we need to be doing is calling out this appalling behaviour and making sure we have laws in place to try and prevent that from happening, but if it does happen, that there are penalties for that, because at the moment, there are not. We need to make sure that we are protecting everyone in our community, including the Jewish community, who are being subjected to these horrors. All Victorians deserve to feel accepted and safe and included. What we have witnessed is unacceptable, and there have been a lot of these attacks directed towards various communities, including the Jewish community, but also the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, the LGBTIQ+ community, people with disabilities as well as multicultural, racial and religious faith communities. We have seen that. I think what we are seeing very much so at the moment in particular is the attack on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in relation to the Voice. That is happening right across our country, not just in Victoria. I am very conscious of that sort of behaviour and that we need to be dealing with it, and this bill helps do that. The use of Nazi symbols and gestures is just totally unacceptable in Victoria, and all of us as leaders in our communities and leaders in this place need to be calling that out. We need to be saying to all our leaders across this country that that sort of behaviour is totally unacceptable, because we have seen some leaders across this country actually promote this sort of behaviour. So as leaders in our community, right here in Victoria, I think what we are now saying is that we all support this bill and we support getting rid of that sort of behaviour. I commend the bill to the house.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:50): I rise to speak on the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023. Antisemitism is a disease. It is a disease in not only our community but all communities. Sadly and unacceptably, it is a disease that is spreading; we know that it is a disease that is spreading. So we stand here in the Parliament today to say that we as a Parliament will bring new laws to do what we can to say no and to try and combat that disease.

But it is not enough. It is not enough because of the spread of the disease in our community. We know that not only from the many speakers speaking to examples of that antisemitism but from the data that has been collected by the community. Every year the Executive Council of Australian Jewry release

their report into antisemitism in Australia, and their most recent report found, as it does every year, an increase in incidents. I know the member for Caulfield and I open the report each year and speak immediately thereafter because we see an increase reported year on year. This year the number of incidents reported was up by 7 per cent on previous years – 7 per cent. Almost 500 incidents are logged – and that will not be all the incidents – each and every year.

We also know because the experts are telling us that. If you listen to the words of the director-general of ASIO Mike Burgess, his comments over recent years have been particularly strong about the rise of nationalist and racist extremism in Australia. I note the deputy director-general of ASIO's comment that the number of incidents of that nature rose over a five-year period, from 10 to 15 per cent of work by ASIO to 30 to 40 per cent – an extraordinary increase in the most vile, scary and dangerous incidents in our community being reported by an organisation that would not normally speak to these issues in the type of work they do. I note that the director-general said that:

In suburbs around Australia, small cells regularly meet to salute Nazi flags, inspect weapons, train in combat and share their hateful ideology ...

When you listen to those words, this bill will do something in relation to those groups now being lawfully unable to salute the flag. What this bill does not do is anything to impact upon the work they are doing with weapons, training in combat and sharing their hateful ideology. That is why we need to do more. That is why this disease is spreading, because though we all in this chamber support this bill so strongly, we know there is more to be done, a lot more to be done – and I will come to that.

Very, very soon after being elected I went to the Holocaust centre in the member for Caulfield's electorate and met Irma Hanner, who had a profound impact upon me – a Holocaust survivor who returned home one day to find that her mother had been taken by the Gestapo. She waited two days for her mum. She was only a little girl. Her mum never came home. She was deported to a camp. Her mother did not make it. She looked at me and said, 'James, a symbol can incite hate in the same way that a word can.' It was a powerful message that she passed to me in the very early days of 2019.

Very soon thereafter the member for Caulfield and I, through committee work and then more publicly, spoke up and spoke on Irma's behalf to say that our laws – which were 20 years old, outdated at the time – did not recognise that a symbol can have the same impact of hate as a word can. A symbol can have the same impact – words from Holocaust survivor Irma. The coalition, in one of the first acts it did, announced a policy in this space and then the government, to their credit, acknowledged that policy and enacted the first part of the law in relation to the Nazi flag. Now we stand here speaking to the Nazi salute in recognition that a symbol can be a sign of hate, and we know it can. Another survivor, Joe de Haan, once said to me that to him the symbol of Nazi Germany should have been wiped off the face of the earth years ago. He said it so straightforwardly, so simply, but both of them had such profound messages. I am so glad to be standing here supporting a bill which is doing part of the work.

But there is, as I said, more work to be done, because we know that nationalist and racist violent extremism is occurring in our suburbs. These are the words of ASIO. What we need to consider next as a community and as a country is whether these groups, who are operating in our suburbs, are considered terrorist organisations and designated as such, because they are not at the moment – they are not terrorist organisations designated as such. I would say that not only do we now need to stop their capacity to salute a flag, we need to look at these groups and frankly go after these groups. We need to stop them, in the director-general's words, inspecting their weapons, training in combat and sharing their hateful ideology in our suburbs, and the only way to do that is to call them out and designate them as what they are, and they are terrorist organisations operating in our suburbs.

These are important measures, but they are just the start of what we need to do to stop this disease that is spreading in our community, that is spreading year on year not just in words, not just in symbols, and in too many cases spreading a message of violence, racism and threat to our community. As ASIO has recognised and said repeatedly, these people are a threat to our safety, they are a threat to our community. The coalition will be supporting this bill, but as a community we need to have a

conversation about what we do next to stop this spread, to stop this growth and to frankly go after the extremists who are behaving in a way that none of us would accept.

Sitting suspended 1:00 pm until 2:01 pm.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

The SPEAKER: Before calling questions I would like to acknowledge in the gallery today the presence of four members of the Legislative Council from the South Australian Parliament: Laura Henderson, Tung Ngo, Frank Pangallo and Heidi Girolamo. Welcome.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Commonwealth Games

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): My question is to the Premier. The Premier admitted today that she was aware lawyers had been engaged to scrap the Commonwealth Games in June. When did the government first become aware that the cost of the Commonwealth Games had blown out?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, could you repeat the question, please? I did not hear you.

Danny Pearson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Assistant Treasurer!

John PESUTTO: The Premier admitted today that she was aware lawyers had been engaged to scrap the Commonwealth Games in June. When did the government first become aware that the cost of the Commonwealth Games had blown out?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:03): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for a question about legal fees and legal advice. But notwithstanding that, as has been mentioned a number of times in the house and in media conferences, as the government was doing the work on how best to deliver the regional Commonwealth Games consistent with the agreement that had been signed with the Commonwealth Games Federation and Commonwealth Games Australia, we were working with the officials, and estimates were being updated from estimates to actuals. As was said at the press conference on 18 July, in those preceding weeks as the figures were reaching more than \$6 billion for a 12-day sporting event, it simply did not stack up. It did not stack up, particularly at a time when the biggest issue facing the Victorian community was making sure people have a roof over their head – the dignity of a roof over their head. That is why the decision was made, and the investment, particularly the \$1 billion into regional housing and the investment in tourism, sport and major events, which was a key legacy reason we wanted to host the games in the first place.

Danny Pearson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Assistant Treasurer is warned.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was: when did the Premier first become aware of the cost blowout? I would ask you to bring the Premier back to that question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): Was the Premier aware that lawyers had been engaged to scrap the Commonwealth Games before she appeared at PAEC on 13 June?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:05): As has been confirmed today, I was advised on 14 June that the Premier was seeking legal advice, so there was no engagement of lawyers before that date.

Ministers statements: regional housing

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:06): I am pleased to talk about the Labor government’s \$1 billion investment in regional housing, delivering more homes to make housing more affordable across regional Victoria, when you consider that in the 2050s more than 2.3 million people will call our fabulous regions home. More and more people are coming to see that the regions are a great place to live and work, whether you are like our fabulous members from Geelong, who choose to live in our state’s second biggest city, or whether you choose to live in the beautiful parts of western Victoria like the member for Ripon and the members from Ballarat, or indeed, Speaker, like you and me in parts of Bendigo, everyone in regional Victoria deserves the dignity of quality, affordable homes in their community. That is why the government is making this critical investment on top of the \$5 billion-plus investment through the Big Housing Build. The dedicated \$1 billion Regional Housing Fund will deliver more than 1300 social and affordable homes for regional communities. Recently there were some new announcements made as part of the first tranche of projects to be supported through this fund. Through this fund there will be 50 new homes in Colac and 50 new homes in Wodonga, which I am sure the member for Benambra is pleased to hear. There are also 70 new homes in Shepparton, Seymour and Rochester, which is critically important for these communities that are rebuilding following the floods that occurred in those communities just a year ago. There is a lot to do. There is a lot to continue to build on through the investment in schools and homes, and we are doing that through this dedicated investment in housing for regional Victorians.

Commonwealth Games

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:08): My question is to the Premier. On 16 August the Premier stated in relation to the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games that:

... the decision was taken on the Monday, overnight Commonwealth Games officials were briefed on the government’s decisions and the media conference was held the very, very next day.

If the decision was not made until 17 July, why did the government secretly engage lawyers in June to get out of the Commonwealth Games?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Barwon South!

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:09): Well, as I have already said today and as it has already been said previously on a number of other occasions, as it became apparent in the weeks leading up to that decision being made – yes, on those dates in July – and as those estimates were becoming actuals, work was being done to present a range of options to government to help inform that final decision. That advice included seeking information from officials across the public service, but – as the Leader of the Opposition should know – it was appropriate to also seek legal advice on these matters, which is what the Premier at the time commissioned, that legal advice. Do you know why we did this? Because as it was materialising that the cost of a 12-day sporting event was going to be more than \$6 billion, the decision needed to be made to consider all the options available to government – to consider whether to proceed with that event or to consider other options.

It is entirely proper for government to take advice and to thoroughly consider all the options. Now, I say this: it has been remarked by someone in this house that they would not have made a decision without due diligence – they would not have made that decision without due diligence. So not only does the Leader of the Opposition support the decision taken by the government, he also agrees with the position of the government to properly consider and take advice on the decision that was taken.

The SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the Leader of the Opposition for his supplementary question, I would ask him to refer to members not by their names but by their correct titles, even across the table.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:11): The Premier’s statement in the house on 16 August is directly contradicted now by her own government’s documents. Will the Premier admit that she misled the house?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Barwon South can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Barwon South withdrew from chamber.

Colin Brooks: On a point of order, Speaker, there is a very clear process for allegations of misleading the house, and asking a question on one is definitely not in order. It should be ruled out of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! The question is in order.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:12): No.

The SPEAKER: The Premier has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: healthcare workforce

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:12): I rise to update the house on how the Allan Labor government’s commitment to building more homes right across our state will help us grow the healthcare workforce that we need in rural and regional Victoria. Nearly one-quarter of our 340,000-strong healthcare workforce live and work in rural and regional Victoria. In the last five years we have grown that workforce by more than 14 per cent, but there is still more to do. One of the great challenges that we face in securing the workers that we need is access to secure, safe, stable and affordable housing for our healthcare workers. That is why the Allan Labor government’s commitment and our Premier’s commitment to delivering on each and every element of the housing statement is so important for health.

In this statement we have committed to over 400,000 homes to be built in regional Victoria as part of our plan and more secure rental accommodation, meaning that there will be more opportunities for healthcare workers, including so many that want to take this opportunity to work in rural and regional Victoria. We have already recruited more than 2000 international healthcare workers to the state as part of our commitment to our COVID catch-up plan. But let me say this: almost a quarter of those have gone to the regions and we want to support them to be there. We are providing incentives for GPs to grow their careers in rural and regional Victoria, we are growing our nursing and our ambo workforce, and they are taking up opportunities in rural and regional Victoria. Our housing statement will deliver the housing that we need to continue to grow and develop that workforce, unlike those on the other side of the house who attack our healthcare workers at every single stage. We are focused on building the housing that our healthcare workforce need and – *(Time expired)*

Commonwealth Games

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:15): My question is to the Premier. On 13 June the Premier told the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee in relation to the 2026 Commonwealth Games:

On 17 March 2026 there will be 7000 athletes and officials from around 70 nations coming to regional Victoria to mark the 23rd Commonwealth Games.

As proven in secret documents, the government was already taking steps to scrap the games as early as early June. Will the Premier admit that she misled Victorians?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Sunbury is warned.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:15): To be clear, the decision that the government took to not proceed with a 12-day sporting event because it was going to cost between \$6 billion and \$7 billion is a position that has bipartisan support from the Leader of the Opposition. As has been said, in the weeks leading up to the announcement of the decision, as the estimates were becoming actual costs, as those figures were becoming actuals, the consideration of options was looked at across government, and the final decision was taken on 17 July and announced on 18 July.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Berwick is warned.

Peter Walsh: On a point of order, on the issue of relevance, Speaker, the minister – the Premier now – was out spruiking the Commonwealth Games while they were planning to scrap it. The question was: did she mislead Victorians in doing that? I ask you to bring her back to actually answering that question, please.

The SPEAKER: Order! As I reminded members yesterday, a point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question. The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: The allegation that has been put in both the question and the point of order from the Leader of the National Party is wrong. It is wrong. We have made it very clear that in the weeks leading up to the decision that was taken on 17 July, those costs were materialising. Quite simply, the decision that has been taken to put investment into housing, the investment into the legacy reasons why we agreed to host the games in the first place – a decision at that point in time that was supported by the opposition; the decision to not proceed with the games was supported by the opposition – we are proceeding with that investment in housing, community sport and tourism and major events but particularly in housing, because that is the most important issue that we are facing, not just in the cities but also in the regions.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:18): In her evidence to the committee on 13 June, the Premier also stated:

... there are people training now to compete at the Commonwealth Games in Victoria in March 2026.

Given that the Premier knew that the government was already taking steps to scrap the Commonwealth Games, why –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I need to hear the supplementary question. The Leader of the House will come to order.

John PESUTTO: Given that the Premier knew that the government was already taking steps to scrap the Commonwealth Games, why did she mislead athletes that the games were proceeding?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Gippsland South is warned.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:19): I make two points on the supplementary question put by the Leader of the Opposition. The first is he has no evidence – no evidence – to substantiate his incorrect claim. Secondly, why is the Leader of the Opposition continuing to mislead Victorians that he would do any different?

Ministers statements: housing

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Development Victoria, Minister for Precincts, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:20): There is no more important issue at the moment than housing, and that is why the Allan Labor government – it has got a good ring to it – is getting on with the job of boosting housing supply right across the state. As part of our work to build the 2.24 million homes

Victoria will need by 2051, we are setting a regional target to build about 425,000 of those homes across our regions. As Minister for Development Victoria I intend to drive strong partnerships with private industry to deliver diverse and affordable housing across Victoria, including the regions. Key urban renewal sites and precincts across regional Victoria are already playing a part in helping to build more homes close to jobs and transport thanks to the work of the previous minister. But it is not just about building homes; it is also about building great, livable, well-designed communities, creating open space and bringing services and jobs closer to people's homes. Projects like Junction Place in Wodonga, the largest regional urban renewal initiative in the country, will bring new life to the historic railway precinct in central Wodonga. This project will double the size of Wodonga's CBD, delivering homes, quality community spaces and a mix of retail, entertainment and commercial spaces.

We also know that as more homes are built in regional Victoria, more people will want to work in regional Victoria, which is why we have invested in jobs precincts such as Ballarat West –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bulleen! You can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Bulleen withdrew from chamber.

Colin BROOKS: Yes, well, I am not talking about Fishermans Bend. That is why we have invested in jobs precincts as well such as the Ballarat West employment zone in the member for Ripon's electorate. That delivers more land for housing and will unlock under-utilised surplus government land to deliver around 9000 homes across 45 sites both in metropolitan Melbourne and across regional Victoria as well, ensuring a proportion of that goes to Victorians on low and moderate incomes. Only the Allan Labor government has a serious plan to deliver more housing for Victorians.

Commonwealth Games

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:22): My question is to the Premier. On 21 June the Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy Harriet Shing told Parliament:

... commitments that we have made will deliver around 7500 jobs before, during and after the Commonwealth Games.

Given that the government was already taking steps to scrap the Commonwealth Games, why did the government mislead Victorians by continuing to promote the games?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:23): Again, in the weeks leading up to the decision that the government announced on 18 July that \$6 billion, heading towards \$7 billion, for a 12-day sporting event was too much, and when you consider that the key reasons why we agreed to host the games in the first place were those legacy opportunities to invest in housing in regional Victoria, in community sport and in tourism and major events – that decision was taken, and that decision had bipartisan support from the opposition.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:23): Minister Shing also stated on 21 June that the Commonwealth Games:

... will enable our regions, our regional hubs and our rural communities to shine on the world stage.

Will the Premier apologise for Minister Shing's statements, which deliberately misled Parliament and deceived regional Victorians?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Can I ask the Leader of the Opposition to rephrase his question.

John PESUTTO: Certainly. From the top, Speaker?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition knows that you cannot suggest someone is deliberately misleading the house. I ask you to rephrase the question, please.

John PESUTTO: Okay. Will the Premier apologise for Minister Shing's statements that misled Parliament and deceived regional Victorians?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:25): The only deceit that is being performed here is by the Leader of the Opposition, who is trying to pretend that what he said in the past is that he would do something different, and he would not have. The Leader of the Opposition has supported the decision that has been taken. He said he would take due diligence to make the decision, and to pretend any different is to perpetrate a deceit on Victorians.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much noise in the chamber. Members will now be removed without warning.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier knows that it is not relevant to attack the opposition. I would ask you to bring the Premier back to the question.

The SPEAKER: The Premier has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: family violence

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Employment) (14:26): I rise to update the house on the work the Allan Labor government is doing to build more housing for those fleeing family violence. The Allan government continues to lead this nation on family violence reform and investment and on continuing to shine the spotlight on this critical issue. I will take a moment to recognise the hardworking ministers who have come before me: I acknowledge their incredible work setting up the nation's first and only Royal Commission into Family Violence, implementing all 227 recommendations and investing over \$3.8 billion to support victim-survivors of family abuse.

We know it is hard to escape a violent household. Fear of retribution, financial instability and housing availability, including in regional Victoria, are key barriers. Victoria's landmark housing statement will address one of the most critical barriers: we want to make sure victim-survivors have a safe home to go to – a safe home for themselves, their children, their pets. On this side of the chamber we are proud that the Allan Labor government's housing statement is committed to building 1000 new homes specifically for those experiencing family violence across our state. That includes making sure we put housing in the places it is needed across regional Victoria. We are building on what the Big Housing Build has already begun to deliver, with one in eight new social housing dwellings reserved for family violence victim-survivors. We know that there is more to do and that rates of family violence are far too high. I can assure this place I am getting on with it and I am delivering these important reforms that will keep more Victorians, particularly women and children, safe.

Commonwealth Games

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:28): My question is to the Premier. Just days before the Premier announced the Commonwealth Games would be scrapped, the government was continuing to progress contract negotiations for the building of athletes villages. The government engaged lawyers to withdraw from the games in June. Why did the government deceive regional businesses that had invested to deliver the Commonwealth Games villages, when the government was already taking steps to scrap the Commonwealth Games?

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Sunbury withdrew from chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:28): I will say again that the final decision was taken on 17 July and was announced publicly on 18 July. In the period leading up to that the

government was receiving advice and options, and as the costs were becoming actuals and the more than \$6 billion to have a 12-day sporting event simply did not stack up, the government made its final decision on 17 July and it was announced on 18 July. Can I say no –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! the member for South-West Coast can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for South-West Coast withdrew from chamber.

Peter Walsh: On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance, I ask you to bring the Premier back to actually answering the question as to why they were engaging with businesses to carry out Commonwealth Games infrastructure projects while they were also engaged with lawyers in scrapping the Commonwealth Games.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: As I was saying, when the costs were becoming between \$6 billion and \$7 billion for a 12-day sporting event, they did not stack up. That final decision was made on 17 July, and it was announced on 18 July. What has happened since then is we are getting on and delivering the more than 1300 social and affordable homes across regional Victoria, the investments in community sport and in tourism and major events, and the priorities that regional Victorians want us to continue to focus on, particularly in housing, because there is no more important issue for the government to focus on, in partnership with regional communities, right now.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:30): Will the Premier apologise for deceiving regional businesses that lost time and money on Commonwealth Games projects the government had no intention of delivering?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The minister is warned.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:31): I think the member for Nepean is relieved he has not got any of these questions today. Anyway, as I said, the Leader of the Opposition should be apologising for his ongoing deceit on this issue. We have been clear with regional Victorians: the decision was made on 17 July. It was announced on 18 July. Since then we have been working with regional communities – with businesses, with councils – on how we can deliver the key legacy benefits which were the reason why we agreed to host the games in the first place. You know what? There are going to be a hell of a lot of jobs in those 1300 affordable homes that are going to be built. There are going to be a hell of a lot of jobs in the community sport infrastructure that is going to continue to be invested in. There are also going to be significant jobs that are going to be supported in terms of the support that we are going to continue to provide to our important tourism and major events industry in regional Victoria. That is what we will continue to focus on.

Ministers statements: housing

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (14:32): It is no secret that regional Victoria is booming, but across our regional and rural areas it is getting harder to find a place to live. We know one of the biggest barriers for renters right now is supply. That is why our housing statement will boost the number of rental options available to Victorians as well as boosting the protections Victorians so desperately need. Only Labor will ensure renters get a fairer deal. In 2018 we made over 130 reforms to improve renter protections. We lead the nation on this. Now we are going to build on that again. As part of the housing statement, we will deliver a raft of new reforms, including making rental applications easier, stopping unfair rent increases between successive fixed-term rents, better protecting the personal information of renters, banning all types of rental bidding, introducing a portable bond scheme, delivering a rental stress support package, establishing a new dispute resolution

body, extending the notice of rent increase and notice to vacate and introducing mandatory training and licensing for real estate professionals, property managers, owners corporations and conveyancers. We know these reforms will make a meaningful difference to the lives of Victorian renters, but it is certainly no thanks to those opposite. They stood in the way of 130 rental reforms in 2018. They are standing against renters again in 2023. While they focus on making life harder for Victorian renters, the Allan Labor government will get on and deliver for Victorians by increasing housing supply first and foremost and also increasing protections for Victorian renters.

Constituency questions

Caulfield electorate

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:35): (330) My question is to the Minister for Environment. Firstly, welcome to the new important portfolio. The minister and I share Melbourne's best kept secret, one of the biggest parks, located in the centre of Melbourne's Caulfield Racecourse Reserve. The minister and I worked on creating a new trust and a new act of Parliament, but they now need the money to progress the strategic management plan. The trust is being environmentally and fiscally responsible, retaining a second lake, removing the underground car park, ensuring no suitable playing services would be synthetic and reducing the overall cost of the project by half. I ask the minister to update the house on how the progress is going to ensure the important funding is given to progress the plan to deliver this important asset for the area.

Laverton electorate

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (14:36): (331) My question is for the Minister for Housing. Just two weeks ago our government unveiled its housing statement. This plan lays out the vision for what growth and development will look like in Victoria. This is something that greatly interests communities in my electorate. Firstly, it reinforces the notion that you cannot keep building outwards with suburban sprawl and that growth corridors, including ours in the outer west, cannot continue to bear the brunt of Victoria's population growth. It sets our planning system towards a greater focus on housing affordability and housing choice, meaning more people can have the opportunity to live where they want to. Importantly, there is a litany of changes designed to strengthen protections for renters, something that is so important for people in my electorate. So my question for the minister is this: how will the changes in the housing statement benefit my community in the Laverton electorate?

Mildura electorate

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (14:36): (332) My question is for the Minister for Health, and my question is: when will the critical care service plan for Mildura Base Public Hospital be funded? The critical care service plan is essential for planning and paving the way for desperately needed additional services at MBPH, such as a catheterisation lab. Recently I became aware of a reply to a letter from the federal health minister regarding the desperate need for this service in the far north-west of the state from our health minister stating that the Loddon Mallee already has two – in Bendigo, 5 hours away. The tyranny of distance means that this has cost lives like that of Scott Umback, husband of Katrina, who could not get an angiogram in Mildura and who died, despite the efforts of our wonderful Ambulance Victoria members, whilst waiting for the adult retrieval service. Mildura Base Public Hospital staff are incredible but driving blind without a master plan or funding for the critical care service plan as discussed with admin. So when will funding be allocated for the MBPH critical care service plan? The need is critical to explore these provisions.

Glen Waverley electorate

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (14:38): (333) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Planning. How will the Allan Labor government's landmark housing statement transform Glen Waverley and Melbourne's east? For so many Victorians housing is one of the most critical issues at the moment. Victoria is growing rapidly, but we know housing construction just is not keeping pace. This supply shortage has house and rent prices increasing while rental vacancies are at

an all-time low. To solve these challenges the solution is simple: we need to build more homes. I am proud to be part of an Allan Labor government that is committed to doing just that. Our landmark housing statement is a bold plan to build 800,000 homes over the next decade. These homes will be more affordable, high quality and in the communities where Victorians want to live. It is a five-part plan. We will make good decisions faster, build cheaper housing closer to jobs, strengthen renters' rights, build more social housing and reform *Plan Melbourne* and the Planning and Environment Act 1987. For more information I encourage my community to visit vic.gov.au/housing-statement.

Berwick electorate

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (14:39): (334) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Minister, on O'Shea Road this year alone we have had tragically two deaths, one of Divya Bhatia and one of Anuruddha Priyankara. Both of these involved O'Shea Road, a new road in my electorate, and we have had issues with speed, lighting and traffic lights on this road since the upgrade has occurred. We have written to and asked questions of former ministers, including you. We want to find out if you pay attention to what is happening on this road, and we continue to get political responses in relation to me not supporting the upgrade of that road. Minister, I ask if we can take the politics out of this, please, and get the information that you have received in relation to safety issues on this road that could have prevented two deaths of people in my electorate. It is time that the Berwick electorate got the truth on what is happening on O'Shea Road.

Pascoe Vale electorate

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (14:40): (335) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Minister, what is the Department of Transport and Planning doing to improve road safety through the Nicholson Street corridor in East Coburg? With more young families and elderly residents living in East Coburg, improving road safety along Nicholson Street will continue to be a high priority. As a heavily utilised north-south arterial, Nicholson Street experiences a variety of competing demands, including around 20,000 road movements per day and people catching the route 1 tram line, as well as locals living along the corridor who have mobility needs or who walk or cycle to work, to the shops and to school. That is why in June 2022 the Victorian government announced the introduction of safer speed limits to better protect all road users. Following community feedback the speed limit was lowered between Bell Street and Albion Street from 60 kilometres to 50 kilometres to help calm traffic in the area, and a time-based 40-kilometre speed limit operating from 7 am to midnight was also extended north of Albion Street to Moore Street. But there are a lot more opportunities to improve safety along the corridor, including through the installation of better road safety signage, speed cameras and more accessible and safer tram commuting experiences for all.

Richmond electorate

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (14:41): (336) My question is for the new Minister for Consumer Affairs. For months we waited for Labor's housing statement to fix the housing crisis, and what did we get – crumbs for renters and a death sentence for public housing. Average rents in Melbourne have risen by 18.2 per cent, and one of my constituents recently received a 60 per cent rent increase. Sixteen European countries have rent controls like rent freezes and rent caps, and yet in Victoria we are fighting for the bare minimum. Without rent caps or rent freezes Labor is condemning renters to rental hell. Minister, your predecessor failed to protect renters, but when will you make unlimited rent rises illegal?

Preston electorate

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (14:41): (337) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and my question is: what are the busiest roads in Darebin in terms of traffic volumes and traffic flow during peak times compared to off-peak? I ask this question because we are getting a lot of new townhouses in the Preston and Reservoir area. As a government we fully support new housing, and our new landmark housing statement will see more affordable houses built in good

locations closer to where Victorians work. However, one of the differences between our Labor government and the previous Liberal government is that we give some thought to the infrastructure that will support those dwellings. We are not just approving planning without thought to that infrastructure, and of course we are thinking about transport infrastructure in particular. We are lucky enough to have a new Premier who has devoted much of her public life to that challenge. We thank the minister in advance for any information she can provide to help us consider these issues and provide more housing in Preston and Reservoir.

South-West Coast electorate

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (14:42): (338) My constituency question is for the Minister for Environment, and I ask why the minister's department is not negotiating with the Port Fairy Golf Club to find a suitable solution over the club's minor encroachment onto public land. The Port Fairy Golf Club is being asked to reroute several of its iconic holes and fairways due to the historic minor encroachment onto public land. Disappointingly, the department is refusing to negotiate with the club in any way despite the club's offering of alternatives such as land swaps to reach a suitable agreement. The Port Fairy Golf Club has been using and acting as caretakers for the land for the past 20 years, keeping it protected from weeds and pests and having created a terrific asset for visitors and community alike. There has been no public outcry or intention from any previous governments to change the status quo. The government has not identified any issues regarding harm. If there were any issues, they would surely have become blatantly apparent in the last 20 years. Minister, your approach just seems mean-spirited, and Port Fairy deserves an answer.

Broadmeadows electorate

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (14:43): (339) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public and Active Transport – I am pleased we have got 'active transport' in there – and I ask for information on the various cleaning and maintenance contracts at the Broadmeadows station precinct and car park. Recently I attended a meeting organised by council with the Department of Transport and Planning at the Broadmeadows station, and I thank Hume council for organising this meeting and inviting me along. I much appreciate the attendance of the department of transport reps to discuss some of the challenges at the station. One of the challenges is the complex leasing and ownership arrangements of the site and surrounds and the various responsibilities for cleaning and maintenance, particularly of the privately owned but common-use areas between the buildings, used by people to access the station platforms and underpass. The department were going to investigate the current cleaning contract requirements and whether these were being met and what options are available to improve the customer, resident and business experience at this station and precinct, including possible improvements to the public interface with the privately owned building that is leased to various organisations. I look forward to receiving this information.

Bills

Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (14:44): I rise to speak on the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023. The bill essentially creates a criminal offence that prohibits the display and performance of Nazi symbols and gestures in Victoria. Obviously this is to address the harm caused by public displays of Nazi symbols and gestures, which are being used only to intimidate and harass. The bill will give police a legislative tool to prevent and cease the use of Nazi symbols and gestures. We have recently seen a rise in the use of these symbols and gestures. We have seen them on the steps of Parliament. We saw the national socialist resistance activities in the Grampians National Park in January 2021. Halls Gap community members and visitors to the national park reported witnessing approximately 20 members marching through the town, harassing the community and

chanting neo-Nazi chants as they performed the Nazi salute. Some wore black uniforms depicting the white pride symbol as they posed in front of a burning cross against the scenic backdrop of the Grampians. Victoria Police rightfully concluded that no criminal offences had been committed, because there was as yet no legislation to support any offences having been committed. Despite no visible action being taken at the scene, I have no doubt in my mind – and I think it is probably undeniable – that those activities would have been investigated very closely by counterterrorism units.

We can make a choice here in this place. We can choose to view these people as confused, as military wannabes that hang out in Aussie Disposals in dress-ups, as young men looking for a social group or as wayward youth, but I think that is a mistake. We should never make that mistake, because it neglects the lessons from history and the role and rise of extremism in our community. A good example of this is the case of the Christchurch terrorist who killed 51 innocent people. Neo-Nazi symbols were found in his manifesto. That is an excellent reason to pass legislative tools, like other Western democracies have. They have had these laws for decades, frankly. Drawing the line in the sand regarding the ethical standards by which we choose to live in a liberal democratic community is critical, and law enforcement and policymakers today face the very challenging task of balancing societal expectations, protecting religious rights and preserving freedom of speech. I think this achieves that, and I think it is a good balance.

While many other symbols used by groups, especially extremist groups, are not as clear-cut, I think there is no ambiguity as far as Nazi symbols go, whether it be the swastika or the Totenkopf – and naivety is just no excuse. You do not need to visit Yad Vashem to know about the Shoah or that a tolerance of Nazism ended up in the Holocaust. You do not need to visit these places to know that this is not just an attack on our fantastic Jewish community, this is an attack on our multicultural community, our multifaith community and our LGBTIQ+ community – in fact on all of us. These symbols represent fanatical nationalism, genocide and ethnic cleansing, not just of between 6 million to 10 million Jewish people but of people with disabilities, homosexual men and Roma community members. Many of these records were destroyed, and many families have been lost to history.

But sometimes that huge number can be really hard to fathom, and it is fair to say that in 12 years a population the size of Victoria's population was exterminated by the Nazis. People talk numbers and sometimes they do not connect those numbers with people. My concern is with education. I think that in the age of social media, disputable truths, shock value and influencers, our kids are not actually getting the facts. They are not getting the historical facts from Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and movies, so I want to outline some of the instances of what is being represented when you dress or act like a Nazi.

I will insert a trigger warning here, because much of what I am going to talk about now is very, very unpleasant. But it did happen, and it did happen to some of those 6 million to 10 million people. We saw the forced sterilisation of up to 400,000 people, including experimental sterilisation, forced abortions and forced medical experiments on children. When you wear the swastika you are showing a proud connection to human experimentation that was done without consent and caused victims indescribable pain, mutilation, permanent disability and death. A lot of the Nazis' experiments had to do with gaining a military advantage, and they did high-altitude experiments where they put prisoners in pressure chambers and increased the pressure until they died. They left people in freezers until they died. They inflicted mock battle wounds on prisoners to test medication.

Josef Mengele befriended twin children from the trains to Auschwitz, and it was reported that he was friendly to these children. He used over 1000 pairs of twins in eugenics experiments and to try to find a way to multiply the German race, and after measurements were taken to find a key to multiple births these children were killed with a shot of chloroform to the heart. These symbols and this salute represent giving people poison, tuberculosis and yellow fever, exposing them to phosgene gas, doing transplantations of joints, bone and muscle and deforming people without any anaesthetic. It actually also represents artificial insemination of women and telling women the date of their death so they could see the physiological reaction in their menstrual cycle. And how do we know this? Well, the

Germans, if anything, were meticulous at record keeping, and 23 doctors were trialled at Nuremberg during the doctors trial. Victim-survivors put their wounds on display, and 15 doctors were found guilty and immediately executed. We should never, ever forget this. We should never see 6 million as just a number. Whether it is the Holocaust or whether it is war crimes, we need to continue educating and, if necessary, legislating.

I certainly believe there is no argument about freedom of speech here. Victoria's diversity is one of our largest strengths, and we have got to protect it. I believe, and I think everyone in this chamber believes, that all Victorians deserve to feel accepted, safe and included. We made a really good start in 2022 when we enacted the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Symbol Prohibition) Bill 2022 to make it an offence to display a Nazi symbol. Now we are criminalising the use of Nazi symbols in Victoria, and the Nazi salute, and equipping frontline officers with the power to seize materials or detain individuals who display these symbols of hate – as well as the SS symbol, the Siegrune; the Totenkopf, which is the Nazi skull used by the SS; and various other Nazi paramilitary organisation badges and emblems.

This bill is important because it forms part of the anti-vilification reform package in addressing hate speech and hate conduct in Victoria. We have seen it directed recently towards various Victorian communities, including the Jewish community, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the LGBTIQ+ community and people with disability, as well as multicultural, racial and religious faith groups. There is no doubt that these Nazi symbols and actions or gestures are intended to cause fear in the community, and that is why this bill is here. We need to protect our community from such harm. There is nothing fun about graffitiing a Nazi symbol; it is a message to convey antisemitism, hatred and intimidation.

I will note that the federal government are actually introducing legislation to prohibit public display of Nazi symbols and to prohibit memorabilia with those symbols as well. I think that is a great thing, and it is very, I guess, complementary to this bill here today.

Just for the record, the Nazi symbol, the Hakenkreuz, is banned in 22 countries, and I must say I like the fact that it could be taken a little bit further. I like the approach of countries making laws about Holocaust denial, and there are plenty of countries doing that: Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovakia and Switzerland. Liechtenstein is an interesting example – they do not really specifically outline any National Socialist crimes. In their criminal code on race discrimination:

Whoever publicly denies, coarsely trivialises, or tries to justify genocide or other crimes against humanity via word, writing, pictures, electronically transmitted signs, gestures, violent acts or by other means shall be punished with imprisonment for up to two years.

I will just finish up by saying that we cannot ignore people sowing the seeds of hate. This movement was largely ignored by the international community in the 1930s, and we saw what occurred just 12 years after that. This is our Parliament at its best: we are ensuring that our community has confidence that police have the powers to deal with potential terrorists, because that is what we are dealing with here. We are drawing a line in the sand regarding the ethical standards by which we choose to live in our liberal democratic society, and I think we have got that balance right. We have heard many amazing contributions to the Parliament today. Again I reiterate that I think this is Parliament at its best, and I commend the bill to the house.

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:54): I rise to speak on behalf of the Victorian Greens on the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023. The Greens support this bill. We fully support it. We also believe that banning the Nazi salute is an important step towards curbing the threat of the sort of far-right extremists that we have been seeing, but it certainly should not be the last step in curbing these hateful ideologies. What we would really like to see is all the recommendations of last year's parliamentary inquiry into far-right extremism being implemented in full as a matter of

urgency, because what we have witnessed recently, as has also been articulated by other members, is the re-emergence of this sort of hateful extremism in a certain part of our society – more specifically, nationalist and racist violent extremism with elements of fascism, white supremacy and neo-Nazi beliefs and identity at its core. While this is obviously not new in Australia, what we have seen is just how frequent and blatant these displays of Nazism and far-right hate have been, publicly targeting the Jewish community; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; LGBTIQ+ people, specifically the trans community; and other racial and religious groups. We have seen groups of Nazis engaging in Nazi chants and salutes with immunity whilst the police can only look on.

What is actually leading to this is open to conjecture. There are a wide range of factors, but no doubt one factor is that we have been seeing an increasing number of politicians and leaders, both in Australia and abroad, that have been prepared at a minimum to dog whistle and tactically encourage and facilitate such views of hatred and rhetoric for political gain. A media investigation found evidence that this hateful movement wants to influence politics, with lists of sympathetic MPs to lobby and plans to try and get more politicians elected to espouse these sorts of views. As a local MP with an electorate with a really strong Jewish community, who meets with members of the Jewish community and visits local synagogues, schools and Jewish community groups quite frequently, I am incredibly mindful of the importance of this legislation and the need for further efforts to tackle antisemitic, extremist and dangerous ideologies.

As I said, this bill to prohibit the Nazi salute addresses one aspect, but there is a wider range of policies and approaches that need to be looked at. I referred to the Legal and Social Issues Committee, which undertook the Greens-initiated inquiry into extremism in Victoria and made a number of recommendations, including investing in more social cohesion and community building. We are pleased that the government has provided in-principle support to the recommendations and has committed to a range of reforms to counter violent extremists, but we would like see the government be bolder and go further than what has been outlined in its response to the inquiry. So far there has been a heavy emphasis on a justice response and a heavy emphasis on Victoria Police managing counterextremism. As I said, this is one tool in responding to the rise of neo-Nazis and hateful ideologies in this state. Additional tools that can be effective in stopping these hateful movements include supporting communities, building social cohesion, investing in anti-racism and anti-discrimination education and building trust in our political, social and civic institutions. These are important tools as well. I look at specifically the findings from that inquiry. Finding 38 states:

Anti-racism public education campaigns and education programs that teach respect and appreciation for multiculturalism are important for improving social cohesion in Victoria.

Another finding states:

Education about the Holocaust is particularly important for understanding ... the consequences of racism and vilification throughout history and should have ongoing inclusion in the Victorian school curriculum.

Recommendation 7 states:

That the Victorian Government support the ongoing provision of ... anti-racism education programs and actively seek to improve and increase the provision of such programs in the community.

There is another finding around digital and critical literacy skills for young people to navigate the internet safely and develop resistance to the influence of extremist messaging so they can critically analyse the information that they are exposed to. As I said, there are a wide range of tools that the government can use in combating the rise of this sort of hateful extremism, looking at what is driving people to these movements. The committee report canvassed risk factors like social isolation, economic insecurity and inequality, and certainly addressing these is part of the tools – like ending poverty, building communities and reducing inequality – that should also be used to tackle these hateful ideologies.

We have also seen links between far-right extremism and transphobia, homophobia and misogyny, and certainly any response to tackling extremism must look at this – the increasing hatred and

vilification of our LGBTIQ+ communities. As we have put on the table, what we want to see is the government move on anti-vilification laws, which currently have protections on the basis of race and religion but not sexuality and gender identity. I understand that the government has undertaken its own process, but this has been going on for a very, very, very long time and now these are urgent and necessary reforms to take. The inquiry found that extremist movements cause harm to the community and that mainstreaming of homophobic and transphobic sentiments in the public discourse is legitimising the targeting of LGBTIQ+ Victorians. We saw this in action as recently as at the rallies on the steps of Parliament, where transphobes and neo-Nazis were vilifying and attacking our trans and gender-diverse communities.

The Greens will definitely support this bill, and it certainly must be the first step towards a comprehensive, whole-of-government response to the causes and consequences of far-right extremism and these hateful ideologies here in Victoria. We encourage the government to be bolder and go further and quicker in strengthening our community to stamp out these hateful movements as well as introducing anti-vilification measures to protect our LGBTIQ+ communities.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (15:01): I am pleased to be able to rise to speak on these very important reforms. We have had some very profound discussions in the chamber today, and I am glad to see that there is a sense of unity and respect on this very serious issue.

I was reflecting on a documentary I saw some time back. It showed film of deceased victims of the Holocaust. There was a mass grave, and without going into the graphic elements of it, suffice to say it was horribly confronting. The imperative of taking that footage was to make sure that no-one ever denied it had occurred. So on that note, the incredible work of Holocaust survivors, their children, volunteers at the Holocaust museum of Melbourne – and I have also been to Yad Vashem – in ensuring that the truth is told, that it is not forgotten, is critical: one, because all generations should be aware of what can happen if we stand aside and do not do the right thing and do not do everything in our power to prevent such atrocities recurring, but also on a positive note, so that we can create a better future for everyone.

I will say, having also visited Yad Vashem, that something became very apparent to me. You think, yes, I will cope with this, and I do not feel sorry for myself – as I was walking through there was a certain point when I reached an emotional sort of saturation in the sense that it is so intense but so profound and so important that I simply cried. You cannot believe that human beings can submit to this kind of atrocious behaviour, but they can – we know they can – and hence this is the good work going on here and now in this chamber, collectively, to ensure that we do what we can to prevent this happening in the future.

On that note, I did want to proceed to acquit some of the issues that were raised by the opposition. I would like to reinforce that those issues have been considered in a very careful way and taken very much in the vein that they were intended, in the sense that they are not being lightly rebutted or dismissed. We fully appreciate that there has been a lot of careful consideration on all sides with regard to what is the best way to move forward and what is the most appropriate language for these reforms. I just want to say from the outset that there is most certainly a premise of respect with regard to what wording should ultimately be passed when the bill, hopefully, is passed through this chamber and then the upper house in due course.

I proceed to the two amendments: firstly, the issue raised concerning the terms ‘used by’ as opposed to ‘associated with’, and I hope that it will be appreciated why I am being a little brief on that, but I will explore why the current wording that the government has elected to use is being put forward to the chamber. The wording ‘symbol used by the Nazi Party’ – I am just referring to the specific elements that are being queried – is contained in the bill following consultation with various stakeholders to capture the intended policy position, which is of course fundamental to what underpins this legislation, while avoiding a broad-ranging offence that potentially captures many forms of communication and a wider range of symbols. This bill captures symbols and gestures used by the

Nazi party, the most widely known being the Hakenkreuz and the Nazi salute, as these symbols and gestures represent the atrocities of the Holocaust, and I proffer that they are pretty broadly and widely known and understood in that regard. The purpose of this bill is to prevent the harm caused to Victorians by the atrocities that are represented by these symbols and gestures. Within the bill the word 'symbol' will take its ordinary meaning, so a symbol used by the Nazi party will mean something used for or regarded as representing the Nazi party. By definition, this does not include dot points or punctuation marks, as such an interpretation does not promote the purpose of the bill and the ordinary meaning of the words within.

I might just go a little further on this specific issue as raised by the opposition. On the phrase 'associated with', the concern is that it would give the prohibition an expansive operation. It would encompass a wider range of symbols and gestures, which would impose a greater burden on communication and charter rights. There are certain gestures – I will not mention them necessarily here, but I think it may be understood that there may be some gestures that seem to be morphing and evolving as we speak. I hate to think what is happening in that space, but anyway, I acknowledge that there are some more modern expressions. I am not fully apprised of them, because obviously I am not someone who represents that particular point of view. There we go; I talked around that a little, but I think you know where I am coming from. You know what I am saying. This is the crux here: this amendment may not be proportionate to the legitimate purpose the prohibition is trying to achieve, which is to protect Victorians from the harm caused by Nazi symbols and Nazi gestures; therefore the bill may be found to be constitutionally invalid and incompatible with the charter.

What I guess I am putting forward for consideration by the opposition as well is that I think it is fairly well understood that we are in a very nuanced space, and therefore we have to be very prudent with regard to it. I am not saying this to be patronising; it is well understood how the bill is drafted to ensure that you are not unnecessarily capturing people who may have done a symbol with absolutely no intent whatsoever of in any way putting forward a Nazi symbol as such. Hence that is why there has been such careful drafting with regard to the frame within which this bill is being put forward to the chamber.

There is a second amendment proposed with regard to the issue of police powers. The proposition by the opposition is:

A police officer may give a direction to a person to cease performing a Nazi gesture if the police officer reasonably believes the person is committing an offence against section 41K(1A) by performing the Nazi gesture.

If we look at police powers, police may direct a person to remove a Nazi symbol or Nazi gesture from public display if the police officer reasonably believes an offence has been committed. This power is intended to allow police to prevent a displayed gesture or symbol from causing further harm to the public where the perpetrator cannot be identified. While the bill does not provide police with a specific power to direct a person to stop performing the Nazi salute, it is intended that police will utilise their powers of arrest to stop a person from performing the salute, and I will come to the critical element of this issue in a moment. It is also important to acknowledge that existing practice for police is to ask a person who is committing an offence to cease that conduct before exercising their discretion to issue an arrest. And here is the clincher: including a specific directions power to stop the performance of a gesture would therefore be duplicitous and unnecessary. That is the rationale behind not agreeing to the particular amendment that has been respectfully put forward by the opposition. Police will also have the ability to charge a person on summons where there is sufficient evidence that an offence has been committed. I hope that does allay some of the concerns put forward by the opposition with regard to the amendments that they have proposed as well.

I think there has been broad agreement here on the impetus for these particular reforms. I am very glad that there has not been any objection to the rationale for putting forward this legislation here and now in the chamber as well. I do not want to speak for everyone, but there was horror at what was represented on the front steps of Parliament. Certainly, if you hurt one person, you hurt all. It certainly lowers all of us as human beings and our sense of security and safety in our community when there

are some individuals who may, on the basis of race or whatever the particular prejudice is, deem that someone else is less valuable or is not owed the same respect as everyone else. There is no justification, there is no rationale for such horrendous behaviour, hence the impetus for bringing forward these reforms as we speak. In that regard I do commend this legislation to the house, noting that we are having anti-vilification consultation as we speak.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (15:11): I too rise to speak on the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023. Like everyone who has spoken today, I appreciate the very broad support for this bill throughout the house and each of the contributions that have been made touching on everyone's different experiences when it comes to this very important matter and the very concerning acts that sit behind this piece of legislation. From the outset can I thank the member for Albert Park for seeking to alleviate some of the opposition's concerns when it comes to our amendments that the Shadow Attorney-General circulated this morning. We will go on to move those amendments and do so with the respect that the member for Albert Park noted in her contribution, particularly around the application of this legislation and ensuring that the legislation has the appropriate purpose and achieves the outcomes attempted in its drafting.

The fact that this bill does have unanimous support in this place really does illustrate the fact that there is simply no place in our state, our country or modern-day society more broadly for the use of Nazi symbols. I think it is important to note the work of the federal Parliament in this space as well and my federal colleague Senator Michaelia Cash, who moved similar amendments to the criminal code in the federal Parliament earlier this year in response to the deeply disturbing sight of the Nazi salute, which has been seen on the streets of Melbourne and in other places around the country. As Senator Cash said in her second-reading speech:

Those who display Nazi symbols or use the Nazi salute are either ignorant of the past or they are deliberately promoting evil.

It is my strong belief that any individual who is seen to be using these hateful symbols or these hateful salutes or acts should have the full force of the law brought upon them, and I am glad to be able to support the bill in this place to make sure that is the case. Any display of Nazi symbols, imagery or gestures is absolutely abhorrent and simply has no place in modern-day Australia and no place in Victoria. We are a tolerant and diverse society, and the rise of neo-Nazi ideology is simply not in keeping with the community or in keeping with the state of Victoria and our country. This bill seeks to ensure that it cannot take place and, if it does take place, appropriate remedies will be there for the police and through our legal system.

As many of the contributions have acknowledged today, the Nazi regime committed atrocities on a scale and with a barbarity that is largely unparalleled in history. The systematic murder of 6 million Jews, the nearly as many prisoners of war and other victims, including the LGBTQI community, remains one of the darkest moments in human history and particularly in the last century. It is something that we as an Australian people are very aware of given our role during the Second World War. Reflecting on that time and the barbaric acts on children and adults with a disability, as well as that systematic murder right across Europe, is something that is abhorrent, and to think that anyone in Australia today would try to glorify or celebrate the perpetrators of these acts is simply beyond comprehension.

We can all be very proud that our country fought against the Nazi regime, the murderous regime that was the Nazi regime. Many Australians gave up their lives to put a stop to the Holocaust, and the presence of Nazi symbols, gestures and imagery in Australia today is simply an insult to their memory as well. Of course it is very, very hurtful to the Jewish Australian community. Melbourne is home to Australia's largest Jewish community, who have contributed so much to our civil society since the mass migration of Jewish people to our shores after the horrors of the Holocaust. I have been honoured in the past to have a close connection with the Jewish community, both in my time in student politics and my time as the member for Kew but particularly on an occasion where I had the opportunity to travel to Israel on a cross-party delegation and spend some time in Israel, and I took the time there to

visit the Holocaust museum. As the member for Albert Park spoke to, it is one occasion that has had a lasting impact on me, simply seeing the horrors and being there to see some of the very, very touching tributes to those who lost their lives during the Holocaust, and particularly the many, many children that lost their lives during the Holocaust, to the Nazi regime.

Displaying symbols or performing gestures linked to that regime that attempted to wipe out that thriving Jewish community is simply morally repugnant and it ought to be criminal, and this piece of legislation that we are debating today will do that. The display of Nazi symbols is also linked to a disturbing rise in extremist sentiment and extremist groups that represent a threat to public safety here in Victoria and right around our country, and many members here today have spoken about the concerning rise of neo-Nazism and that extremist ideology being perpetrated in our society here in Victoria. In fact the director-general of ASIO Mike Burgess stated earlier this year that responding to threats of ideologically driven terrorism now accounts for 30 per cent of their counterterrorism caseload, and he described ‘a cohort of individuals motivated by a toxic cocktail of conspiracies, grievances and anti-authority beliefs’. It is vital that as a society we make it absolutely clear that neo-Nazism and its associated symbolism have no place in our community.

As I spoke to earlier, the member for Malvern and Shadow Attorney-General has introduced a number of amendments today, and I thank him for his leadership on this issue and also thank the member for Caulfield for his longstanding leadership on this issue and for his unwavering support for the Jewish community, like many of us in this place. This amendment that the opposition has proposed today, which the member for Malvern spoke to earlier, seeks to amend the bill’s definition of Nazi symbol to insert the words ‘and associated with’ so it reads:

... any other symbol used by and associated with the Nazi Party ...

This is designed to ensure that the ban on display of symbols associated with the Nazi party does have that direct association, and in the spirit of the debate here today it seeks to strengthen this piece of legislation to ensure that its intent can be carried out through our justice system.

The second amendment today looks to provide for a police officer to have the power to direct a person to cease performing a Nazi gesture in a public place, and that would have the same criteria as applies to a direction to cease displaying a Nazi symbol in a public place. Another amendment that the member for Malvern has put forward today is to ensure that the use of a Nazi gesture can be stopped in the moment and in its place and to ensure that this bill’s powers can be carried out by the police as intended.

As Senator Cash said when introducing her bill in the federal Parliament, it is important that we send the right signal, particularly to young people in this country who are likely to be influenced and often indoctrinated into radical extremism. This piece of legislation simply says there is no place in modern-day Victoria and modern-day Australia for the use of any Nazi symbol or gesture, and prohibiting the Nazi salute sends a very powerful message to any would-be extremists that that sort of behaviour we have seen lately, and too often lately, at many protests in Melbourne is completely unacceptable and that the full force of the law will be brought against those who attempt to do it.

I appreciate the opportunity to support this bill today and commend it to the house, and I thank all those who have spoken on it for their contributions, for the broad support in this place. I thank the member for Malvern the Shadow Attorney-General for moving his amendments that seek to strengthen this bill and show the importance of this piece of legislation sending a strong message that neo-Nazism simply has no place in Victoria or in Australia.

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (15:21): I rise to make a contribution on the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023. My electorate of Bentleigh is home to just over 5 per cent of Australia’s Jewish community, and right next door in the electorate of Caulfield is 20 per cent of Australia’s Jewish community. Together the Bentleigh and Caulfield electorates cover most of the City of Glen Eira, and the City of Glen Eira has Australia’s largest concentration of Jewish people. So

for that reason and that reason alone, this piece of legislation is very important to my constituents to say the least.

Eighteen years ago, when I was 19 years old, I was elected to the City of Glen Eira council, and that is when I got to know many members of our Jewish community but also got to be involved with a number of different Jewish community organisations. It was also when I first started to meet many, many different Holocaust survivors. Australia has the world's largest concentration of Holocaust survivors outside of Israel. It really did shock me, even as a 19-year-old, that there were people who would come into suburbs like Bentleigh or Caulfield or Elsternwick or Ormond or McKinnon, knowing that that is where many Holocaust survivors live, and spray-paint swastikas on public facilities in the hope that a Holocaust survivor on their morning walk would actually be confronted by a swastika. That is what happened when I received a call one morning from a very, very distressed Holocaust survivor. To Glen Eira council's credit, whenever this happens – and unfortunately it is an all-too-frequent occurrence – it is cleaned up straightaway, immediately. But it is absolutely unacceptable, disgraceful, indeed an evil act that these things occur. We cannot sit idly by as a government. We have to take action, and I am proud of the action that this government has taken to tackle antisemitism and to ensure that we continue to fight what was the most evil regime in human history. This bill I think is a strong statement of that leadership.

This bill prohibits the public display or performance of gestures used by the Nazi party. It builds on the previous bill that prohibited the public display of the Hakenkreuz and is a response to both the parliamentary inquiry into Victoria's anti-vilification protections and recent incidents involving Nazi symbols in the community. This bill sends a very clear message that Victorians do not tolerate hateful conduct towards our Jewish communities or other minority communities in Australia and empowers law enforcement to direct the removal of Nazi displays and impose penalties for non-compliance, because the Nazi salute is not just a gesture, it is a symbol of division and hatred that stands in stark contrast to the values that we hold so dear in Victoria and in Australia.

I am proud of our government's record on this matter. Our government's record is very significant indeed. For starters, as I have just said, we legislated Australia's first criminal ban on the display of Nazi hate symbols. We introduced mandatory Holocaust education in every secondary school so that our young people in every generation, especially with the passage of time when we lose our Holocaust survivors, learn the important lessons of the Holocaust. We adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism, educating non-Jewish people and providing a mechanism for instances of antisemitism to be reported and acted on in the workplace and at schools. We have a strong track record of investments, including \$1.5 million to improve security measures at the Beth Weizmann Jewish Community Centre. That community centre actually has more threats to it than the MCG – just let that sink in. It is a community centre. And most recently there was our election commitment to protect Victoria's Jewish communities from antisemitism and violence by providing \$900,000 over three years to the Jewish Community Security Group and our strategy to tackle antisemitism. So needless to say I am very proud of this government's record on these matters.

Like I think everybody else in this house, I never thought I would ever see Nazis performing a Nazi salute on the streets of Melbourne, but I also never thought I would see gallows rolled out on Spring Street. We have got to ask ourselves what has happened over the last 10 years. I mean, there has been Brexit, there has been the election of Trump, there has been the pandemic and there has been the attack on the US Capitol, and when we are going through such monumental changes and monumental shifts in the public discourse, what we need to counter some of that, what we need to counter people preying on the vulnerability of others, is leadership – not just leadership from politicians, from all of us in this chamber and from other legislatures around the world, but leadership from the media as well. The increased use of social media, the advent of social media, has meant there is a lot of misinformation and disinformation circulating on the internet. And how do you counter that – you make sure that the mainstream media are reporting facts. So not only do we need leadership in this house – and our government is showing leadership on this issue and has consistently – we need leadership from every

sensible person with a platform, with a megaphone. That also includes the media, because as the member for Kew just pointed out, ASIO chief Mike Burgess has acknowledged that far-right extremists in this country remain a persistent and resilient threat. We must be alive to this, and we must do what we can as legislators and as leaders in our communities to ensure that what we are doing is protecting everybody in this state and particularly protecting minorities.

It is no coincidence that when we see these displays they are usually attached to a demonstration on the front steps of Parliament where certain minorities are being targeted. That is absolutely disgraceful. You know, whenever I visit a citizenship ceremony – and I have been visiting citizenship ceremonies either as a councillor or as an MP over the last 18 years – I always say to new citizens that there are three things that set our country apart from the rest of the world: our social safety net, our Indigenous Australians and our multiculturalism. Despite all this, we are still the greatest example of multiculturalism in the world, and we must combat hate wherever we find it.

I have spent many, many hours at the Holocaust centre over in Elsternwick. I have been to Yad Vashem. I have also been to the site of what will be the world's newest Holocaust centre, and that is in Thessaloniki. Thessaloniki is Greece's second-largest city, and prior to the Second World War 50 per cent of the population in that city was Jewish. Ninety-five per cent of them were wiped out by the Nazis. They were marched to a town square. They were kept there for hours, forced to do degrading things and then marched to the train station and sent to the death camps. That train station has since been decommissioned, and a Holocaust museum will be built at that location. I am looking forward to travelling to Thessaloniki when it opens in a few years time, because learning about the community of Jewish people in Greece a few years ago did make me realise that you do not have to be Jewish to feel strongly about the Holocaust, because it impacted all of us. It impacted all of us, and these gestures of hate impact all of us and have no place in Victoria. I commend the bill to the house.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (15:31): I am delighted to rise and make a brief contribution on the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023. Having heard the member for Bentleigh speak about travelling overseas to see some of these places, I have not done that. I do wish to do that in the coming years because I think it is part of our history that we do need to understand better, although I spent three or four years at a school in Elsternwick, so I feel like I understand the Jewish community to some degree. But certainly the Holocaust and the issues that go with that I am certainly not fully across, and I would like to learn more about that history, because it is quite abhorrent. I am pleased that we are debating this bill today after various incidents that have occurred, some on the very front steps of this place, the people's place, the Parliament of Victoria, and I find it absolutely abhorrent that that can still continue. I have listened to the debate and was particularly impressed with the contributions by the member for Caulfield and the member for Box Hill.

We have heard that this bill will amend the Summary Offences Act 1966 to make the public display or performance of Nazi gestures an offence and to extend the application of the offence to public displays of Nazi symbols. Certainly, since the passing of the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Symbol Prohibition) Bill 2022 just last year, when we saw the law commence on 29 December, there have been several high-profile incidents, including protests, involving the use of the Nazi salute. It certainly highlighted that the existing law has not dealt with Nazi gestures adequately and so has led to this bill, the summary offences amendment bill 2023.

The bill's purpose is to make the public display or performance of actions or gestures that symbolise Nazi gestures an offence. In this day and age it is disappointing that we still need to introduce legislation to stop these activists from promoting and partaking in antisemitic salutes or actions, which are appalling, and I do hope the government has thought this legislation through fully, because here we are again I suppose modifying or fixing up some of the rushed legislation from last year. We see again that legislation that does get rushed through this Parliament does not completely solve the problems it was designed to, but I certainly do hope that this legislation will put a full stop behind the issues around the Nazi salute and gestures. With that said, let us hope that this is the last piece of legislation we need to stop these extremists from performing these cruel and callous acts.

The legislation will see appropriate penalties for such displays, being 120 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months or both. There are some exemptions of course when the display or performance is engaged in reasonably and in good faith for genuine academic, artistic, educational or scientific purposes or in making or publishing a fair and accurate report for an event or matter of public interest; where the display of the Nazi symbol was engaged in reasonably and in good faith for a genuine cultural or religious purpose; or where the display of the Nazi symbol was engaged in reasonably and in good faith in opposition to fascism, Nazism, neo-Nazism or other related ideologies.

Again, I say it is appalling that Holocaust survivors need to be subjected to this sort of behaviour anywhere, and particularly here in Victoria. I think that the stance we are taking here today symbolises that united stance of Victorians to stand up to and stamp out bullies and rid our state of arrogant people who simply cannot see the difference between right or wrong. We have certainly seen a significant step in this area in recent weeks. Some of the details included in the bill are that:

A police officer may give a direction to a person to remove from display a Nazi symbol or Nazi gesture if the police officer reasonably believes the person is committing an offence against section 41K(1) ...

A police officer may give a direction to a person to remove from display a Nazi symbol or Nazi gesture ...

It is fair to say that this bill has been introduced at a time of increasing concern about the public display of neo-Nazi and antisemitic behaviour. The Liberals and Nationals have supported the banning of the public display of the Nazi swastika for some time, and I am certainly pleased to stand here today to support this legislation. I do hope all corners are covered under this legislation, particularly in relation to the police powers and the police directions. There should be power for a police officer to direct a person to cease performing a Nazi gesture in a public place. I do hope that the amendments that have been made by the member for Malvern are duly considered by the Parliament. Whether it is here in this place or between houses, we have seen a significant change with the previous Premier stepping down, and it is time to tell now if this new broom will take on board some of the ideas and work together with the opposition to make sure that we get the best outcome. This is legislation that we are all supporting, that I think everybody in this house is supporting, and I do hope they work with us to make sure that we get it absolutely right, whether it is here or in the other place.

In summary, it is important that every member of this house understands and supports this legislation to stamp out this behaviour. There is no place in society or in any community to support this behaviour, and the full force of law should be used against activists who break these laws. The Jewish community deserve better, and they deserve to know that those who break the law will be dealt with, and not just with a slap in the face with a wet lettuce but with the full force of the law, to make sure that they are accountable if they continue to do Nazi gestures and salutes. Again, I hope the Victorian government considers our amendments to make sure that we get this absolutely right. We cannot ignore this behaviour any longer, where extremists do not have the integrity or the common courtesy or the common decency to understand the feelings of the Jewish community and other communities and that their foolish games are hurtful. We need to make laws like this to stop their foolish behaviour.

Even in Wangaratta in regional Victoria, in my electorate, we saw earlier this year people had been out late at night with spray paint, painting swastikas all over cars. It is not to be stood for, and there was an outcry from our local community saying this is wrong. These are the sorts of steps we need to take to make sure that we follow through with what we say. These laws will assist in how police can arrest and charge these fools. It is not lost on me that there is unanimous support in this place, and I certainly hope that this gets a speedy passage, with amendments, in the other place.

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (15:38): It is with a sense of vexation that I rise to speak in support of this bill to ban the Nazi salute in Victoria – vexation because in our modern multicultural state, a state which prides itself on equality and respect, it is nevertheless apparent that we are again having to strengthen our laws simply to ensure Victorians can live free of bigotry, hate and violence. Last year I was proud to speak in support of the ban on Nazi symbols, a historic moment for our government and a first for Australia as together we stood up to send a clear message to those who seek

to divide, intimidate and harm our peaceful way of life. Together we said to people who would brandish the Nazi swastika, ‘You don’t get to show off your hatred. You don’t get to make others fearful. You don’t get to glorify violence and tyranny and genocide – not in this state.’

At the time I related the story of my father-in-law Joel Margolis. Joel was a Jewish boy living in Warsaw with his family when Germany invaded Poland, and his narrow escape from the Holocaust meant that he was ultimately able to migrate to Australia, make an extraordinary contribution to medical research and become a dad to my husband Julian. His story is part of the history of our family, and when our girls are old enough to understand, my husband Jules and I will take the time to explain to them how their grandfather fled his home to escape a hate so strong it could not even see him as human. Around two-thirds of Europe’s Jewish population died during the Holocaust – 6 million people, many in extermination camps or in mass shootings, many after months or years of forced labour, torture and deprivation. As others have noted, millions more were persecuted and killed based on their ethnicity, their religion, their political beliefs and their sexuality. That darkness can never and should never be forgotten. When it rears its ugly head, its hateful head, in our communities there is only one way we can respond, and that is to stand up and say no, because racism is an insidious evil in whatever form it takes. Whether subtle or overt, it erodes our humanity. And as individuals, as a collective and as legislators it is our moral responsibility to speak up and stand against racism, discrimination and injustice when we see it.

This Parliament has been at the forefront of passing legislation that affirms all Victorians’ rights to feel accepted, safe, free to be who they are and free to speak their truth. Whether it is through our ban on conversion therapy, whether it is through Safe Schools, whether it is through adoption equality, treaty or stronger anti-discrimination laws, Labor has made it a pillar of our values and our identity to acknowledge past trauma, stand up against intimidation and hate and stare down the evil ideologies that seek to scapegoat minorities. Some of this may seem abstract, but it is not. Others have spoken already about the horrific scenes outside our Parliament when a cowardly group of neo-Nazis decided to target the transgender community with their hateful acts. Immediately following these events our government denounced these behaviours in the strongest terms and committed to expanding our nation-leading legislation banning the Nazi Hakenkreuz to include the Nazi salute. That is exactly what we are doing, because every part of our state and every person in our state should be safe from bigotry and hateful ideologies, and what happened last year was not an isolated incident.

We have seen the neo-Nazis show up at trans story times. We have seen them scrawl antisemitic messages across our city. We have seen them mixing and blurring with the anti-vax movement to sow disinformation. Close to home, in my electorate of Northcote, we have experienced the anger and audacity of these extremist groups firsthand. In 2021, 31 anti-vax protesters were arrested for rioting through Northcote Plaza, terrorising families and children, workers and shoppers. During my election campaign, billboards across the electorate were defaced with Nazi symbols and words, an affront to our very democracy. And just a few weeks ago a group of neo-Nazis armed with knives, clad in black and wearing balaclavas took it upon themselves to violently descend on a cafe in High Street, Thornbury. These are brazen acts of intimidation, and they are disturbingly on the rise not just in Australia but across the world. We cannot allow this kind of fascism to take root in our society.

ASIO continues to assess Australia’s terrorism threat level. Disturbingly they report:

Ideologically motivated violent extremism – and particularly nationalist and racist violent extremism – remains a threat to Australian security and its adherents will continue to engage in offensive behaviours ... ASIO remains concerned about the potential for these groups to radicalise individuals ...

particularly through the use of social media. There is the risk that these individuals can then go on to undertake attacks, potentially without warning. We may not be privy to it, but we know that encrypted channels buzz daily with the divisive rhetoric of the far-right movement, drawing more and more people into their vortex of hate. Heartbreakingly, the individuals being targeted for radicalisation are often some of the most disadvantaged in our society, and this vulnerability is deliberately preyed on as they stoke feelings of disillusionment and anger. Around the world we are seeing these highly organised far-

right movements gain traction and start shaping the policies of the traditionally mainstream right. It is happening in the US, in the UK and in more and more European countries, and Australia is not immune. Victoria is not immune.

So I am pleased to see the bipartisan support from the opposition for this bill and the dignity of the debate today. This bill bans the public display or performance of any symbol or gesture used by the Nazi party and its paramilitary arms. It forms part of a package of anti-vilification reforms to address hate speech and hate conduct in Victoria, reforms which have been developed in response to the parliamentary inquiry into Victoria's anti-vilification protections. The abhorrent performance of the Nazi salute has no place in Victoria and has indeed been banned in numerous other countries with the understanding of the weight these gestures carry and the history they evoke.

This bill explicitly prohibits the Nazi salute alongside the existing prohibition on the Hakenkreuz. Despite what the member for Malvern argued in his speech and with his amendments, the bill does not require an explicit clause to give the police the power to direct someone to cease the Nazi gesture. This is because, by virtue of creating an offence to perform this gesture, the police have the ability to intervene in the performance of what will be an offence in action, just as the police are able to intervene in other offences in action, whether that be a carjacking, public exposure or any other offence you can think of. They will have the power to ask a person to cease and will further have the power to arrest that person and charge them.

I do want to note, as I did when we banned the public display of the Hakenkreuz, that there will be a range of exceptions to the offence which relate to genuine cultural, religious, educational and artistic purposes. This is also not intended to capture innocent gestures like simply hailing a cab. Context and intent will be important.

We wish that making these laws was not necessary, but beyond that wish is our resolve to always tackle antisemitism, hatred and racism head-on. I never want to see the kinds of behaviours we saw at the front of Parliament again – shameful and cowardly public demonstrations of hate and bigotry designed only to cause fear, pain and division. If this bill goes some way to preventing that and preventing the harm it inflicts on our community, then it is worthy of our support.

In the minutes I have left I want to thank our parliamentary colleagues who have stood up today to speak in favour of this bill. It is not easy subject matter, and for those with personal stories and connections to the Holocaust or indeed any form of genocide it takes a toll. The impact of traumatic events in history does not go away. They reverberate through time, through generations and across continents. When those experiences are weaponised against people, when they are used to intimidate and silence and tell parts of our community that they are wrong simply for being who they are, there is scarcely anything more vicious. That is why this bill is so important. It sends a message in Victoria that we will not accept any part of our community being threatened, taunted and vilified just for being who they are. The diversity of our state is our greatest asset. Our peaceful way of life is precious. Our democracy is precious. Authoritarianism and fascism have no place here. I commend this bill to the house.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (15:48): I am pleased to contribute on this bill today. It has been quite a day listening to the contributions from other speakers, especially the member for Caulfield, the member for Box Hill and the member for Bulleen, whose contribution was quite amazing. It is a little bit sad in one sense that we have to talk about this today, but unfortunately in our community we have a certain very small population that believe the Nazi salute and the Nazi symbol are relevant in our community in the year 2023. It is pleasing to know that both sides of this Parliament have turned around and said it is not relevant anymore in our community – not one bit. It was an absolute disgrace that they stood on the steps of Parliament and did that Nazi salute, and it was an absolute disgrace because this is the people's Parliament.

This is also a place where we work. When we look around our chambers – this chamber and the upper house – and we look at the people in those rooms, there are a lot of people from different backgrounds

and different ethnicities. We all here contributing to making Victoria better. It does not matter what side of the chamber you are on, that is what we are trying to do. But it is not only the houses of Parliament. Look at the people that work in Strangers Corridor, that work in the cafe, and our clerks and our cleaners – it is this whole building. It was an insult to the place where we work, but it was also an insult to the people of Victoria, because this is the people's house.

I am very happy with this bill coming through. As I said, I cannot believe I have to talk about this because of the absolutely gutless and cowardly actions of a few individuals – and they are gutless; they are the most gutless people I have ever seen. They stand up there. They have got their face masks on. As the member for Malvern said, they are in their little black pyjamas. They have no relevance in today's society at all.

You can see the passion in the contributions today from everyone and how it has touched people, especially those with Jewish backgrounds. My grandfather left Italy in the 1930s – my Italian grandfather. Obviously he was Italian – he came from Italy. He left Italy. He hated Mussolini with a passion because of his association with Nazi Germany. He knew that the writing was on the wall. The member for Bulleen said it very well earlier: we had so many people come to Australia in that time for safety, to have a better life and to leave that rubbish behind. The racism and the antisemitism – they wanted to escape that. So to have that appear now outside this Parliament is an absolute disgrace. Every time somebody puts up that symbol, every time somebody does that salute, it is an absolute insult to the Jewish community – to the 6 million lives lost and the 1 million children as well. It was an absolutely disgusting time in the history of this state. I cannot fathom what it is like to visit the museums that people were talking about. I will be honest: I have not visited them yet, but I will. I think it is part of our responsibility as MPs to learn as much as we can about other people's faith and history, and I will visit these museums that have been mentioned today. I do not know how I will go with the actual visit, because it sounds absolutely horrific.

I would like to mention the amendments that the member for Malvern has put forward in good faith to strengthen the bill and to make it a better bill. That is what we are here today to discuss – making this a better bill for all Victorians.

I am pleased I have got the Minister for Police in the room today. I would like to mention this: maybe if we brought back the move-on powers for Victoria Police, we could move that rubbish off the steps of Parliament. We would not have to look at it anymore. So I suggest to the Minister for Police: have a look at that to strengthen this bill as well, so if anybody is out there using the Nazi salute, the police can move them on. Give them those powers back. They were powerless on the day that they were on the steps of Parliament. They could not move them on. Maybe the Minister for Police, who is sitting there, has noted that down as something that we can improve on.

It is interesting now that nearly 50 per cent of people in Victoria have a parent that was born overseas, both parents were born overseas or they were born overseas. It is roughly 50 per cent of our population, and it really is incumbent on us to protect our population. As community leaders it is incumbent on us to stamp out racism every time we see it. Every time racism raises its head we should stamp it out.

This bill has my full support, it has our full support, and I would expect nothing less from our side of the chamber. My leader has just joined me here today, and as I said, when we look around the chamber and we see the different ethnicities around the chamber, it is a great place to work, because it makes Victoria a better place. I agree with the member for Bentleigh when he says that in Victoria, Melbourne in particular is one of the best multicultural cities in the world, and it is by far the best multicultural city in the world. I go to a lot of multicultural events, representing the Leader of the Opposition, and it is a fantastic city for multiculturalism. That is what we have to protect. What we have to protect is what we have created in this city – not only Labor governments but Liberal governments as well – over a long period of time. That is what we need to protect, and there is no room in our society today for what has been going on lately, especially this year with the rise in these pyjama-clad morons, as the member for Malvern likes to put it, and I could not agree with him more. They are pyjama-clad

morons, and they are that gutless they cannot even take a face mask off. But it is incumbent on us to stamp out racism every time we see it.

Just in closing, I would like to say that I think the government should really have a look at the member for Malvern's amendments. He has put those amendments forward to strengthen the bill and for no other reason. It has been great to see the contributions from both sides, although some of the stories today were I must admit quite moving and very hard to listen to. I am very proud that we are supporting this bill, and I commend this bill to the house.

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (15:57): I am extremely proud to rise today to join the many speakers before me on the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023. It is a very important bill, one that creates a criminal offence and prohibits the display and performance of Nazi symbols and gestures in Victoria. It is fitting that this is one of the first pieces of legislation that has come before the house under the Allan Labor government. I would like to say that I am even prouder to have worked alongside many of my colleagues here who have direct or indirect connections with the genocide and with the atrocities that happened. I would like to concur with the trauma and the legacy they leave, coming from both of my parents surviving the killing fields not long ago. They never talk about the experience that they went through during their teen years, but I have listened to many of the contributions here and read a little bit about what happened in the past, and I see many similarities with the experience that they went through. That is why it is a very, very important bill and a bill that I support wholeheartedly.

During my time in the past Parliament the Legal and Social Issues Committee listened to public hearings about this very important issue, and it took me a very, very long time. I remember at one of the public hearings that many of us committee members needed to take some breaks to hear directly from members of the community, the Jewish community, that called upon our government in terms of showing leadership to put a stop to this. Not long ago, I think in March this year, coming to the city and walking past Parliament House and seeing those protesters on the steps of Parliament, it confirmed to me that this bill is the bill that we need to show leadership, and I am very glad to be part of this Allan government once again to contribute and to speak on this bill, which we all –

The SPEAKER: The time has come for me to interrupt business for the matter of public importance.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Matters of public importance

Government performance

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

That this house notes that the Premier takes over the biggest state debt in the country and has a ministerial legacy of waste, blowouts and mismanagement, further noting:

- (1) Victoria's debt is larger than New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania combined;
- (2) the Premier has overseen nearly \$30 billion in major project blowouts; and
- (3) the Premier was responsible for the expensive and humiliating Commonwealth Games cancellation.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (16:01): Last week the Andrews era came to an end, and it was not a moment too soon. We had seen a Premier who had grown tired of the responsibilities of office and wanted to spend more time on Australia's most luxurious golf courses with his rich mates and enjoying long lunches with Australia's elite and a government he had led that had lost touch with the community that depended on it to deliver the hospitals, the schools, the roads, the child protection services and the justice system they need the Victorian government to prepare for them and to deliver for them so they can live the lives of opportunity and promise that this state ought to give them. So it was fitting that the Premier left, and for a brief moment we thought things might

change. We thought that with a new leader, despite all of the weight of the incompetence, the corruption and the waste of that government, the departure of the former Premier would provide an opportunity for someone to come along and say, 'That was not good enough for the people.'

The people of Victoria need something better. They need their finances looked after, because when you mess up, when you cannot manage the people's finances, who pays – the people pay.

David Southwick interjected.

John PESUTTO: And taxpayers will be asked to pay more, that is for sure, member for Caulfield and Deputy Leader of the Opposition. But it is people who pay the price of this. For a brief moment my colleagues and I on this side of the chamber thought maybe they would get the message that here was an opportunity for a fresh start, new leadership, a new vision. But what do we have? As we waved goodbye, as groups of people right across our state cheered when they heard the news that the former Premier was leaving – and cheer they did; we were at the Melbourne show, and as we walked through people were giving us high fives and cheering. It was like the government of the wicked witch had left.

A member: Ding, dong!

John PESUTTO: Indeed.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask members to cease interjecting so that the Leader of the Opposition does not have to yell to be heard.

Juliana Addison interjected.

The SPEAKER: Enough, member for Wendouree! You will be removed from the chamber.

John PESUTTO: What a loss! As we waited with anticipation last week, what would emerge – a new start, fresh leadership? No. What we got was the same government, as tired as the old government, as incompetent as the old government and, I am sure we will see, as corrupt as the old government was. How do we know this? Well, the person who was the copilot in every single debacle, every single blowout, became the Premier. The former Deputy Premier, now Premier, runs the show. And what did she give Victorians? She gave them blowouts on major projects and she gave them the Commonwealth Games debacle, all of which I will talk about in a moment.

It seems that they all thought the principles of promotion that most Victorians understand – do a good job, show you can deliver, fulfil your responsibilities to the people – would be rewarded, but no, what we saw was the person who most singularly represents all of the failures of the government of which she was a part rise to the top. We saw the division that will now characterise this government on the very day when we had the humiliating spectacle of the former Premier and the current Premier having to sit outside the Labor party room.

David Southwick: Working it out.

John PESUTTO: Working it out indeed. They would not know what to do without the former Premier in charge. And then after a last-minute, humiliating compromise we have the Premier sitting there and a Deputy Premier who does not believe he should be sitting there as the Deputy Premier. So the person who lays claim to being the most incompetent person in the former government is now the most senior.

But it does not just stop with that. This new Premier has shown a clear preference for ensuring that other people who have not performed can rise to senior positions. Take the member for Essendon, for example – 'dividend Danny', as some people would like to call him – a person who is more concerned about his share portfolio than his ministerial portfolio, a person whose greatest single claim to fame in this place as a minister was delivering WorkCover with cumulative operating deficits of over a quarter of a billion dollars and the minister who was responsible for ensuring that the scheme that was there

to support injured workers broke and then thought he was doing us all a favour by saying 'WorkCover's broke, and I'm here to fix it'. Maybe he does have expertise in how to fix something he broke, but how can you reward this person by giving this person the same job that the Premier had and expecting him to do anything differently? This is a guy who is plainly incompetent. He only had a couple of jobs and he fluffed them both. He should have been sacked months ago. Any government with even half the integrity of a good government would have said someone with such rampant and obvious conflicts of interest could not remain around the cabinet table. How do we do this? When was this okay in Victoria? We want a government that leads by example and sets the highest standards.

And then it is not just dividend Danny, it is Harriet Shing in the other place.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member to refer to members by their correct titles.

John PESUTTO: The dividend minister – in addition to the dividend minister, we have Harriet Shing in the other place – a person whose claim to fame is that she and her office interfered with an IBAC investigation and the matters of the Integrity Oversight Commission. And what have we done? We have given her housing.

So let us look at these two people. Minister Pearson, the dividend minister, has been given charge of Victoria's infrastructure portfolio – tens of billions of dollars under his watch. How good do we all feel about that – that this person is now in charge of the portfolio that the Premier herself blew out? He is in charge of that. Minister Shing has been put in charge of the housing statement – the housing statement that had more blank pages in it, it seems, than pages with content, when that statement was released.

Jess Wilson: Lots of pretty pictures in it.

John PESUTTO: Yes, lots of pretty pictures, as my colleague the member for Kew says.

So we see a government that have inverted the KPIs – the worse you do, the better you do. That is the motto of this new government. We have a government that as well as being tired and old and corrupt is divided. We saw that yesterday when the Treasurer went out and announced two taxes and the Premier did not know about it. She did not know the taxes were being announced. The Assistant Treasurer said, 'I have no idea.' Well, we kind of all knew that, but for him to say that to the press was something surprising, because as divided as the government is we did not realise it was that divided. And it is a problem. It is a problem because it is a government, clearly, of chaos. It cannot manage the program going forward, and even the former Premier – do not take my word for it – does not believe in this government. We see him quoted in recent days, and what did he say? He said something like this: 'They're nothing without me'. And how right he was.

Michael O'Brien interjected.

John PESUTTO: We have to remain parliamentary, the member for Malvern will know. 'They're nothing without me' – and in a way he is right, they are.

We have seen it today in question time and we have seen it in recent days – a government that is chaotic, a government that is divided. I say to the people of Victoria: you deserve better than this. Let us look at what we have got. We have got a Premier now who does not understand how to manage people's money. She is in charge of the economy, with her colleagues. Debt in this state remains the highest in the country – still more than New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania combined. We have the worst credit rating. S&P and Moody's both have us as the worst state in the country, and that matters because our interest bill at the moment is \$15 million a day.

Jess Wilson interjected.

John PESUTTO: Am I correct, member for Kew?

Jess Wilson: Yes.

John PESUTTO: And it will climb to \$22 million in 2026–27. And what does that mean? That means on rough calculation – let us take the way you cost things on the back of a coaster and just say \$15 million a day is the equivalent, roughly, of four schools a week. Four schools a week get squandered up against the wall because that side over there cannot manage money – \$15 million a day.

Jess Wilson interjected.

John PESUTTO: That is right. As my colleague points out, the same person who delivered this catastrophic financial outcome for the state remains in charge of the budget. The budget in May was a horror budget; we know that. This ‘COVID debt levy’ is just this government going up to businesses who are already doing it tough – trying to support their workers and trying to support their families and their communities – and just shaking people down. It says, we need more cash out of you.

How do you do it? You whack up payroll tax by over \$4 billion over the next four years. You talk about wanting to be there for renters, for those of you who are not spending their time with Australia’s elite on their luxurious golf courses and in the best restaurants – that is what you all do, you hypocrites. But the people who pay are the people who need the most support. You talk about supporting renters, but then you go and hurt them. You hurt them by increasing land tax. Who pays for that? Renters pay for that.

Darren Cheeseman interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for South Barwon! You will cease interjecting or you will be removed.

John PESUTTO: Over \$4 billion extra you will squeeze – not from landlords necessarily and not from big builders. That \$4 billion plus that you are going to secure out of that land tax increase will be paid by renters – Victoria’s most vulnerable people.

If that was not bad enough, the big kicker is WorkCover increases from dividend minister Pearson. Do you realise that your WorkCover increases will rip out \$18 billion? Let me repeat this: the WorkCover hit on employers will raise \$18 billion that is stolen from workers – \$18 billion over 10 years and \$4 billion over the forward estimates. So it goes up exponentially.

The schools tax is just a culture war attack on choice. So you are hitting aspiration, you are hitting enterprise, and then you are saying to families who just want to send their kids to a school of their choosing, ‘We’re going to hit you for it, and we’re going to demonise you for it’. What possible justification can you have for an education tax like this? Again it will be paid for by the most vulnerable, because a lot of our independent schools, in fact most of them, particularly those who are in a position to charge higher fees – you know what they do. They do an enormous amount for the community. They are registered as not for profits, so they are not there for profit purposes. Thirdly, they deliver about 30 to 40 per cent of their enrolments to people who need fee help. Now, if the schools cannot do that – if financially they are not in a position to cop that and they have to cut programs, particularly those community-based and charitable programs – then who pays? The most vulnerable – the people you hypocritically pretend to want to support and do not. It is all hypocrisy – a joke.

The vacant land tax we had announced yesterday – as if anything was going to be different. All this Premier has done is not waste any time. She is getting straight down to it – ‘Let’s whack up taxes’. Mike Zorbas, the CEO of the Property Council of Australia, said:

Here’s a tip for other states: don’t do a Victoria.

So here is the Premier’s first achievement: we have made it into the dictionary with ‘don’t do a Victoria’. That is something from an industry stakeholder that you would not expect. The Real Estate Institute of Victoria calls the tax disgusting, because the most vulnerable will pay for it. The Premier, having overseen the major projects, is most responsible for the blowouts.

Sam Groth interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Nepean, you are not in your place!

John PESUTTO: And then there is the Commonwealth Games debacle. Let me just finish by talking about the Commonwealth Games debacle, the most humiliating debacle at the hands of the Premier. What did we see today? As an omen of what is to come, of all the chaos and the division which even you all know about in your heart of hearts – the division and the incompetence. We had a Premier come out this morning and say, ‘I can’t recall when I first learned that lawyers were engaged.’

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for South Barwon, you can leave the chamber for 20 minutes.

Member for South Barwon withdrew from chamber.

John PESUTTO: Obviously they went around and scurried through all the documents, and she came out here in humiliating fashion and said ‘I was advised on the 14th’. Well, to all members present, including those members across the chamber, this will not end. There is more to come out, and we will see that what the Premier said puts her at odds with what she told this house and what she told the Victorian people – completely misleading.

I will finish on this: Victorians deserve better. Victorians deserve leadership and a fresh vision for our state, one that puts you first – your schools, your health, the roads you drive on, the services you depend on. Victorians deserve better, and they are not getting it. This change of leadership is nothing more than a new coat of paint on an old, dilapidated house. We will see the same problems, and even those members opposite can feel it in their waters. You know it is over. For the next three years this government is going to hunker down, but we are going to see more of the division and chaos. Victoria deserves better. We will continue to fight on their behalf and provide the scrutiny that is needed to keep this rotten, tired and incompetent government, as old as the last one, in check.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the next speaker, I ask the house to come to order. If a member has the call, I expect them to be able to be heard in silence. There is too much noise in the chamber.

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (16:17): Well, that was pretty excitable, wasn’t it? It was pretty excitable, but there is more excitement out of the roof seals, I think, than the seals on the front bench. I will just say this: if you have tuned in from home and you have maybe turned the screen off because watching it and listening to it at once was a bit too much, I will describe the scene for you. There was a bit of backslapping, the same sort of backslapping we saw when they won a race against no-one in Warrandyte. Warrandyte was a one-horse race, and every time a journo asked him, ‘Why are you so down in the polls?’ – there was a poll recently that had them going backwards – it was like, ‘Oh, but Warrandyte’. This is a seat they have held consistently since I was two years old. That is when they won the seat of Warrandyte. That is how long they have held it. But this self-congratulation over winning the seat of Warrandyte – over retaining Warrandyte – just shows the depths they have plunged.

Normally when you do something for a long time, you get better at it. These people have been in opposition a very, very long time, and they just get worse and worse and worse. The Leader of the Opposition reckons he was at the Melbourne Royal and people were cheering when Dan retired. Well, if that is the case, it has not translated into support for them, because they just get worse; 2014, 2018, 2022 – they just get worse. You even lost your seat in 2018. You are the worst opposition in Victoria’s history. You are the worst opposition in Australia, each and every one of you.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would ask members not to use the term ‘you’. It is a reflection on the Chair.

Nick STAIKOS: I am not surprised that they are the worst opposition, because when they were in government for that one term, they were the worst government. They did not do anything. After the

first 100 days of our government, a member of the press gallery asked the then Premier Dan Andrews, 'Can you keep up this pace?' I can guarantee you they never asked Ted Baillieu that question, because that government was characterised by inertia, inertia that we had never seen before. I mean, what did they do? They did not complete any level crossing removals in those four years. They dumped the Metro Tunnel, which we will be opening a year ahead of schedule. They took the axe to TAFE. But I tell you what, speaking of TAFE, after the contribution that we just heard from the Leader of the Opposition, I reckon we need to make opposition a free TAFE course, because I am absolutely concerned about the skills crisis, the greatest skills crisis in Victoria we see each and every day – and it is on the other side of the chamber.

This is probably the most egregious example of the neglect of those opposite when they were in government: they presided over the highest unemployment rate on the mainland. That was absolutely shameful, because there were less people experiencing the dignity of work under that government. Under our government we have historically low unemployment. We got to work straightaway when we came to government.

All that this matter of public importance is about is opposing the major projects that are setting Victoria up for the future. Let us not forget that by the end of this decade we are going to overtake Sydney as Australia's largest capital city. By the 2050s we are going to be the size of London, and we need transport infrastructure befitting a great city of the world. And those of us on this side of the house believe that Melbourne is a great city of the world. Those opposite want to rock Victoria to sleep, because that is what Liberals do – they do not do anything, and they criticise others who get into government and want to make a difference for the people that they represent.

So we got to work straightaway. We are removing 110 level crossings. Seventy-two of them are already gone. We have got more to do. We are making a number of train lines level crossing free, including the Frankston line. That is so important in the lead-up to the opening of the Metro Tunnel because it will add so much capacity to the network. I was very fortunate that the first three level crossings to be removed were in the Bentleigh electorate. Do you think we got any support from those opposite? Did they support it? They said, 'Of course we support level crossing removals.' But then I was alarmed to find Georgie Crozier, with a clipboard and a petition, marching up and down Centre Road opposing our level crossing removals – 'Of course we support level crossing removals, but sign this petition. But no, we support level crossings – of course we do.' And then there was David Davis on the Dandenong line. The term he coined was 'sky rail'. We loved that term so much we adopted it. Yes, we are building sky rail around Melbourne, and the communities there could not be more thankful. We are removing level crossings. We have also been removing Liberal MPs like no government before us.

I will move on to the Metro Tunnel. The Metro Tunnel is going to be a game changer when it comes to commuting around Melbourne, because it will connect our train system, our rail system, to parts of the city currently not connected by rail. I think in particular of the University of Melbourne and the hospital precinct at Parkville, which as of 2025 will finally have a rail connection. We have been down to have a look at the progress of those wonderful new stations. I was down at Town Hall station with a number of colleagues recently. I have been to see Arden station as well. This is going to transform Melbourne. Those opposite opposed the Metro Tunnel when they were in government. In fact, in government, as I said earlier, they dumped the Metro Tunnel.

This Metro Tunnel is going to change the way we commute. Just in my local community, the Frankston line currently does not go through the existing city loop, but because the Dandenong line will go through the new Metro Tunnel it will mean that the Frankston line – and Pakenham, member for Pakenham – can resume services into the existing city loop tunnel and it will mean more frequent services, and that is something that our community does welcome. It is only possible because this government is building the Metro rail tunnel and is removing 110 level crossings. It is growing our network, creating capacity in our network. And who is responsible for all of that – the current Premier of Victoria. She does not deserve a motion like this. She deserves a simple 'Thank you', frankly,

because it is Premier Allan who is building this state and this wonderful, great city of the world for the future – and it will be the size of London in the 2050s.

Now I turn to the Suburban Rail Loop. We hear a lot from those opposite about the SRL. I am really proud of the Suburban Rail Loop as a project. It will actually start in the electorate of Sandringham, member for Sandringham. It will start in Cheltenham, adjacent to the border that we share. That is also going to be a game changer because a great city of the world like Melbourne needs a transport system befitting a great city of the world. If you have been to cities like London or Tokyo, you would know why Melbourne needs the Suburban Rail Loop. If you look at some of the tangible, practical benefits that this SRL will bring, for starters, it will finally connect Australia's largest university – Monash University – to rail. When Monash University was built in the 1960s, it was one of a number of megaprojects in the 1960s. There was always an intention to connect it to rail, and it has taken this government to have the vision to actually get it done. I thought to myself, 'If you lived in Cheltenham – let's say you lived in the member for Sandringham's part of Cheltenham – and you needed to take public transport to Monash University today, how would you do it?' So I went on the app, and at that point it told me –

Brad Rowswell: The 631.

Nick STAIKOS: No, at that point it told me that the quickest way would be to take the train to Bentleigh station and to get on the 703 and go to Monash University. I timed myself – it took me an hour. Clayton is not in the middle of nowhere, it is a nearby suburb to Cheltenham. But when the Suburban Rail Loop is built, a train ride from Cheltenham to Monash University on the Suburban Rail Loop will take just 11 minutes. From 1 hour to 11 minutes – this is exactly the sort of tangible benefit that this will bring. In terms of Suburban Rail Loop East, the first stage of the project, it will not just connect Monash University, it will also connect Deakin University and Box Hill TAFE. This is truly a game changer, and we support it. It is a pity those opposite do not, but it does not really matter because they are not relevant to what we do. The Suburban Rail Loop was endorsed by the Victorian community at the 2018 election and at the 2022 election.

We have been hearing from this temporary Leader of the Opposition. I do not think he has long to go. He is someone who gets booed by his own party members. He is currently getting sued. Have you ever heard of a leader so hated by his own party members as the current Leader of the Opposition? I tell you what: I have been attending state Labor conferences for the last 20 years, and I have never seen a leader of the Labor Party booed by the state conference. This was something completely out of this world. This is an absolute rabble of an opposition. Now there is not one member breathing down his neck, there are two. It will be sooner rather than later that the Leader of the Opposition packs his bags. I am going to ring up John Kennedy and ask him to make a comeback, because I reckon Hawthorn are regretting some very poor choices at the last election.

This government is investing in these major projects that are setting Victoria up for the future – a future of growth – and at the same time we are making sure that we are leveraging that investment to create jobs and opportunities for Victorians. I have always been proud that under our government 10 per cent of all labour hours worked on these major projects are being worked by engineering cadets, trainees and apprentices. If you visit any government project site, you will meet some of these young people getting their first go – getting their start – on these government projects, and we are proud of that. It is not just cadets and trainees and apprentices. We have a number of First Nations Victorians working on our level crossing removals, for instance, something we are also very proud of. We have a number of ex-service men and women working on our major projects. We have got a record number of women working in construction as well. That is all thanks to our government, because the central mission of this government has been to provide jobs and opportunities to Victorians.

Under the last government not only did they not invest in anything, not only did they not build anything, not only did they preside over the highest unemployment rate on the mainland, they also took the axe to TAFE. We made TAFE free. We have got more than 70 free TAFE courses. On that,

I am really, really proud that one of the most popular TAFE courses at the moment is the diploma of nursing. At the moment in Victoria thanks to our government you can do your diploma of nursing for a year and then move on to the bachelor of nursing, both for free because we are investing in more nurses for this state. We are investing in more teachers for this state as well with the recent announcement.

In the minute I have got left I do also want to mention the housing statement. We are going to ensure that 800,000 additional homes are built over the next 10 years. There is nothing more important than having a roof over your head, and that builds on the government's Big Housing Build, because without the dignity of having a roof over your head you do not have any hope of training, of attaining greater skills or of getting a stable, secure job.

This government under Premier Allan is making the right investments to ensure that all Victorians have the opportunities that they deserve, and we are doing that without the support of this absolute rabble of an opposition. But I tell you what, we do not need their support, because we are here in great numbers, and that is because we have been endorsed time and time again by the people of Victoria.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (16:32): I rise to support the matter of public importance that has been proposed by the member for Hawthorn, the Leader of the Opposition in this house:

That this house notes that the Premier takes over the biggest state debt in the country and has a ministerial legacy of waste, blowouts and mismanagement, further noting:

- (1) Victoria's debt is larger than New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania combined;
- (2) the Premier has overseen nearly \$30 billion in major project blowouts; and
- (3) the Premier was responsible for the expensive and humiliating Commonwealth Games cancellation.

In history there are moments when people remember where they were when those particular moments happened, like when man walked on the moon – when Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. People remember where they were when that moment happened. Those that were there when the Berlin Wall, which was an atrocity in Eastern Europe, came down, they remember where they were when the Berlin Wall came down. For those that were Elvis fans, they remember where they were when tragically Elvis Presley died. For a lot of us, we remember where we were when Daniel Andrews resigned. For us, as the Leader of the Opposition said, we were at the Melbourne Show at a show lunch, and the rapturous applause that came through when the MC said 'I've got a message that Daniel Andrews has resigned' shocked people. It shocked the MC that Daniel had resigned. But it was not just here in Victoria. I had a mate that was in Sydney at a business conference up there, and in Sydney when that motion came through there was rapturous applause, because other states understand how we lived under the heel of the Andrews government in this particular state.

Everyone in Victoria was relieved that the Premier actually resigned. There was a slim sliver of a chance where we thought: a new Premier, a new start, things might actually be different. I said that at the press conference with the Leader of the Opposition after the former Premier resigned: there is a chance for a reset here in Victoria. But we have seen, one week in, no reset. It is business as usual. It is more taxes. The first two big announcements were two new taxes coming in. 'We're going to spend the money on the Suburban Rail Loop. We're going to keep spending on projects that are already over time and over budget.' There was no opportunity for a reset. Everything is the same. So tragically, that collective sigh, 'We're going to have a change', has turned into a real moan, because it is the same old business as usual.

If you actually look at what business as usual means for regional Victoria, you can go through the investment – or the lack of investment – in infrastructure projects in the last two budgets. In last year's budget – regional Victoria has got 25 per cent of the population – we got 13 per cent of the capital spend. The year before we got 12 per cent of the capital spend. The funding for road infrastructure has been cut by 45 per cent since 2020. That is down from \$700 million to about \$450 million.

There are more people losing their lives on Victorian roads now than there were before because the roads are dangerous. There has been a 22 per cent increase in the number of people killed on regional roads, because they are unsafe. I would have thought that a Premier coming from regional Victoria, who uses a regional road, might have actually thought there need to be changes to road funding here in Victoria, but there has been no talk of that at this particular moment.

If you go through the greatest project that I could think was going to happen to regional Victoria, the Murray Basin rail project, it was a once-in-a-generation opportunity to standardise and upgrade all the freight lines of north-west Victoria. It has not been talked about for a while in here, but it will get talked about again, because the now Premier was the minister responsible for that project. It has not been finished. The now Premier says that this project is finished, it is all done. It is not all done – there are still lines there that are broad gauge and not standard gauge. The minister put out a press release a couple of years ago saying that the Maryborough to Ararat line was finished, all the level crossings were done, the train speeds could actually increase. I drove through there a few weeks ago and there is still work going on on those level crossings. The train on that line has not increased its speed. The train from Mildura is not getting to Melbourne any faster than it was before. It means that the turnaround, as they go around the long loop to get to Melbourne, actually takes longer than it used to.

Richard Riordan: You've gotta take an esky.

Peter WALSH: Well, they have to take more than an esky; they have to take a cut lunch and a sleeping bag to get from Mildura to Melbourne and back with that particular train. So that project, with so much hope for regional Victoria, is an absolute fail of the now Premier, ruling a line through it and saying, 'We've done our job; this is an issue for a future government'. Can I remind the Premier that she is now the future government, and perhaps she might want to pick that project up and actually finish what she destroyed as she went through those particular circumstances with that.

We saw the now Premier sit around the cabinet table when the native timber industry here in Victoria was closed down, an absolute disgrace for regional Victoria. We saw the now Premier sit around the cabinet table while the CFA, the proud volunteers of Victoria, was absolutely trashed. We saw the now Premier sit around the cabinet table when Jane Garrett as a minister was a lone voice for the CFA, and we know tragically how it ended for her with her political career. So we have a Premier who we have seen will not stand up for regional Victoria, and we are very, very concerned about that.

We saw the IBAC *Operation Daintree* report that said that the Labor Party has developed a culture of bending or breaking the rules, that it unfairly favours the allies, the friends and the networks of the decision-makers. Are we actually going to see a reset with the new Premier? I think the evidence of the last few days would say no, we will not. The Premier will not come clean, will not talk about the facts, when it comes to the Commonwealth Games. We have seen in question time the last two days that it is made up on the run – it is an answer for this question – but if you are going to tell lies, you have to have a good memory. What is happening here is that the truth is going to come out. Victorians will learn that the government misled them for months and months and months – that the Commonwealth Games was effectively a hoax to get through last November's election and to give hope to Victorians, particularly regional Victorians, that they would actually get something from this government. What you have seen ever since then is them slowly walking it back and walking it back, engaging lawyers on how the hell do we get out of this mess we have got ourselves into here, till finally the then Premier had to come clean with the now Premier, who had to come back from holidays to make that particular announcement. So the truth will come out. It will take time, but the truth does come out, and that is happening.

I congratulate our team in the upper house and all the crossbenchers in the upper house who came together to have an inquiry into the Commonwealth Games debacle, as we have seen it. That is democracy working as it should work, where the houses actually hold executive government to account, and I would encourage the now Premier: appear before that committee. If you have got nothing to hide, do not use this issue of cognisance between the houses – actually front up. Set an

example of integrity, of accountability and of telling the truth, and front up at that committee. But dare I say it, I am sad to say, I do not believe the Premier will do that and front up to that committee.

So after a glimmer of hope, a slight glimmer of hope, with a possible reset of the way Victoria is going to be governed into the future, I must admit I am extremely disappointed that very, very little is going to change, and what we are going to see is that life is going to continue to get harder for Victorians under this government. It was 50 taxes, now 52 taxes – the first reading of legislation today was about how many more taxes we might get into the future. It is going to keep going and going and going. There is a very good saying about Labor governments, apart from the fact that they cannot manage money, and that is, more importantly, that when they run out of their money, they come for your money. And I think a lot of Victorians can now feel the Labor government dipping into their pocket, getting into their wallet, taking it away. The cost-of-living crisis that we are having in Victoria is actually the Labor government. It is the Labor government and their policies that are driving the cost-of-living pressures that we have here in Victoria. Whether it be energy, whether it be taxes or whether it be the property taxes that are being put in place, it is all driving the cost-of-living pressures, and, I would say, nothing is going to change under this current Premier.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (16:42): It is a delight to rise today to speak on the opposition's matter of public importance. Who would have thought we would have an opportunity to speak on the opposition to our government's transport infrastructure agenda? I also want to start by talking about some important dates in our collective memory, and the first one is 26 November 2022. I know that the Leader of the Nationals talked about some loud cheering, and there was certainly a lot of loud cheering in Box Hill on 26 November 2022 as I was returned as the member for Box Hill along with 55 of my colleagues. There were certainly a lot of cheers on that day – many more cheers than sorrows.

John Mullahy: Great news.

Paul HAMER: Absolutely, member for Glen Waverley – a wonderful new member of the class of 2022. As you said, it was great for the east – a fantastic result. There were cheers that rang out throughout the east as a result of the election, and there certainly was not any sorrow as a result of the election.

I also want to talk about another date, and that is also in 1969. It was perhaps not as internationally significant as man's first landing on the moon but one that was very important to my heart, even though it was before I was born, and that was the release of the 1969 Melbourne transport plan.

Peter Walsh: I cannot remember where I was.

Paul HAMER: I am sure you were around, Leader of the Nationals. But in that plan there were a number of very important transport infrastructure projects, and as I am sure the opposition remember, that was a signature policy of the Liberal Bolte government. It is sad to say for the Nationals that they were not a party of that government, but the Bolte Liberal government did release that plan. It had a range of transport infrastructure improvements that were to guide Victoria and Melbourne through to the year 2000. How did they fund these projects? Well, they funded them through debt and debt borrowing, and it is interesting that Premier Bolte used state debt to build more infrastructure in Victoria than any other state leader. During his 17 years as Premier debt as a percentage of state economy reached as high as 58 per cent. Now, that seems to have been completely lost on the members of the opposition in the current debate. The position that they seem to want to take is that no debt is good debt, even if it is to deliver the essential infrastructure projects that we need for the future.

The other specific project that I want to talk about from that plan is the city loop. It had been identified earlier, but it was put in the 1969 plan and construction began in 1971, and if I am correct I think the first stations opened in 1981.

John Pesutto: They had proper business cases, Paul.

Paul HAMER: Well, there has been a business case for the Suburban Rail Loop and all of our transport projects. But under the opposition's consideration of transport projects as they are at the moment you would only be looking at 30 years of benefits. That period would have run out at the end of the century, which means that since the turn of the century there would not have been a single benefit derived from the city loop project, which is obviously just complete rubbish. Everybody who uses that service every single day knows how important the city loop is to the functioning of our city and not only the ability to move around the city from a transport point of view but its ability to reinvigorate those areas of the city that the new stations are in. This Parliament precinct, the area around Melbourne Central and the area around Flagstaff Gardens have changed dramatically in the 45 years since the city loop was opened, and it is because of this transport infrastructure investment that drives further investment and further development and the ability for jobs and job creation and investment.

I think if we are to learn from and take heed of the lessons from the past, they are about the importance of investing for our future. The infrastructure projects that this government and particularly the Premier in her previous role as the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure have had carriage over will set up Melbourne for the next hundred years, because this is the lifetime, the legacy of these projects. The rail lines that were laid down in Melbourne back in the 1850s to 1900s continue to provide exceptional service to the people of Melbourne and Victoria. When we look at the Level Crossing Removal Project, when we look at Metro Tunnel, when we look at the Suburban Rail Loop, these are the projects that are going to sustain Melbourne as it continues to grow from a city of 5 million people to a city of 9 million people in 30 or 40 years time.

I do want to focus specifically on some of these important investment projects and what they mean not only for my local area but for the state in general. The level crossing project: 110 projects have been announced, 72 of which have been completed, including three very important ones that are in my electorate, two which have been recently completed, at Union Road and Mont Albert Road. Seventy-two have so far completed across the metropolitan area, and 110 in total have been funded. These level crossing removals make such a difference to both their local communities and also the ability to then change the service patterns of the metropolitan train system, reduce delays and allow a clock-face timetable so that people can turn up and go get the train services that they need. We should not be stuck in a 19th-century mentality of having level crossings at major road intersections.

I know in our own area it was a big challenge and an enormous infrastructure project – one of the biggest and most complex level crossing projects of any of the metropolitan projects that have been undertaken. I want to thank the Premier for her leadership on the project and the team at the Level Crossing Removal Project for getting this project done in difficult circumstances and of course thank the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert community, who did have to put up with many, many disruptions but are now able to see the results of that work. The vast majority of the community are enormously pleased with the outcome that it has provided.

On the Metro Tunnel project, another vitally important infrastructure project to allow and facilitate the growth in our community – we know that the city loop, as I mentioned before, has provided such an enormous benefit to the city over its almost 50 years of life, but it is reaching capacity. In order to provide the additional access for commuters into the city, there needed to be additional train paths, and the way to achieve that was through additional tunnels such as the Metro Tunnel. The Premier has shown leadership through driving this project through. As the member for Bentleigh said, this was taken off the agenda during the Baillieu and Napthine years, and it was only on it when Premier Andrews was elected and the Andrews government committed to this project in full – without any single level of support from the federal Liberal government throughout the entire period of that government, which forced the Victorian government to make that important decision, which will provide a long-lasting legacy to the Victorian people and particularly to the people of Melbourne.

Finally, in the very short period of time I have left, I just wanted to congratulate and acknowledge the foresight of the Premier in driving the Suburban Rail Loop project. This is going to make a huge difference for suburbs and particularly suburbs such as Box Hill.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (16:52): I rise to support the member for Hawthorn's matter of public importance. What we now know is that it was party time in Victoria when the North Face jacket left the building. I can safely say that we have had the most divisive Premier that this state has ever seen – a Premier that still needs a security detail, a Premier that nobody wants to play golf with on the golf driving range. Somebody that loves playing golf, when they see him, walks a million miles. Let me tell you, people celebrated when Daniel Andrews left the building, and so they should, because he delivered pain, suffering, debt and mismanagement to this state.

And who was his copilot? The current Premier, who had an audition that we were all watching, who had an audition to say what is this Premier going to be like. Well, we all should have actually realised what this Premier would be like because the waste and mismanagement absolutely started and finished with the current Premier – \$30 billion of budget blowouts and a Commonwealth Games non-delivery. This is a Premier that actually was a former minister for budget blowouts, the former minister for the big bill, the former minister for the non-delivery of Commonwealth Games – what an audition, an audition that shows absolutely, as we have said and as we have seen time and time again, a government that cannot manage money. And what is the result of that? Victorians end up always having to pay more. It is a government that have their hands in taxpayers pockets to actually fill the gaps that they cannot manage themselves.

We knew, when the Premier had left the building to get onto the golf range, that it was time for a new Premier. And you would have thought this all would have worked out pretty smoothly. You would have thought that the Premier that had been auditioning for 10 months after the election was ready to go, starting to do that work, ready to take over. She had the Deputy Premier all set to go, the Treasurer – those two were all ready to actually take over from Daniel Andrews. It was not so smooth, was it? We had fighting, we had divisiveness, we had such chaos that the Premier had to come back from his golf – Daniel Andrews – to sort it out. And what did he say? 'What have I done for this? What have I done to you?' – as if he did such wonderful things for the state and expected just a smooth transition and that everything would be right. Well, we know that has not been right.

We have seen the first two days of what was an audition and is now absolutely a mess – a shambolic mess. You see such divisiveness. You have got the Deputy Premier sitting there looking and saying when it is going to be my turn. You have got the member for Essendon that has taken over the minister for budget blowouts legacy to cut the ribbons on all these projects, whenever they are going to be delivered. This is a mess. And why is it that this government cannot manage money? Why is it that the Premier cannot manage money? Why do we have \$30 billion of budget blowouts that we are all paying for? The highest debt in the nation, the highest taxing state in the nation – more taxes than anybody – and what does this government do? 'Oh, we'll add some more taxes: some more property taxes, a holiday tax, a health tax, an education tax.' It goes on and on and on – and more property taxes. They will just keep going. You know why? None of this government have actually done a day's real work in their life. They do not know what it is like to hold a real job, to run a real business. None of them sitting on the back bench have an idea how to run a real job. But I will leave the backbench aside.

Let us look at the ministry. Let us worry about the front bench. We have got 21 members on the front bench. You talk about waste and mismanagement – 21 members on the front bench. Here we go. Of the 21, how many are trade unionists? Nine. How many political staffers? Thirteen. How many trade unionists and political staffers? Three. How many public servants? Two. How many small business owners? Two.

A member interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: No, no – two. We need to go through a bit more detail. But at least that was stated there, so I will give them the benefit of that. Two. No wonder the state is broke.

Emma Kealy interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: Shoppies? Yes, probably. But fair dinkum, no wonder this government has got their hand in every single taxpayer's pocket. Fair dinkum, this is a government that could not manage a chook raffle. And you know why? Because when they run out of money, they just tax you more. You can imagine having the Premier say, 'You know what, this is your shop. Away you go. Open it up. Off you go.' All of a sudden – like we see with rents continuing to go up – how do we pay for that? You cannot use the taxpayer. All of a sudden, what do we sell? Well, you know what, you cannot sell what you want to force people to sell. You have actually got to have real product. You have got to actually work hard. You have got to roll up your sleeves. You have got to know what it is like to go without. None of this lot know about any of that when it comes to real work. Not one single person knows about real work – none of them. They are very, very happy to take off the taxpayer. It is greed. It is envy. It is looking after yourself, looking after your mates. They have no idea what it is like to work hard. No wonder we are broke. No wonder we have got the highest debt in the nation. No wonder Victorians are paying for it. There is pain and suffering like you have never seen before, and they do not care. Up the back they turned around when we said more taxes: 'Oh, that's all right. Developers will pay for it.' Well, it was very, very easy to say there was going to be a honeymoon between the property and the private sectors to build all of this housing. How many? 220 new homes a day. The total being?

Wayne Farnham: Eighty thousand a year.

David SOUTHWICK: Eighty thousand a year. Let us extrapolate it. I will tell you what, if there are any punting people over there on the other side, I will lay you good odds that those houses will not be delivered. They will not be delivered, because where do you get the materials from? Where do you get the labour from? Where do you get the money and the debt to pay for any of this stuff? It is not magic. It is not confetti. It does not come from nowhere. You cannot keep taxing people out of existence. People have got other options. If Victoria is a state that taxes you more, if Victoria is a place that sends you broke, what do you do? You go somewhere else.

The best way to be able to stimulate the economy is to get some competition, get some confidence and get people to invest back in the state. They are not doing that, because Labor only know one thing – taxing you more. When you work harder, they tax you more. When somebody actually really has a go, you do not turn around and say, 'Good on you, keep going,' you say, 'You've earned too much money. It's greed.' It is just targeting people. This is tall poppy syndrome like you have never seen. That is what this government is like. It is class warfare like you have never seen before. That is why Victoria is not the place that it used to be. That is why it is harder now than it ever was before to be able to buy your first home. Housing affordability – absolutely forget about that. The former Premier said, 'Who wants to buy a home? We're quite happy with people renting. Who wants to buy a home? Young people don't want to buy a home.' That is the former Premier, who is now at the golf course. No wonder there is no reward for effort, opportunity or getting the reset that we need in this state.

The state needs a reset. We thought we would get that from the new Premier, but it is more of the same. The Commonwealth Games was a big test for this current Premier. Two billion dollars – that is what it was meant to be. She keeps talking about the \$4 billion blowout – \$4 billion. That was not under us, that was under this Labor government. They could not manage the Commonwealth Games. We are all paying the price. The Labor government is spending \$2 billion to pay for something that we are not even going to deliver in this state. The Commonwealth Games is a classic example: this is a government that cannot manage money. We are all paying the price. Taxpayers are worse off. Victoria is broke, and it is the Labor government that has caused the pain and suffering to all Victorians.

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (17:02): I rise to speak on the matter of public importance submitted by the member for Hawthorn today. Firstly, I am really surprised that this MPI does not have the word ‘nasty’ in it, as I know it is a word that those opposite love to use when describing the first female Premier that we have had in the last 30 years. The notion of those opposite in this MPI is simply wrong. Victorians know that the legacy of our amazing new Premier lives on in the vast amount of transport infrastructure projects she has delivered. She has done more for this state than you could ever hope to imagine in your lifetime. She wrote the book on ensuring rural and regional voices are heard in this place. Her positive legacy runs deep not just in Bendigo and Melbourne but across the entire state. She has overseen the Regional Rail Revival project, which is delivering upgrades on every single regional train line across this state.

John Pesutto: Rubbish!

Martha HAYLETT: It is not rubbish at all. In my neck of the woods she has led work on the \$500 million Ballarat line upgrade, which has seen 135 extra weekly services delivered for Ballarat, with trains every 20 minutes during the peak and every 40 minutes off peak. She has delivered stabling upgrades at Ararat and extra services on the Ararat and Maryborough lines. She has saved jobs at Alstom by building trains in Ballarat and Dandenong – rather than overseas, like those opposite.

John Pesutto interjected.

Martha HAYLETT: This is in stark contrast, member for Hawthorn, to the dark days, the dark era when those opposite ruled this state and closed five country train lines, shut 176 country schools and 12 country hospitals and went on a relentless privatisation rampage that left lasting scars across our communities. My community has not forgotten what you did to the Maryborough line and the Ararat line. They will never, ever forget that you closed those train lines and we reopened them.

John Pesutto interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition! Without assistance, please.

Martha HAYLETT: The Premier’s work in transport has transformed our rural and regional areas. It has transformed the train network. It has created jobs. It has boosted our local economies, with more fantastic projects to come.

I am also so grateful for the Premier’s support in delivering lasting legacy projects across the Ripon electorate, including a brand new sports facility for Miners Rest, new mountain bike trails in Creswick and future affordable social housing and key worker housing as part of the \$1 billion Regional Housing Fund. She has personally joined me on several occasions to spruik these projects, including in Miners Rest and Creswick. Local schoolkids from Miners Rest Primary School were so excited to meet the now Premier, and the entire Miners Rest community cannot wait to see their brand new sports facility delivered soon. It will include a competition-grade oval, sports pavilion, change rooms, amenities, car parking and more. It will mean Miners Rest locals will be able to play sport close to home, which is a huge win for our kids and locals of all ages. The Creswick trails project is also much anticipated by locals and mountain bikers across the state. It will form a network of mountain bike trails around Creswick, and it will boost tourism across our whole region. These projects would not happen without the leadership of Jacinta Allan. She has always had rural and regional communities at the heart of her decision-making, and without her tireless work over the past 24 years our state would not be what it is today. She has more leadership in her pinky finger than any of those opposite have in their entire body. It is not just transport and sporting infrastructure that she has led the way on across Ripon but so much more.

I remember the day last year that she joined the member for Wendouree and me in Ross Creek with members of the Ballarat Indian community. It was such a proud day, and the Premier had moved mountains to be there to announce \$900,000 for a new Hindu temple and cultural centre for the local Hindu community. I remember her generosity and kindness and how happy the committee members were to have her there. This project will mean locals will no longer have to travel to Melbourne to

attend temple. It will deliver a new prayer hall, commercial kitchen, children's playground and more. I want to thank the tireless volunteers who have advocated for this project, including my friend Pradush Narayanan, and Gobi Anand, Harisankar Parippaayillam, Raveen Chilukuri, Sundram and other committee members. Supporting the many incredible multicultural communities across Ripon and the entire state is something our new Premier has always done, because she deeply cares about inclusion and community. She values diversity, and she backs people with actions, not just words.

Another big piece of work that she has led the way on is the development of the Ballarat West employment zone in my electorate. It will become the engine room of jobs and growth in Ballarat over the next 20 years and involves the development of surplus Crown land for industrial, commercial and residential use. It will be home to a new intermodal freight hub, getting freight trucks off our roads and onto rail, and it is powering ahead, with work well underway and new business busting to be a part of it, including McCallum Disability Services and a food bank. Our Premier has not wasted a single minute getting on with state-shaping projects. She has inspired a generation of women to get into politics, including me.

While she has been delivering project after project, getting elected time and time again, those opposite have just continued to sink further and further into irrelevance. They are divided, and they bicker with each other while the far right continues to infiltrate their party. The Leader of the Opposition is even booed by his own party members, many of whom live in my electorate of Ripon, when he speaks at the Liberal state conference. His party runs racists and bigots as state election candidates. They have been writing op-eds and running community forums in country Victoria, causing fear and spreading misinformation about the Voice to Parliament. Many of the members opposite do not even believe in women's fundamental rights over their own bodies. Even the federal Leader of the Opposition says that the Victorian Liberals have to sort out their mess. So if I were them, I would probably focus a bit more on themselves rather than throwing cheap shots at this side of the chamber. Meanwhile, unlike those opposite, who need to settle their disputes in court over defamation proceedings, our new Premier has the full support of her entire caucus.

Members interjecting.

Martha HAYLETT: She truly does. We are united on this side of the chamber. We are united, unlike those opposite. We are focused on delivering projects our state needs, including better transport infrastructure, upgraded schools and hospitals, safer roads and more social and affordable housing, which you will all claim the credit for, I am sure, when we do it all. I am so honoured to be a member of the Allan Labor government, and I love the sound of that. It sounds fantastic.

I know that our new Premier will do the whole state proud with her passion, determination and commitment to those who need it most. She was the very first woman to represent Bendigo in any Australian Parliament when she was elected into this place as a young 26-year-old. At that time she said true representation 'means caring about people, listening to the people and speaking out for the people'. She wanted to make a difference, and she has. Her track record is one of delivery, and those opposite would be wise to take note of her leadership style. I cannot wait to see all the good that she does for this state. We will all be backing her along the way, united in supporting her.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (17:11): It is always wonderful to speak on a matter of public importance, particularly one which is as important as this – something that says this is just same same but different. It is the same old Labor government that Victoria has had to deal with for the past nine years – we are nearly into the 10th year of this government. The same bad decisions are being made. The same strategy is being put in place, where you just tax Victorians more and more and you cut spending on the services that Victorians need – the job of government – while our hospitals are falling apart. They are rat infested. There are some which have got non-compliant cladding still on their walls that is not being addressed. We have got members of the government who are instead treating this like a bit of a cheer squad opportunity and totally rewriting the history of the current Premier and her fingerprints, which are all over what has happened to Victoria over the past nine years. It is just laughable.

I had to choke back a few tears of laughter when the member for Ripon was talking about how great the investment in the roads in her electorate are. Have you travelled on the Western Highway recently? You do not drive on the left of the road, you drive on what is left of the road through that area. Holy smokes, it is not many times that I drive along that highway, in the member for Ripon's electorate, but you have cars on the side of the road, with the tyre invariably flat and ripped open, rim damage and chunks taken out, and people waiting for the RACV to tow them away. This is not an unusual sight. I have spoken to many, many people, and as a standard rule they drive on the right side of the road, because the left side is just critically dangerous. There are not just potholes along the left side of the road on the Western Highway, there are craters. If you are driving a smart car, you would possibly lose it. It is absolutely disastrous what is going on there, and this is an extra cost that we are seeing every single Victorian having to pay, because we have got the token little spray of white paint around the pothole, we have got the little sign up – 'Slow down; road hazard ahead' – but there is no sign of any road crews. Instead of investing in our roads, what we have seen from the Allan Labor government is a cut to the road asset management budget. In fact what we have seen is a 45 per cent cut since 2020. That is a critical cut, and it is not just for roadworks, it is for road waterproofing as well. The waterproofing is so important, because if we do not keep water out of our road surfaces, those little fissures quickly turn into potholes and your road totally falls apart. When we were in government around \$350 million a year was put into the road waterproofing.

Tim McCurdy: How much?

Emma KEALY: About \$350 million a year. Under the Labor government it has been about \$250 million a year. This year it has been cut back to \$30 million a year. But wait, it is not just the \$30 million a year. They are not actually putting that out to tender. They are keeping it up their sleeves for, literally, a rainy day. So this year no road resurfacing for waterproofing will take place in Victoria – no road waterproofing. This is absolutely disgraceful and will have critical impacts in years to come.

If this is how this Labor government – from what we are hearing from these MPs, the people opposite – looks after regional Victorians, then no wonder they have got no idea what they are doing. That is why regional Victorians do not vote for Labor – because they know that there are never any projects that are put in place in regional Victoria. The current Premier could only ever talk about projects in Melbourne. And do you know what came with those projects in Melbourne? Massive cost blowouts, massive debts, more taxes and Victorians having to pay more for less. That is what we saw every time. So any time the Premier gets on her feet and we think, 'Wow, we've got someone from regional Victoria,' let us face it, we had it before, didn't we? Premier Andrews, that country lad from Wangaratta.

Dylan Wight interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Tarneit is warned.

Emma KEALY: Didn't he have that little country attitude at heart? He loved the country. They did not speak so highly of him, though. He never, ever put country Victoria first, and we saw that in every single budget that Labor have handed down – every single budget. Regional Victorians make up 25 per cent of the state's population – 25 per cent. We do not get 25 per cent of the state's infrastructure spend.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Interjections have gotten too loud, and it would be very nice if I could hear the member speak.

Emma KEALY: I can raise my voice even further, Deputy Speaker, if you like. I have got a bit of voice left after Collingwood's fabulous grand final win last Saturday, and I congratulate all the boys in black and white for that fabulous win. We should have all been cheering, and I would love for the Speaker to make the effort to bring that premiership cup to Parliament House so we can all feel how good it is to have Collingwood as premiers in 2023.

Let us come back to our so-called Premier for regional Victoria. Gee, she has done a lot of things that have really harmed regional Victoria. I reflect upon the member for Murray Plains's contribution about what you were doing when you heard that Daniel Andrews had resigned. I was at that same function with the Leader of the Nationals at the Melbourne Royal Show, and the cheers and the jubilation – not just in that room but right around the showgrounds – were absolutely palpable. Not just in the conversations that I had, you could hear people walking by – and they were not just country people; these were city slickers who were talking about, 'I can't believe the bloke's finally gone'. They were cheering. They were happy. But it soon went from being happy, from having the free beers out the front of Parliament House – people got on the beers – to people remembering what harm Labor did to the state of Victoria when he was Premier and Jacinta Allan was his deputy. That is what people remembered. I heard terrible, terrible stories, where people remembered their dying mother during COVID – they could not go and hold their hand.

Juliana Addison interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Wendouree is not in her seat.

Emma KEALY: That is exactly what people said. That is exactly what people were talking about. People were grieving about circumstances where people died and the whole family could not attend a funeral because there were 17 people in the family and only 10 could go to a funeral in an LGA – Hindmarsh council, where there had never, ever been a case of COVID.

Dylan Wight interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Tarneit, you are pushing it.

Emma KEALY: Now, the people opposite might think that this is not serious. They are having a joke and a laugh about people dying during COVID. I think that is disgraceful, and that is a reflection upon each and every one of you, because the harms from COVID lockdowns were horrific, and they were particularly horrific on people who live in regional and rural Victoria. We have seen so many studies come out now about the lingering impacts on people's physical health but also particularly their mental health. We are seeing critical surges when it comes to people using alcohol and other drugs, which are impacting on them severely as a result of Labor's lockdowns over COVID, but there simply are not any rehab services to go to.

As a result of having this massive, massive debt based on cost blowouts, mismanagement and corruption by the Labor government, in Victoria we are paying \$15 million a day of interest to the big banks. That is \$15 million of taxpayers money that should be directed into our services, into our hospitals, into our schools, into our infrastructure, but instead it is just being paid as interest and being frittered away. There are so many things that that money could be used for. It is about a million dollars per kilometre of road, so that money could upgrade 15 kilometres of road each and every day. In fact – and the member for Ripon will support this – if we did not have this massive interest debt to pay, in three months we could resurface the entire Western Highway right from my electorate in the west, from the South Australian border, through the member for Ripon's patch, right the way through to Deer Park. That is what we could do by saving that interest. In just 8 minutes we could fund Lifeline Gippsland for one year – in 8 minutes. We could fund Mildura's second river crossing in less than a week. We could fund the Goulburn Valley stage 2 redevelopment in less than two weeks. We could fund the Kilmore public secondary college – a town which has got 10,000 people in it but does not have a public secondary school – in just two days. We could redevelop Western District Health Service in about a day. We could build a new swimming pool in Rochester – one was destroyed by floods – by lunchtime. We could then of course, as I said before when I was talking about the impact of lockdown, build in every two days a brand new drug and alcohol rehabilitation bed. Tell me that is not something that Frankston desperately, desperately needs at this point in time – as does Shepparton, as does Warrnambool, as does Latrobe Valley, as does Mildura. I urge the government to do better – and do better for regional Victorians.

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (17:21): I rise this afternoon in the face of this matter of public interest that is equally as ridiculous and laughable as it is insulting to the people of Victoria, because time and time again, over the past three elections, the people of this great state have voted for a government that gets on and does the things we promise. At each election we have expanded our majority in this place, because the people of Victoria have seen that this government invests in what matters – in housing, education, health care and transport – and that is what Victorians can count on.

The rabble opposite are convinced that our track record of delivery is something to be ashamed of, but the Glen Waverley district has a message for them: the Liberals' dream of Thatcherism and neoliberalism is Victoria's nightmare. It is why time and time again Labor has expanded our presence in the east, in no small part thanks to the leadership and the tireless work of our Premier. In her previous role the now Premier oversaw the greatest transformation of Victoria's transport infrastructure, I would argue, since Victoria's gold rush of the 1850s. It truly cannot be overstated, because the consequences of our Big Build are visible in every suburb of the city and in every corner of our state.

The bold Level Crossing Removal Project is a great example of the terrific work done by the Premier. Back in 2014, after four years of inaction and stagnation under the Victorian Liberals, we promised we would remove 50 of our most dangerous and congested level crossings. Victoria backed the plan, and our Premier delivered on our promise. In fact we went well and truly beyond. Fast-forward to 2023 and we now have 72 level crossings gone for good, plus over 40 new and rebuilt train stations across the state. The Level Crossing Removal Project is supporting thousands of jobs, creating award-winning public open spaces, busting congestion and creating level crossing free rail corridors so we can run more trains.

Under the leadership of the Premier, we are not stopping at the original promise of 50 level crossings, we are removing 110 by 2030. Not only do the Victorian people back the Premier's work, they see right through the Victorian Liberals, who seek to tear it up at every step of the way. I remember back in the lead-up to the 2018 state election the Liberals' vicious campaign against the Cranbourne and Pakenham line level crossing removals, railing against the project at every single turn. But the Victorian communities saw right through their negativity and comprehensively returned Labor MPs all along that corridor to office. Now those communities enjoy world-class train stations, the new Djerring bike path and great open spaces thanks to Premier Allan's great work in the transport infrastructure portfolio.

But for whatever reason, the Victorian Liberals never learn. Stuck in their same old ways of whingeing and screaming at any sign of investment into transport infrastructure, you would have thought they would have learned their lesson by 2018. But they did not, because come 2022 the Liberals were at it again, and this time in the east – at every step of the way, nothing but whingeing and screaming about the level crossing removals across the Belgrave and Lilydale lines. Well, they were once again proved to be deeply out of touch with Victorians, because Victorians know that these level crossings must go. That is especially the case in Surrey Hills, where two people were killed at the Union Road crossing. The Surrey Hills and Mont Albert community resoundingly re-elected the member for Box Hill in the face of an anti-level crossing removal campaign by the Victorian Liberals, and now that community is level crossing free, with the terrific new Union station now open and taking passengers and beautiful new open spaces being planted as we speak. Make no mistake, the brilliant progress is possible thanks to the leadership of the Premier. It is progress that is stifled every step of the way by those in the Victorian Liberal Party opposite.

It is not just level crossing removals where Victorian Liberals do their best to halt our city-shaping investments in transport infrastructure, because in my part of the world, the Glen Waverley district, we back the Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) and the incredible work the Premier has done to make it a reality. For context, it is hard to overstate the importance of the Suburban Rail Loop in reshaping Melbourne and our transport network for decades to come. The twin rail tunnels will connect every major line in the state and create beautiful, highly livable communities around each of the station precincts. It is a concept we first took to the Victorian community back in 2018. Once again, as you

might have guessed, it was the Premier who spearheaded this great project from the start, and it was the Victorian Liberals who opposed it, first at the 2018 state election, which saw the Liberals spectacularly lose what they call their ‘crown jewels’ – the seats of Box Hill, Burwood and Mount Waverley in the east. They all flipped to red, as did the adjacent seats of Ringwood and Hawthorn, because the people of Melbourne’s east want a government that is visionary and has the guts to deliver the bold infrastructure projects we need for the years to come, like the Suburban Rail Loop.

Ever since the game-changing election in 2018 it has been the Premier leading the charge to complete a massive body of work on the Suburban Rail Loop – first the business and investment case process, then the most detailed environment effects statement of any project in national history and the rollout of the Suburban Rail Loop community funds in the communities along the rail corridor. Thanks to its hard work and leadership, the Allan Labor government is getting on and getting it done.

The first stage of the SRL, SRL East, will connect Cheltenham to Box Hill, with stations at Clayton, Monash University, Glen Waverley and Deakin Burwood in your electorate, Deputy Speaker. Early work is now underway. There has been intense geotechnical drilling all along the corridor. In Glen Waverley I recently visited the construction site with the now Premier, where a team of workers have already been relocating services around the future station box, and in Box Hill there is major construction underway as we speak to build a brand new high-capacity tram terminus in preparation for the SRL station construction. The Suburban Rail Loop is not a pipedream; there are hundreds of workers on the ground right now making the SRL East a reality. The Victorian community sees it and the Victorian community likes it.

You would think that the Victorian Liberals would recalculate after the disaster that was their SRL policy in 2018. You would think they would recognise the community’s support for the project and acknowledge the Victorian community want a government that is bold and then delivers. But that was not to be, and once again for whatever reason they promised yet again to tear it all up, not dissimilar to their stance on the level crossing removals or any number of transformational infrastructure projects across Victoria: too hard, too expensive, too tricky. For an opposition that was trying to win over the hearts of Victorians and form government, it was deeply embarrassing stuff to adopt a no-can-do attitude. Imagine for one moment if we applied the same logic to the city loop or the construction of the international terminal at Melbourne Airport or the electrification of the rail network: we would be stuck in the dark ages. Yet for the Victorian Liberals that is where these things seem to be at, both with their internal social policy debates and also with their transport infrastructure policy. Their 2022 election policy of cutting the Suburban Rail Loop was no different, but once again it failed dismally in every single seat along the SRL East corridor, from Mordialloc and Clarinda to Oakleigh, Glen Waverley and your seat, Deputy Speaker, Ashwood as well as Box Hill, because Victorians have seen Premier Allan’s leadership and the body of work we have done so far and they want us to keep going and get the job done.

When I doorknocked thousands of people as a candidate last year, even the most staunch, traditional Liberals were telling me to just get it done. So that is what we are doing. As I mentioned just before, there is a power of work already underway and we are not slowing down, because by 2026 there will be tunnel boring machines in the ground beneath the eastern and south-eastern suburbs, building the Suburban Rail Loop. This is not just an ambition, it is going to be a reality, because we have just signed the first two tunnelling contracts to make that happen – and I believe you, Deputy Speaker, were there with the Premier the other day to announce that Glen Waverley to Cheltenham section. It is happening thanks to the leadership of Premier Allan, and it is happening because the Victorian community backed the Suburban Rail Loop – not once, but twice.

That is why this matter of public importance before the house today is just so laughable. It is like they do not understand the reality of Victoria in 2023. The community rejects their hands-off, Thatcher-esque approach to infrastructure and service delivery. The community wants the state to act and to get things done, and whether it is level crossing removals, the Metro Tunnel, the Regional Rail Revival, the North East Link, the West Gate Tunnel, the Monash widening or the Suburban Rail Loop,

the Victorian people want to see it happen. For almost a decade it has been the Premier that has been making these projects a reality.

Believe it or not, though, of course these projects cost money. But it is an investment for all Victorians because this spending is on productive infrastructure that not only creates jobs during the construction but grows the economy in the long term. It is this spending that supports our strong and diverse economy and maintains our position as an economic powerhouse of Australia. The good people of Victoria owe the success of our Big Build to the leadership of the Premier. With a short bit of time: Victorians want better than that, and I am proud to be part of the Allan government, which is doing what matters.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (17:31): One week in and the honeymoon is over. The ghost of Daniel Andrews is just lingering there. Daniel Andrews would not have let taxing Treasurer Tim get away with going rogue on day two of Parliament. The ghost of Andrews is there; the expletive-laden rants of Andrews – ‘They’re nothing’ – dot, dot, dot – ‘without me’, he said. Rather than Premier Allan beginning with a fresh start and a reset, Premier Allan is just a pale imitation of Daniel Andrews. That is all she knows – day two here in Parliament, on the job, and a new Premier but same old Labor, introducing not one, but two new taxes –

A member: Already.

Bridget VALLENCE: just on day two in Parliament – same old Labor, same taxing Labor, tired and divided after nine long years, with Daniel Andrews leaving the sinking ship. All they know is to spend more and tax you more for it. Premier Allan only knows one way. She is continuing the legacy of Daniel Andrews’s government of financial incompetence, reckless spending, a \$200 billion debt – sinking the state into astronomical debt that our children and our grandchildren will be burdened with – and increasing taxes. There have been 52 new or increased taxes since this Labor government has been in power – same old Labor, same taxing Labor: a new jobs tax, a new rent tax, a new housing tax, a new schools tax – punishing everyday Victorians each and every day for its economic incompetence, making life harder for Victorians because it has sent this place broke. It should be ashamed of that. It is absolutely shameful that they have sent Victoria broke. They have sent the place broke because, in major part, the Big Build projects and the canned Commonwealth Games projects, under the watch of former Minister Allan and now Premier Allan, have been responsible for such massive waste, massive cost blowouts of over \$30 billion, at least that we know of – is it \$30 billion, is it \$60 billion, is it \$100 billion? – on these major projects.

I call on the Premier again to come in and come clean with Victorians, to name just one project that she has been responsible for that she has delivered on time and on budget. I bet she will not come in, because she will not be able to name one. She will not be able to name one project that she has delivered on time or on budget. Every project that she has touched is years behind schedule and billions of dollars over budget and has contributed to tracking towards \$171 billion, and then \$200 billion in the forward estimates, of budget debt that she is leaving for our children and grandchildren to have to pay back.

No wonder they are cutting services and taxing Victorians more – the economic position of Victoria is really terrible. There are so many things on which Victoria is the worst of any state in Australia. It is not a legacy that I think I would want to inherit as Premier, but this Premier has been the copilot with Daniel Andrews, hand in hand making these decisions that sent our state into spiralling debt. Unprecedented cost-of-living pressures – the cost of everyday Victorians’ budgets is going up, and it is as a result of many of the decisions of this tired Labor government. Escalating energy prices, the cost of grocery bills going through the roof, fuel – this government will blame the war in Ukraine, but we all know that there are many decisions of this government that are contributing to the cost-of-living pressures that Victorians are experiencing every day.

That brutal budget they handed down in May – though we would ask: is anything worth the paper it is written on in terms of the budget? Because the Commonwealth Games was there front and centre in the budget but only weeks later was canned. It is a budget of higher taxes, continuing deficits and spiralling debt well into the future. As we have said before, 52 new or increased taxes, and we think that this government is foreshadowing another 10 to 12 new taxes just overnight. We are very concerned that these taxes are contributing to the increased cost-of-living pressures for Victorians. Victorians pay the highest taxes in Australia. Victoria is the highest taxed state of any state or territory in the country. This is just ridiculous – more than \$5000 per person in taxes.

John Pesutto: Ridiculous.

Bridget VALLENCE: It is crazy. As the member for Hawthorn, who brought this matter of public importance forward today says, it is ridiculous that everyday Victorians are having to pay more than \$5000 in taxes. That is \$5000 that they cannot spend on other things: on their children, on getting food on the table, on just general maintenance around their household.

We have said that the debt is going up to \$171 billion, but of course that is not the real figure. So many experts say it is going to be well over \$200 billion in just a few years time. That is larger than the combined debt of New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania – again, a shameful legacy of this tired Labor government. These interest payments – as of today, just today, we are spending \$15 million of Victorians' hard-earned taxpayer dollars just to pay down the debt. In a few years time that will be \$22 million a day just to pay off the debt. That is money just gone to pay the debt bill.

Just think of what you could do with \$22 million. In my community that would mean fixing the dangerous and deadly roads throughout the Yarra Valley: the Warburton Highway at Seville East and the Maroondah Highway at Killara Road, Coldstream. It would mean duplicating the rail track between Mooroolbark and Lilydale on the Lilydale line to improve the frequency of those trains. It would mean changing the single-lane bottleneck under the Hull Road rail bridge so that there would not be that congestion for all of the people in Mooroolbark, Lilydale and surrounds. It would mean fixing and upgrading the local schools so that our children in my community would have the best possible learning environments – not pork-barrelling all of the schools in the neighbouring Monbulk electorate but actually spending some money on the schools in the Evelyn electorate too. We could spend some money on upgrading vital equipment for the Lilydale State Emergency Service, the SES and the CFA brigades. That is what we could do with the massive interest debt that we are paying: \$15 million a day just in my community. Think what that could mean for communities right across Victoria. But under Labor all they know is debt and taxes. Victoria is broke, and life is getting harder for Victorians. Everyday Victorians are being punished for Labor's incompetence.

Look at the West Gate Tunnel Project: a \$5.5 billion project, now \$10.2 billion. That is a \$4.7 billion blowout. It was a broken 2018 election promise to have this built by 2022. Remember all of the banners up, saying 'You'll save 20 minutes' and 'It will be built by 2022'? When they realised they could not deliver on that, they ripped down all that banner wrap. Premier Allan was the one saying that that would be done by 2022. That is a broken promise. When I was on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee in 2020 and asked the then minister and now Premier when the West Gate Tunnel Project would actually be delivered, she said, on record at PAEC, 'in 2023'. Well, there are only a few months of 2023 left and that project is nowhere near being delivered, and the cost blowouts are just going to get even worse still.

The Level Crossing Removal Project promised \$5 billion. The current estimate is that that project has blown out by \$3.3 billion. Look at the Lilydale and Mooroolbark level crossing removals – projects that I have been calling for since 2017, which were finally done but at a cost of half a billion dollars to do those Lilydale and Mooroolbark level crossings, and they failed to take up the opportunity to duplicate the track. So the frequency of the trains has not improved – not a second's improvement in the train services on that line – the car parks are leaking, the concreting has led to flooding in the local

shops across the road and the Parkiteer bike cages have not been working for 12 months. It is absolutely a botched project, and the traffic congestion around there is nuts.

We have not even got to the Commonwealth Games project. How could you say a \$2.6 billion budget blew out by \$7 billion? That is under the watch of this Premier. How could you get it so wrong, Premier?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Kororoit, I would like to acknowledge the presence of former Minister for Environment and Climate Change and Minister for Youth Affairs and former member for Warrandyte Ryan Smith.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (17:41): I rise to speak to the matter of public importance, which was put by the member for Hawthorn. I have got to say, when reading through this motion, I had to laugh at the hypocrisy of the mover. Those opposite are people who, when last in office – and I believe that was 2010 to 2014, and we all remember those dark days of Ted Baillieu and Denis Naphine – did absolutely nothing but slash spending on hospitals and schools, destroy our TAFEs and attack our unions. And I speak on good authority with that as I was at the Rail, Tram and Bus Union. Those opposite engaged in pure and arrogant self-indulgence, and the people of Victoria rightly rewarded these clowns with simply one term.

I dread to think what might have happened if those opposite had have been in charge of this state during the unprecedented pandemic crisis. Instead of spending the necessary money to protect, they would have stood back and let the people fend for themselves, especially the most vulnerable. If this government had not stepped in and spent during the pandemic and lockdowns, this state would have fallen into recession, and that is what those opposite wanted – a recession where it is dog eat dog. Those opposite hate government stepping in and protecting people in hard times because in their heart of hearts they believe in the market's law of the jungle – if people suffer and lose their jobs or the roof over their heads or the small businesses, well, then that is simply just too bad. The truth is it was this government, alongside ordinary working people, who got us through the darkest days of the pandemic. Through their sacrifice and hard work they got all of us through, and those opposite want to talk working people down and scoff at them whenever it suits them, with contempt.

The opposition claim major cost blowouts, but the truth is that this government is the government that gets things done, and we all know that. It is this government, the Allan Labor government, that is going to continue to get things done for Victoria – the Allan Labor government alongside our amazing leadership team. Let us not forget the Victorian people have endorsed our government's positive plans for three elections. Yes, that is right – three elections. We are increasing the margins each and every time. We have proudly been serving the Victorian community and delivering on our promises since day one. We are ensuring that Victorians receive the care that they need, closer to home. We are getting rid of 110 of the most congested and dangerous level crossings. We are continuing to drive a package of planning reforms from our housing statement, clearing the backlog of approvals, making sure that good decisions are made faster and guiding the way that our suburbs grow. We are building the transport which our state desperately needs. We are making sure that Victoria has a pipeline of work and that we can keep up with the demand.

We are doing what we need to do – we are not wasting a day. We are investing in teachers and nurses and ensuring that we get on with what matters, and that is because under our leadership, all Victorians will get what they deserve. Doing what matters is at the forefront of our Premier's mind, and our side of politics is completely behind the Allan government, as we are united. We will continue to get on with what matters, and in my patch of Kororoit that has been evident. As you all know and you have heard many times before, Kororoit picks up two local government areas, the City of Brimbank and the City of Melton. As I have said in this chamber before, the City of Melton is the fastest growing LGA in Australia – 58 babies per week. Thanks to our side of the house, we are keeping up and investing money there.

Let us start with transport, one of my favourite subjects. We have got additional rail services: 10 new peak services a week on the Ballarat line; bus services and infrastructure: changes to the Caroline Springs route 426; Caroline Springs station: 400 car parks which are new and have been upgraded; and then the Deer Park train station, which has 150 new spaces. I was actually there two weeks ago with Deputy Premier Ben Carroll. We have got more services on the Ballarat line: 125 new services each week, with 45 services across the busy morning and afternoon peaks, when they are needed.

Then we move over to level crossing removals. Well, we have been very lucky in Kororoit. We have got Fitzgerald Road, Ardeer; it is complete. We have got Mount Derrimut Road, Deer Park, also complete, alongside Robinsons Road, Deer Park, also complete, and we have commenced Hopkins Road because we are ahead of schedule with our level crossing removals – because this government knows that they are needed. Coming up, this government has a lot more planned for the west. We have got the Derrimut Road, Hopkins Road and Boundary Road, Tarneit, intersection signalisation – something desperately needed. This investment will upgrade the intersection of Derrimut Road, Hopkins Road and Boundary Road in Tarneit by installing traffic lights to improve the safety and operation of the intersection.

Then I turn to the Growing Suburbs Fund, and I am proud of this: \$1.5 million to Aintree Community Centre; \$850,000 to Brookside community pavilion; \$1 million to Caroline Springs town centre recreation reserve and \$800,000 to Mount Atkinson Children's and Community Centre – a growing and fantastic suburb. Looking over at health, we have got the Changing Places facilities at Caroline Springs Leisure Centre, but it does not stop there. We are providing suitable facilities for people who cannot use standard accessible toilets. The facility allows people with high support needs to fully participate in the community.

John Mullahy interjected.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH: Exactly. We are respecting people. We have got \$34.9 million allocated to the Sunshine emergency department, and then of course there is the Footscray Hospital – absolutely state of the art. Our local member for Melton has absolutely championed the delivery of a new Melton hospital, with construction starting in 2024. Nine hundred million dollars will be allocated to this project. The hospital will be powered by 100 per cent renewable energy. It will include a 24-hour emergency department, more than 100 medical and surgical beds, an intensive care unit, maternity services, mental health services, radiology services and outpatient care. It is fantastic.

Then of course, being Labor, education matters to us. Labor has invested \$1.657 million from the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund over 11,894 payments. Labor has invested \$23.591 million in equity funding for Kororoit schools. More than 504 students in Kororoit benefit from the state school relief program every year, with more than 4681 items of clothing being distributed since 2015. One of my favourite programs of all time, and I know we touched on it in this place earlier today, is the breakfast program. Over 96,200 breakfasts have been served to kids in Kororoit as part of our breakfast-in-schools program. I have seen this with my own eyes, and it is something that we must continue to keep up. We have got school funding. We have done a lot for the west, and we will continue to do that.

Before my time is up, the Leader of the Opposition said that he thought we might elect someone 'better' – I think was his word. Well, let me tell you that our Premier Jacinta Allan, as we all know, has the experience, has got the energy and has got the smarts to lead us to victory in 2026 for a fourth term – a fourth term of Labor. I know that Premier Allan can do that and our entire team is behind her. Alongside our Deputy Premier Ben Carroll and the rest of Labor's leadership team, we have a united and unstoppable team. Now, he further said that we were – I think 'chaotic' and 'divided' were his words. Well, I would say to the opposition leader that you may simply need to look in the mirror. But we all know that that could be quite scary. As we know, while on this side of the house we are delivering on our commitments to Victorians over three periods, the opposition is an absolute rabble. The opposition is filled with disunity. There are challenges and splits left, right and centre. Those on

the other side have grown accustomed to speaking out of both sides of their mouths. They are split on nuclear, on equality and even on who should be their leader.

The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Caulfield actually had a lot of fun in trying to tell us what happened at last week's caucus meeting, but I know many of us in the house were actually there. I can say wholeheartedly that we unanimously supported the now Premier, Premier Allan, and we also supported the Deputy Premier Ben Carroll unanimously. So although you would like to claim that, you know, we are split, it is absolutely not the case.

I just want to rewind a little bit, and if memory serves me well, the leader who is vocally speaking out at the moment, the Leader of the Opposition, won his leadership by – was it one?

John Mullahy: It was one.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH: One vote. Okay. So now, after the recent by-election in Warrandyte, it makes me wonder how many votes he has actually got in his party room. I am not sure; are you?

A member: How many ministerial portfolios do you have?

Luba GRIGOROVITCH: I do not want to be a minister; do not worry. I also see that Matthew Guy is back in the shadow cabinet – back to the future, we say. So it makes me wonder how you are going over there. He is being sued by his colleagues, and it looks like the party is not going to support paying his legal fees.

In conclusion, because I can see I am running out of time, I would like to say that I will not stoop to the level of the opposition leader by going on and trying to discredit some of our senior MPs, who we all have faith in. We 100 per cent support Premier Allan, and we are united and proud to be in government.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Narracan I would like to acknowledge Senator Jane Hume in the gallery. Welcome.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (17:52): I am really pleased to talk on the matter of public importance today submitted by the member for Hawthorn, our fantastic leader. And it is quite funny – I want to reference the Leader of the Nationals and his comment, 'We will remember this. Where were you when Daniel Andrews resigned?' Well, I was right here in this place.

A member interjected.

Wayne FARNHAM: I was. I was right here when Daniel Andrews resigned. I walked him into the annexe. I walked in with him, and when the former Premier came out, I gave him a bottle opener to say, 'You can have your first beer on me'. People did not believe me when I did that. They said, 'Why would you do that?' I said, 'Well, if I had have known he was going to resign, I would have bought him a slab if it was only going to cost me \$50 to see the back of him.' What a great investment that would have been for Victoria, because every other investment this government has made for Victoria has been absolutely disgraceful.

Let us talk about the history and what we have to deal with. And it is actually quite funny – the Premier the other day said, 'We're in our DeLoreans. We go back in time.' Well, every member of that side of the house must have a DeLorean, because all that they talk about is what happened 20 years ago or 30 years ago. But it is good to know that everyone over there has got a DeLorean. But it was interesting to note – on trying to choose the Premier – when we have got two people fighting over a nearly \$500,000 a year income, two people fighting over that, Victoria's cost of living is out of control. How do you think the Victorian public felt about that, the selfishness of these two fighting over a half-million-dollar job while they cannot afford to pay the bills?

And there is no wonder, when an election commitment was we are going to bring back the SEC, and we are going to lower power bills. That is the biggest load of hogwash I have ever heard, because there

is no-one in this chamber that can tell me that their power bill has gone down – no-one. Everyone's power bills are going up. Everyone's gas bills are out of control. There is not one policy this government has brought in that has reduced a power bill yet. The only thing you have done is given away \$250 of taxpayers money to help people out. That has not reduced the price of electricity. No matter how much you give away, it is not reducing the price of electricity. And your SEC is flawed. You have no idea what is going on. You do not know how much it is going to cost. No-one can actually give us a final figure. You have not even told us how many solar panels are going to cover regional Victoria, and that is going to be another budget blowout.

But let me talk about the May budget. In the May budget with the increased taxes –

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, I wanted to draw your attention to the fact that the member for Morwell keeps referring to 'you' and 'your'.

A member: Morwell?

Mary-Anne Thomas: Sorry, not Morwell, Narracan – the member for Narracan keeps referring to 'you' or 'your' and of course in doing so is reflecting on you.

The SPEAKER: Order! Thank you, Leader of the House. As the member for Narracan and other members know, the use of the word 'you' is not appropriate.

Wayne FARNHAM: My apologies, Speaker, I was obviously getting a little bit excited.

But let us talk about the May budget and the taxes that were introduced in the May budget. This shows me how incompetent this government is. In the May budget the taxes that were introduced were going to bring in \$9 billion worth of revenue – that is, \$9 billion. But the fact is Victoria today pays \$15 million a day in interest. Now, if you do the calculation for that – and remember this \$9 billion is to pay down the COVID debt – the interest bill over that same amount of time is \$21.9 billion. As a person that worked in business a long time, my advice to the government is: you are going backwards. You are not reducing debt. And that is on \$15 million a day of interest today, not the forecast \$22 million. It is not on the forecast debt of \$226 billion but is on the \$171 billion that is actually quoted at the moment.

And let us talk about that \$171 billion worth of debt. Thirty billion dollars of that debt has been contributed by the new Premier who sits in that seat – \$30 billion is her contribution to that debt. Then we have got \$30 billion of COVID debt. So what is the other \$111 billion? Mismanagement and incompetence – that is all it is. And that is what happens when you have that side of the chamber who do not know how to run a business. They do not know how to budget, and they do not know how to run a job.

Brad Rowswell: How can they run the state?

Wayne FARNHAM: They cannot run the state. They cannot do that. Twenty-five major project blowouts – I do not know how they estimate this. I have no idea what process the government goes through to actually estimate jobs. If I go through some of the jobs, it is a big list of blowouts that the Premier was in charge of. Let us be very specific here – the Premier. I am not going to go through them all, because I do not have enough time. North East Link was promised for \$5 billion – a \$13 billion blowout. That is one. Let us go to the next one. West Gate Tunnel has a \$4.7 billion blowout. Let us go to the next one. Metro Tunnel has a \$3.36 billion blowout. And it all becomes a little bit redundant because it is all the same reading after a while, and it just makes you sad really.

But what has this government done? Unfortunately this again, I believe, shows the incompetence of this government. We had an industry that was creating billions of dollars worth of income, and what did the government do? They shut it down. They ripped the guts out of it, and not only did they rip the guts out of it, they ripped the guts out of regional Victoria when they did it. They decimated the timber industry. That did not have to be done. They did not need to do it, but they did it as always to curry

favour with the Greens, because they need the Greens in the upper house to get legislation through. And that is what the government does: it curries favour with the Greens. What you have done now is decimate an industry that was contributing to Victoria's economy. Let us not forget that. The timber industry was contributing to Victoria's economy.

But let me go through a couple of things that \$15 million a day will actually get you. For the cost of one day's interest in Victoria we could have had 160 maternity nurses. We could have had 260 child protection support workers, an extra 179 paramedics, 218 classroom teachers or 306 Victoria police recruits. Now, this is in one day, but I think the Labor Party might be a bit upset to know this. They could have got, for one day's interest, 500,000 Labor members –

A member: What?

Wayne FARNHAM: 500,000 they could have got.

A member interjected.

Wayne FARNHAM: Well, that would be subjective, but they could have got 500,000.

As the member for Euroa said earlier, we feel as though this is same same but different. We could have had a fresh start, and we have not had a fresh start, and what it is: while the old Premier was writing the cheques in the name of our children, it was the new Premier that was cashing them in, and that is a debt that is going to be carried on for years – years; our grandkids will not be able to pay this off. \$15 million a day is a disgrace. All I can say is, I was hoping that the new Premier would do something different, but day one in that seat, two new taxes come through. I do not even know if she knew about the new tax. She may have; she may not have. I do not know if they told her or not, but two new taxes straightaway – absolutely no idea. I do not know how this state is going to end up after the end of this term, but I am tipping that this state will not end up in a good space.

A member: Keep going! It's not over yet.

Wayne FARNHAM: I will keep going, do not worry. I have got plenty to say. I could have spoken for 40 minutes about this.

Let us talk about the Growing Suburbs Fund. It got slashed from \$50 million to \$10 million, and then they ripped the peri-urban councils out of it. You ripped the peri-urban councils out of the Growing Suburbs Fund. You do not care about regional Victoria, and there is more to regional Victoria than Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong. There is a hell of a lot more than that. In my electorate we do not get a thing. We were not even on the list for funding for anything. It is an absolute disgrace, and I totally support this motion from the Leader of the Opposition.

Business interrupted under resolution of house of 3 October.

Members

Member for Warrandyte

Inaugural speech

The SPEAKER (18:02): The time has come for me to interrupt business for the member for Warrandyte to make her inaugural speech. Before I do that, can I acknowledge the former member for Box Hill, the Honourable Robert Clark, in the gallery. I remind members to observe the courtesies of inaugural speeches, and I remind visitors in the galleries that no photography or filming is allowed. I call the member for Warrandyte.

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (18:02): Thank you, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to rise today to give my maiden speech. I am humbled to have been elected as the member for Warrandyte in the 60th Parliament. I thank the people of my electorate for bestowing me with this privilege. I am grateful and honoured that I get to represent our incredible community. Warrandyte is a truly unique

and diverse part of Victoria. Nestled along the northern banks of the Yarra River, it boasts a stunning natural landscape that defines its character and charm. Warrandyte is not just 107 square kilometres of electorate. It is an embodiment of what makes our state and city so beautiful. Ours is a place where the country meets the city, with the natural wonders and beautiful landscape that span across the electorate to the urban and multicultural soul in suburbs like Doncaster East. We are blessed with the winding Mullum Mullum Creek in the south, the sanctuary of the Warrandyte State Park in the east and the scenic vistas of Mount Lofty and Wonga Park in the west. We are home to the lungs of Melbourne, a concept birthed from Liberal ideas. Our electorate boasts some of the most beautiful, lush wide-open spaces, thanks to former Premier Rupert Hamer's legacy in introducing environmental conservation zones, now known as the green wedge. As both my predecessors Ryan Smith and Phil Honeywood were, I pledge to also be a defender of the green wedge. Our beauty is also our challenge. We face the risk of bushfires thanks to our green landscape. Two local issues that I will continue to advocate for and not grow silent over are adequate bushfire protection in our area and fixing the Five Ways intersection in Warrandyte South.

Ultimately what makes our electorate so truly wonderful is its people. Our local sports clubs are the heart of our community. From my friends at the footy and netball clubs in Warrandyte, Donvale, North Ringwood, Chirside Park and Park Orchards to the bowls clubs, basketballers, cricketers, tennis and soccer players and beyond, local sport runs deep out our way. There are also homegrown legends who represent great institutions, from Julie Quinton, owner of Quinton's IGA in Warrandyte, to Mary-Anne Lowe, owner of Bramleigh Estate, to Greg Kennedy, who, with a group of his mates in 2012, decided to chip in to save the iconic Grand Hotel in Warrandyte.

In my electorate I find myself in good company amongst the many community-minded people who have spent their lives giving back. This includes our incredible CFAs. These are heroes who put their lives on the line as volunteers to protect our local area. From Aaron Farr in Wonga Park to Cam Mackay in South Warrandyte, to Chirside Park, North Warrandyte and Warrandyte, our CFA volunteers embody sacrifice, service and the Australian spirit. I could spend all day up here talking up our incredible community if only time would permit.

In recognising all of these Warrandyte greats, I am delighted to pay tribute to my predecessor, the Honourable Ryan Smith. Ryan was a brilliant minister and a formidable parliamentarian, but his first priority was always his local community, which he loved and still loves and fought for each and every day of his 16 years in Parliament. He is a man of courage and conviction who stands up for what is right and cares deeply for others. It is his shoulders that I stand on today and his legacy that I am proud to follow on from. It would be remiss of me not to also thank Ryan's beautiful wife Avril, who is, as many political spouses are, the unsung hero in a life of public service. Thank you, Avril, for your family's sacrifice and service. It is with deep gratitude that I acknowledge and honour you both today.

On that note, can I also thank the many people who have given up their time and effort, heart and soul into my campaign. The Liberal Party is a volunteer organisation – funded, driven and made possible by everyday Victorians. From the preselectors who entrusted me with this opportunity to the members of the Warrandyte state electorate conference and to those who have been with me from the very beginning of this journey, there are too many to name. I would like to thank our dedicated staff and the secretariats Stu, Ben and Robbie; my friends who believed in me Jane Hume, Michael Sukkar, Robert Clark; the Evanses, Harrisons, Smiths, O'Briens, Lis, Lings, Hes, O'Farrells, Dimitroffs, Walshes, Porters, Rosses, Johns, Pinks, Kalnins, Lawrences, Grays, Longs, Jeffreyes, Shepherds, Crivellis, Freinds, Manju Hanumantharayappa, Grigaus; my girl gang; and my friend and brother Ben Buxton. The list could go on and on. Ours is a grassroots movement, and I thank each and every one of you who have played a part in helping me achieve this office.

Most of all, I want to thank my family. To Mum and Dad, thank you for everything. To the Werners and to Lance and Chris, thank you for your love and support. To my husband Fraser, you are the love of my life – steadfast, strong and loyal. You are my safe harbour. I am so proud to be your wife and partner in this life. Thank you for believing in me and loving me the way that you do.

Our family is a picture of modern Australia. My husband Fraser is a fifth-generation country boy from the Goulburn Valley and grew up on a 2000-acre sheep farm that once belonged to the great Weary Dunlop. I am the daughter of Chinese–Malaysian migrants and grew up with English as my second language. I am proud to come from a culturally diverse background and proud today to be the first Asian woman elected to state Parliament in the Legislative Assembly.

My journey into politics has been unique, rewarding and challenging. As a young woman seeking to serve in public office, the discrimination I have faced has been shocking and unfortunately far too common. It may astonish those opposite to know that much of the mudslinging and derogatory commentary has unfortunately come from those that side with them. The misogynistic comments I have endured, like how there is no place for women in leadership, have motivated rather than dissuaded me. Today I proudly stand as the first woman to represent the seat of Warrandyte and the new youngest member of the Assembly. There have also been many occasions where I have experienced blatant racism as a person from an ethnically diverse background. Negative commentary like ‘Go back to your own country’ and racial slurs that have been levelled at me make me proud to stand in this chamber and be the first of my community to enter this place. May there be many more.

However, none of the worst of the sexism or racism that I have experienced in seeking public office has compared to the discrimination that I have faced for being a person of faith. We live in a multicultural and multifaith society in Victoria. My parents were married in a local Buddhist temple. Today in attendance I have friends who are Sikhs, Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, Catholics, Christians, atheists and Muslims. In fact in my community I recently met with a group of Islamic leaders who approached me in search of support because of the discrimination they have been facing thanks to certain ideological agendas and approaches to religion in our state. Victoria should be a place where your faith, values and culture are celebrated. The open hostility that people of faith continue to endure is not inclusive and not acceptable and has no place in modern Australia. My faith has shaped me, given me strength and taught me to love others, no matter who they are, what they believe and where they come from. It inspires me to have care and compassion for humanity. I stand here as a person of faith in the public square, representing and serving my community no matter their background, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity or football team. And let it be on the record: up the Dees. I stand for the democratic ideals of freedom of choice, religion, thought, speech and association. Today I call for an end to the perpetuation of discrimination of any kind and for the embracing of true inclusivity in our state.

As a young Asian woman with a background in the charity sector, people have often stereotyped me as someone who would sit with those opposite. However, I, like so many, was drawn to the Liberal Party because of its values of aspiration, equal opportunity, reward for effort, lower taxes and economic prosperity. We believe in empowering small businesses so they can thrive, and in good economic management. We believe in preserving the environment for future generations. We believe in looking after those less fortunate. We believe that families are the cornerstone of society and in the innate worth of the individual, and we believe in small government with minimal interference in our daily lives so that people can have the freedom to choose so that they can live their best lives. These values are my values and what I will fight for and uphold as long as I am here.

My parents sit in this chamber today. They are why I am a Liberal. Dad migrated to Australia in 1987 with one suitcase and his life savings of \$800. Mum joined him the following year, both in pursuit of a better life for their future family. My parents embody Liberal values and are a testament to the Australian dream of how hard work pays off and how you can come from nothing to make something of yourself. They worked hard to get ahead and make a life here in Victoria, working multiple jobs in factories, doing manual labour, cleaning toilets, doing odd jobs for friends in exchange for food, all so they could give my brother and me every opportunity that they had only dreamed of. Mum and Dad, it is your aspiration and sacrifice that has allowed me to be here. My success is your success. Mā Bà, xièxiè nǐ, wǒ ài nǐ.

Strong women run in my family. My mum’s mum, my popo, survived World War II by hiding in the jungle as a child when Japan invaded Malaysia. Because of her family’s poverty, she was never sent

to school. To this day, at 90 years old, my grandmother popo is still illiterate. She used to always say these words to me growing up: guāiguāi dúshū – make sure you are a good girl and make sure you study hard. Popo thought that being a person of good character and having a good education was a recipe for success. Unfortunately she is now too elderly to travel so she is watching on from Malacca, Malaysia. Well, popo, hello from Parliament House in Melbourne, Australia. Wǒ yǒu guāiguāi, wǒ yǒu dúshū. I hope I have made you proud.

I am a firm believer in the transformational power of education. It is hard work and aspiration that raised my family from the depths of poverty to me standing before you today in the Parliament, but it is also education. I remember my popo telling stories of how she as a child would stand outside the local school in her home town and crane her neck to peer through a window just so she could catch glimpses of learning, so desperate was she to know how to read and write. She instilled in us the benefits of a good education, and it is this belief that spurs me on to fight for a better education system in our state. We need a Victorian education system that keeps literacy and numeracy as the main priority. We need to get back to basics.

Whilst my electorate boasts some of the best schools in Melbourne, nearly 30 per cent of Victorian schoolchildren are struggling to meet basic literacy and numeracy standards, and nearly 40 per cent of year 9 students are unable to read at a proficient standard. Although the Labor government is on record saying they consider these results to be phenomenal, I do not. In my professional life I would frequently come across high school students from across the state who were still struggling to read or write. It was not ideology, nor politics, that pulled my family out from poverty; it was the ability to read and write. Education is what my grandmother and my parents fought to ensure our family received. I am passionate for every child in Victoria to get a proper education. As the results in what was once the Education State continue to decline, we must make literacy and numeracy the foremost priority in our curriculum again.

I have not come here to make a career; I have come to make a difference. Mum tells me this story of when she was pregnant with me. Full of selfless hope and ambition as a new migrant and young first-time mother, she would put her hand over me in her belly and say to me, 'I want you to be a leader, and I want you to change the world.' I have devoted my life to giving my all to serve my community, from my days helping young people from underprivileged settings and refugee backgrounds to my time in the charity sector feeding the homeless and helping the vulnerable. I have always sought professional pursuits that put service above self. Martin Luther King once said, 'Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve'. To me it has always been about service, and it has always been about giving back.

To the people in my electorate of Warrandyte, that is what I am here to do. To hold this office is an honour and not one that I take lightly. In closing, I make this commitment to you: I commit to being your advocate. I commit to being approachable, willing to listen and ready to serve. You will not find me office-bound in the political bubble making decisions from an ivory tower – you will find me embedded in our community amongst the people and focused on the things that truly matter. You will not get ego or elitism from me, and please hold me to it. I am just an ordinary girl who loves people and loves her community and wants to make a difference. I am here in Parliament to represent you, fight for you and serve our community with all that I am.

It is my hope that my time here will be marked by compassion and care for people, by conviction and courage in my values, by character – honest, just and pure – and by my calling to serve. Speaker, I thank you and the chamber for your time.

Members applauded.

*Bills***Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023***Second reading***Debate resumed.**

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (18:21): As I mentioned, it is fitting that this bill, the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023, is one of the first pieces of legislation that has come before the house under an Allan Labor government. It is a bill about justice, equality, fairness and cohesion – all values that will shine through in this government. As we know, Victoria is one of the most diverse places in the world, and our cultural diversity is central to who we are. The Allan Labor government is committed to nurturing Victoria's vibrant multicultural and multifaith society, and we are here to commit to and to celebrate diversity. In fact, as many of the speakers before me have already said, it is essential that we continue to nurture Victoria's cultural diversity to ensure our state remains a welcoming home for all. It is central to our identity and to our prosperity, and this bill builds on that work here today – work that continues to build a welcoming, accepting and cohesive society.

The Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023 aims to expand upon the 2022 ban on public displays of the Nazi hooked cross, also known as the Nazi swastika, to introduce bans on other Nazi symbols and to ban the display or performance of the Nazi salute in public. Last year's ban was a very proud moment. I am very proud again here today that this bill before us will ensure that the Nazi salute and other gestures and symbols used by the Nazi party will be banned in Victoria to prevent hateful conduct and address the harm it causes in the community.

Allow me to say it was also an honour to be part of the Legal and Social Issues Committee with the honourable member for Caulfield and also the member for Box Hill and to listen to the very important public hearing on this very topic. I would also like to commend the committee's former members and the secretariat for having the report back to Parliament before we had the first debate in 2022. I also would like to commend the Attorney-General for her work in sending a clear message that Nazi ideology and the hatred that it represents are not tolerated in Victoria. We have zero tolerance for this kind of glorification of hate. It is not acceptable. It is a message that I echo in the strongest possible terms. In my electorate and in our state – one of the most diverse and wonderful places in the world – there is no place for this nonsense. For the absolute overwhelming majority of us it does not matter where you come from, what you look like, what you believe in or what language you speak. In Victoria we are proud of our cultural diversity. We welcome diversity and we celebrate it.

I am proud to see the following amendments implemented here in this bill. The bill amends sections 41I to 41M of the Summary Offences Act 1966 and extends the existing prohibitions on the public display of Nazi symbols. Importantly it will be an offence for a person to intentionally display in a public place or in sight of a person in a public place a Nazi symbol or gesture if the person knows or ought to have known personally that the symbol or gesture is a Nazi symbol or a Nazi gesture. It will also be an offence for a person to intentionally perform in a public place or in sight of a person in a public place a Nazi gesture if they know or ought to have reasonably known that the gesture is a Nazi gesture. There are some commonsense exceptions, and this includes where the display of a Nazi symbol was engaged reasonably and in good faith for genuine cultural, religious, academic, artistic, educational purposes or in opposition to fascism, Nazism, neo-Nazism or other related ideological purposes. The exception will also apply where the display or the performance of a Nazi gesture was engaged reasonably or in good faith for genuine academic, artistic, educational or scientific purpose. For all of these reasons, I am very proud to be part of the Allan Labor government and to have spoken on this bill here – to contribute my part. I am very proud to be part of it.

I also should take this opportunity to say thank you to the former Premier Dan Andrews for his tireless work as Premier of Victoria for the last nine years and as my neighbouring MP since 2018. It was clear to me every day how the Andrews Labor government delivered for our thriving and diverse local

community in Clarinda and also in Mulgrave. It was such an honour to serve in the Andrews Labor government delivering generational transformation across Victoria in health, education and the infrastructure system, from level crossing removals all along the Frankston and Dandenong lines to major works at the Monash and Dandenong hospitals and rebuilding many of our once-disadvantaged local schools and providing free TAFE and free teaching degrees. The Andrews Labor government delivered a once-in-a-generation change to Melbourne's south-east. Thank you, Dan. I sincerely wish you and your family the very best in the future.

Of course I would like to congratulate our new Premier. She has always been a huge advocate for Kingston and the Greater Dandenong community. For that reason, I would like to commend the bill to the house.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before I call the Leader of the Opposition, I remind members to not walk between the member on their feet and the Chair – it is disorderly.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (18:29): I am pleased tonight to be able to rise and speak in support of the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023, and to some extent I approach this debate with some mixed feelings, because you would hope that in 2023 a bill like this would not be necessary. After decades of law reform and cultural change and the efforts like those which Australia but in particular Victoria has taken in a bipartisan way to build a beacon of diversity for the rest of the world to see how people from different cultures can come together, you would hope that this would not be necessary, but I join with others in saying that it is a necessary piece of legislation. It is why, as the Shadow Attorney-General and member for Malvern has said, it is a necessary piece of legislation and we will be supporting it.

We certainly have seen in the last year alone some examples of appalling conduct on the steps of this magnificent institution. It is no small irony, and a sad one at that, that a place that is so august and represents the greatest aspirations and hopes – a building which through its very architecture and the history of the generations of leaders who have served in this institution would suggest – had the odious gestures we saw on the steps of Parliament earlier this year in June, and only a few weeks or so after that again with Nazi protesters. It just reinforced the need for a piece of legislation like this. It is unacceptable in our community and in a democracy like ours, which sets itself as a benchmark for others to follow, one where we have worked tirelessly as a community, again across political divides, to ensure that people who come here – new and emerging communities – can participate in the prosperity of this state and that we can work together to share that prosperity as best we can so that those who come here can know with some confidence and assurance that they can continue to practise their cultural traditions, as with my family and others, that they do not have to abandon them when they come here and that they can do so in a way where they can join with others and share in their cultural and social traditions as well.

This legislation is important. We have seen recently the rise of antisemitic behaviour. As I will say in a moment, this is broader than just Victoria's fantastic Jewish community. Following the Nazi protesters who appeared on the steps of this Parliament back in March, the member for Caulfield and deputy leader took me to visit the Melbourne Holocaust Museum, and I have to confess it was a very moving experience. During our meeting there with a number of representatives and leaders of the Jewish community I was honoured to be able to meet Joe Szwarcberg, a 92-year-old Holocaust survivor. I have to confess I have not in my political journey met too many Holocaust survivors. This was a week or so after the appearance of Nazi protesters on the steps of this Parliament. I know my colleague the deputy leader and member for Caulfield has mentioned this in his remarks too, but I will not forget sitting with Joe Szwarcberg and others and Mr Szwarcberg grabbing my hand and saying, 'We must never let this happen again.' I gave an undertaking that I will do everything I can to make sure that never happens.

We have to employ all means at our disposal to make sure we build a society and a community with the attitudes where people respect each other and do not dehumanise, because what this legislation

really is about is taking a stand – not against free speech; we all know the importance of it, and we all believe in it. That is not really up for debate, in my view, in this bill. What really engages us in this bill is how we best identify that conduct which is not legitimate free speech but which is an odious means of dehumanising other human beings. That is really what it is about. Whilst I do not pretend that those boundaries are easy to discern at times, and there are obviously grey areas where even reasonable minds can differ on what free speech permits and what it does not, I do not think there is any doubt that the Nazi salute is an unmistakably hateful gesture that has the capacity more than other gestures to incite hate and to incite violence. That is why I support this, and I stand right behind this bill.

I should, in mentioning the Melbourne Holocaust Museum, mention Abe Goldberg, who I understand has turned, or is about to turn, 99, a Holocaust survivor who has been one of the pioneers of that museum. I also want to pay tribute to the Jewish Community Council of Victoria – the JCCV – and Dr Dvir Abramovich, who have been long-time campaigners for taking a stand against these types of gestures.

On the important question of freedom of speech, which we all understand is a critical human right in itself, I think this legislation does provide an opportunity for us to achieve what is the normative change we really want. I join with others in saying I do not want to be standing up week after week on bills to mandate or proscribe different gestures, but this one is an important one because what we want through this legislation is to not only protect particularly those in Victoria's Jewish community. This will have a normative effect beyond that. It is saying that whatever gestures incite violence we do not accept that and we will take a stand against them. I understand the arguments about what is next – none of us want to continue to enact legislation to add to the list of proscribed gestures and proscribed symbols. But I do not think there can be any doubt about the Nazi salute and other Nazi symbols that are readily identifiable across generations and across ethnic and racial backgrounds, and that is why I stand with my colleagues in support of this bill.

Can I also add my support to the amendments moved by the Shadow Attorney-General, the member for Malvern. Notwithstanding my earlier comments about the need for legislation of this sort, these types of statutes are often confronted with difficulties about how you best define rights and obligations, particularly for those in law enforcement to deal with situations that are not easily foreseeable. What the Shadow Attorney-General has moved by way of amendments are very sensible, and can I just ask the Premier and her Attorney-General and the cabinet whether they might give serious consideration to these amendments in the spirit of bipartisanship with which they have been moved by the member for Malvern. They will reduce the capacity and potential for disagreement on the spot about what law enforcement agents can and cannot do. It is easy for us here to contemplate how that might look. But only those on the front line will know and discover just how easy it would be, and if we are going to do this I think we should ensure that those first responders and law enforcement officials have at their disposal all the capacity they need to address situations and circumstances you cannot with the best foresight in the world predict. And so I encourage the government to take the member for Malvern's amendments on board and ensure that when this bill turns into law and is given effect it does so with more certainty.

I end proudly saying that as a Victorian I am – and all of us as Victorians can be – very proud that we do diversity better than anywhere else on the face of the earth. I think we demonstrate every day of the week that we can live in harmony, bringing together people from different races and ethnicities, different socio-economic backgrounds, different faiths, different political beliefs. We bring all of these people together. We respect their underlying humanity, which after all, despite all of our other differences, is our common bond, that common humanity. And it is not just important for new and emerging communities who come to this great state and this great country, but it is also a signal to the rest of the world, where hundreds of millions of people only wish that they could live with the rights and freedoms that we enjoy every day here in Victoria. This bill is a signal to the rest of the world that we still recognise those challenges, we do not take anything for granted and we will fight every day of the week to ensure that every person's underlying humanity, their dignity and their opportunities to

share in the prosperity of our great state can be protected, enhanced and professed with great pride around the world and here at home.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (18:38): I am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to debate on the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023. It has been famously said that those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it, and if there is any member of this house, any member of our community or anyone listening online or reading through *Hansard* at a later date that has not yet had the opportunity to learn, to be educated on and to understand the evils, the horrors, the chaos and the destruction that was the Nazi regime, then you must take the opportunity to learn that now. By understanding the destruction, the horrors, the tragic loss of life and the devastation we of course begin to understand the critical importance of hate, of violence and of actions that must never be tolerated within our community or indeed communities right across the globe.

This government stands for peace and for supporting those of all faiths and all cultures in what is indeed a wonderful multicultural state. I note the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition and those opposite throughout the debate. I did have a school group in this morning to Queen's Hall and made some comments about the importance of our democracy, the notion of acceptance and the fundamental belief and understanding that a critical element of democracy is that people within our community can and will have different views. But there is respect around values and the notion of a fair, just community where people's views are indeed listened to, and that is done in a way that is free of fear, of violence and of things we know – through those incredibly dark times, the late 1930s and of course the 1940s, World War II and indeed other wars – have taken hold throughout the course of modern-day history.

We know and understand that the importance of those lessons must always remain at the forefront of policies, of the thinking of all governments of all persuasions. That is fundamentally important. What we know is that we as a government, as a Parliament and as a community must always stand against that hate, must always stand against that violence and must stand against those who seek to divide, who seek to spread evil. Those, although small, elements of our community who target minorities, those who are vulnerable, must of course be called out but not just called out; we need legislation such as this bill before the house and many, many other pieces of legislation to show in the strongest possible terms that this is not today and not any other day ever acceptable. We cannot be more clear about that, and if your mantra is hate, if your mantra is division and you come to spread fear, you will be sought out and you will be caught out.

This bill bans the public display or the performance of any symbol or gesture used by the Nazi party and its paramilitary arms. The bill forms part of the anti-vilification reform package in addressing hate speech and conduct in Victoria. The reform package has been developed in response to the parliamentary inquiry into Victoria's anti-vilification protections, and these reforms of course, as we know, are complex and require considerable time to make sure they are fit for purpose. As I mentioned, the bill has been developed in response to the parliamentary inquiry as well as the recent incidents that have been mentioned by others in their contributions, as we have seen this year, where Nazi symbols and gestures such as the Nazi salute have been used to intimidate, to harass and to cause harm within our community.

Nazi party symbols and gestures are linked to the horrors of the Holocaust and the atrocities of the Nazi regime, and we know not just that many within our community – of course the Jewish community, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, LGBTIQ+ people, those with a disability and other multicultural, racial and religious faith groups – always deserve the protections of legislation but that we as a community must stand together to fight this each and every day. As has been mentioned, our diversity within our state is one of our greatest strengths. All Victorians, Deputy Speaker, as you know, deserve to feel accepted, deserve to feel safe and deserve to feel included. The display and the performance of these symbols and gestures directly harm our community, and these displays of the Nazi symbols are intended to cause fear in our community. That is why this bill is focused on reducing the harm caused by such conduct.

We know that the government introduced the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Symbol Prohibition) Bill 2022 to make it an offence to publicly display the Hakenkreuz, the Nazi symbol. This offence commenced on 29 December 2022. When that legislation was passed, the government committed to working with Victoria Police and other relevant agencies to monitor the display of other hateful symbols to determine whether further symbols should be prohibited. Since that ban of course there has been a concerning and a steady increase in the use of the Nazi salute. That is in any circumstance – in all circumstances – not okay, not acceptable, and that is why the passage of this bill is so incredibly important. What we know is that those that want to propagate this fear, those that want to come into the community and spread hate and target people within our community, to bring about destruction and fear, and the actions of those who wish to spread such fear are in no way on any day acceptable. This Allan Labor government will always stand for fairness; it will always stand for justice and for defending peace within our community and within our society.

I want to take the opportunity to thank all of those that have advocated incredibly strongly to bring this piece of legislation before the Parliament, but I want to do so in a way that sends in the strongest possible terms the message that this government and indeed the Parliament should always be standing with those that are targeted through these cruel, divisive, dangerous approaches. I take the opportunity to acknowledge the work of the minister and the minister's office on the preparation of the legislation, those that worked incredibly diligently on the inquiry and above all else those brave men and women who have unfortunately and in many cases tragically faced some horrendous, some vile, some disgraceful and some disgusting behaviour that should never, ever be tolerated. We as a government, as a Parliament, are always at our best when we come together to face elements within our society that should be put in the corner and should stay in the corner.

We know that the work within this space is ever challenging and ongoing. We know that this piece of legislation as a standalone piece of legislation is not, as many bills that come before this house are, a magic wand to prevent these incidents from happening ever again; we know that. But what we will do is build a suite of reforms that go towards fairness, that go towards preventing hate and that go towards preventing violence and making sure that the lessons of history are never, ever repeated, because that dangerous, that destructive, that evil regime – we know we must learn those lessons. We are better for it, and that is why I commend this piece of legislation, this important bill, to the house.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (18:48): I wish it was my pleasure to rise to speak on the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023. It is a shame that we need legislation like this. It is a shame that people do not make the connection between absolute evil and hate and the symbolism that the Nazi salute represents. It really is a shame. I am grateful that now every member of Victoria Police will have power to act, but the fact that the symbol, this salute, is still being used and that maybe the connection is not being made between this and the biggest atrocities of humankind ever is absolutely abhorrent. The fact that this has come through this place today, in the people's house of democracy, I think speaks volumes.

I have been listening to all of the speakers today. The member for Northcote and the member for Monbulk in particular talked about family history. My family history is my grandparents fleeing after World War II and the effect that that had on their lives, their children's lives and their grandchildren's lives. Even though my kids did not have the chance – much like the member for Monbulk spoke about – to hear the stories directly from those that saw what happened in post-World War II Europe, education and making sure that we learn from this is really important. We can call them neo-Nazis; we can call them extremists. I do not know what the thought process is that runs through their heads to dress in their black pyjamas and come to a house of democracy and protest. I am not quite sure what that is, but the fact that Victoria Police now have provisions to act and to prohibit that is very important.

I do want to acknowledge the town of Beulah, as the member for Caulfield spoke about earlier. This all started largely in that small Mallee town of 312 people at the end of 2019–20 when a flag flying Nazi symbols was flown in a backyard highly visible to a Holocaust survivor – the trauma that that must have brought back for Peter, who has spoken about this in the past. The member for Caulfield has been

in contact with Peter today, and we will go and pay him a visit. This largely started in that town of 312 people, and it is a beautiful town. Peter retired there, you know, leaving Melbourne for a quiet retirement, and then was faced with that pretty much in his backyard. It is tragic. At the time there was an article in the *Age* that spoke about this incident, and I will quote from the *Age* article, which said:

Beulah police have received multiple complaints ...

The entire community came together. It was the whole town. It was the council. It was the Beulah police. It was everyone in that town that was outraged – not only outraged, because we can all be outraged from time to time, but highly concerned with what flying that flag can mean. To follow on from that quote:

Beulah police have received multiple complaints from neighbours about the flag over the past fortnight.

“We are currently investigating and awaiting legal advice as to what, if any, offences have been committed,”

Leading Senior Constable Shayne Riggall said.

‘What, if any, offences’ had occurred. At the time they had not actually committed an offence, but it was the rallying and the voices of that small town, that beautiful town of Beulah, that got that flag taken down, and Peter was able to walk outside again. The fact that we now have provisions to act is really important.

I do want to touch on the member for Malvern’s amendment of course, which replaces the words ‘used by’ with the words ‘associated with’. This is really important to me because a month ago, when I got home after my 5-hour drive home after the last sitting week, when we were discussing this in the backyard with a couple of friends, we got into quite a robust discussion – I do not want to say an argument – that almost led to the ejection of one of our friends from our house and our life, because he could not quite understand what it meant, ‘used by’ the Nazis. He was talking about the symbols used by, but where does it stop? That is really broad. Although I argued for a couple of hours, quite frankly, this amendment actually puts that in a much tighter shell. So ‘associated with’ the Nazis and the evil and the hate that that carried certainly brings it together a lot more and makes it much more succinct.

After listening to everyone speak on this bill today I would hope that that amendment is supported, because it is actually really important. Do not get me wrong, this person that I was arguing with is not a bad person. They are not an evil person, and they are not a person filled with hate at all. They are someone that is of Aboriginal background that has been subjected to and knows very well the extent of discrimination, of racism and all that stuff. But he was just concerned about what the term ‘used by’ meant and where the parameters were for that, which is a valid point. Hindsight is always 20/20, so when you look back on it there is a valid point there, and I think this amendment covers that. So the wording of the member for Malvern’s amendment does narrow that argument somewhat.

I did want to keep my contribution brief today, but that has not occurred – what a surprise. But I did really want to acknowledge the township of Beulah in the Mallee, because I know that this was a source of attention for the town 3½ years ago that they probably did not want. But they felt the need – the council, the police members and the general community – because out in the Mallee, where towns are an hour or so apart, the community is all you have got, and if you do not stick together, then division can occur. When division is felt in a town of 312 people, give or take, depending on the season, it is felt most acutely. So they deserve recognition for this bill coming through this place today, they really do. For Peter, although he is in his 90s, his survival and his relocation to Beulah I know has had a profound impact not just on that Mallee town but on the entire state now with the symbol prohibition and now the Nazi salute prohibition of 2023. So I commend this bill and the amendment to the house.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (18:57): I rise to support the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023. This is a bill that fulfils the Victorian government’s commitment to legislating a ban on the Nazi salute by prohibiting the public display or performance of any symbol or gesture used by the Nazi party or its paramilitary arms. In doing so I note that this bill has bipartisan support, which I commend and I acknowledge, particularly through the quite profound contributions that have been made from all sides of the house thus far, because we are at our

very best as a Parliament when we can unite around such important and meaningful issues on behalf of our diverse and multicultural state.

In saying that, I still honestly find it very hard to fathom that we here in Victoria in 2023 are still fighting and pushing back against evil Nazi ideology following some of the most recent and disturbing incidents across this state, because along with our allies, valiant Australian men and women fought to defeat Nazi Germany during World War II from 1939 to 1945 – a war that ended 80 years ago, almost. Yet here we are in the Victorian Parliament today, in 2023, having to continue that fight to ensure that we never again even come close as a community to repeating the grave mistakes of the past or even permitting evil ideologies that should be consigned to the past to have any place in today's modern Victoria. That all begins with recognising, calling out, stamping out and outlawing, if necessary, any signs of overt racist and bigoted behaviour that incites hate and violence espoused by however many or few people as early as possible, before it has any chance to take root or to take hold again. That all starts with words; it all starts with symbols; it all starts with actions.

That is why remembering, understanding and learning from history, however positive or negative, is fundamental to helping us all on the journey to building a better and more inclusive future, which is what we are all here to do. It is also fundamental to helping us understand the ideology that some in our community today still, sadly, continue to follow, preach, salute or be influenced by, which has led us to bringing in this bill.

So let us delve into a little bit of exactly what these neo-Nazis in modern-day Victoria are actually saluting. The National Socialist German Workers' Party, or the Nazi party, was the radical far-right movement and political party led by Adolf Hitler, who along with his henchmen would go on to become the leaders of the biggest ever mass murderers in modern human history. First founded in 1920, the Nazi party originally attracted very little popular support. As I understand it, they were actually initially treated almost like a joke. However, under the banner of Nazi flags, symbols and the Nazi salute, the Nazis went on to build an ultranationalist narrative that weaponised the impacts of the Great Depression of 1929, the effects of the Treaty of Versailles, which Germany signed following the end of World War I, as well as the gradual and staged targeting of faith and cultural minority communities, namely the Jewish community, whom the Nazis increasingly and falsely blamed for the failures and shortcomings of the German state.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am required under sessional orders to interrupt business now. The member will have the call when we return to the matter.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Melba Highway

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (19:00): (351) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. It is well known and well documented that the Melba Highway continues to cause problems for road users, with the biggest problem at the moment being the traffic light which has been installed where one lane has been closed at Gordons Bridge between Castella and Glenburn. The action I seek is for the minister to implement more effective traffic management controls on this section of the Melba Highway. While the road needs to be fixed urgently and reopened, the current traffic light system that is in place is not working during peak periods. These are the periods of the highest demand, and the worst is on weekends and particularly on a long weekend.

By way of background, a massive pothole opened up, and it was not your regular pothole. This was deep, and people could put their arm down underneath the pothole and it could disappear into the road, which is actually what happened, and it was recorded and circulated quite widely on social media.

There was some very quick action taken. One section of the road was closed, so we have one lane, and a traffic light was installed. It looked as though things happened very quickly in those first few days, but after five weeks or so there has been no evidence of any activity. No-one is sure whether the road has been fixed or not, but what we do know is the problems that the traffic light system has caused for drivers on one of the busiest roads and freight routes in the area. This traffic light is generating a lot of negativity and community dissatisfaction. On the long weekend, for example, the wait time at the traffic light for a 300- or 400-metre section was 1½ hours, and it backed up 10 kilometres. This is pretty extraordinary for people who are returning to Melbourne, typically tourists that have been enjoying the wonderful Murrindindi and Mansfield shires, to get held up for an hour and a half coming back to Melbourne. This has happened each weekend – not quite to the same extent, but this has happened each weekend, and it was always going to happen. This would be predictable, but the traffic light that is there is equal in both directions. It needs to cater for, if in one direction the traffic is really heavy, to give that a longer period. People are going bananas about it. I get text messages from people in the traffic or going in the opposite direction. I get emails; we get phone calls to the office. It is really difficult for people to manage at the moment. I do not think an hour and a half is acceptable to be waiting at a traffic light at all. So I ask the minister to look at the traffic management system that is in place at the moment and make sure the road is fixed really promptly, but we need to have a better solution certainly at those peak times, because it is driving people bananas.

Port of Geelong

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (19:03): (352) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Ports and Freight, and the action that I seek from the minister is to visit the Geelong port and see some of the work they are doing in the electorate of Lara and the wider Geelong region. The Geelong port is thriving as Victoria's second largest port, handling close to 12 million tonnes of cargo and more than 600 vessel visits each year. It is a major driver of Victoria's economy, managing over \$7 billion of trade and supporting more than 1800 jobs across the state. I recently attended the Geelong port for the official welcoming of the first wind turbine blades for the Golden Plains wind farm. Golden Plains is a major wind energy project that involves the construction of over 200 wind turbines on land near Rokewood in western Victoria. This is the biggest wind energy project in Victoria and in fact the biggest project of its kind in Australia. The Geelong port is a key part of the renewable energy supply chain, facilitating the delivery of crucial components of this major wind energy project. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the CEO Brett Winter and his team for their leadership in the Geelong region, embracing renewable energy projects and being champions for the transition to renewables locally. I look forward to welcoming the minister to Geelong port so that she can hear directly from them about the work they are doing in our region.

Murray Valley Highway, Yarrawonga

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (19:04): (353) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action that I seek is for the minister to coordinate an onsite meeting with me and the traffic management crew from north-east Regional Roads Victoria. Up in our patch they call it 'Rough Roads Victoria' – but no, I will not enter into that – but Regional Roads Victoria is the group that I need to speak with. The section of road that I am concerned about is on the Murray Valley Highway just west of Yarrawonga. Yarrawonga is the fastest-growing town in regional Victoria – for good reason – but with that growth comes growing pains. Some of those growing pains are traffic management. There is a section of road between Bunnings and Hogans Road which has more than tripled in traffic movement within the last five years obviously with the establishment of the magnificent Sebel, the Black Bull golf course and the Silverwoods estate. The 80-kilometre speed limit along the Murray Valley Highway makes traffic movement like a game of Russian roulette when you are trying to enter the Murray Valley Highway and head east back into town from either Hogans Road or the Silverwoods drive. I recently met with a large group of locals led by Marg Duff who are very, very keen to see the changes. I am not a traffic management expert, so I am not here to say whether it should be a pair of roundabouts or a speed-reduction sign – that is for Regional Roads

Victoria to determine. But it is important that we meet onsite and get a better understanding of the issues and how to address those issues. Again I ask the minister to coordinate an onsite meeting with me and Regional Roads Victoria north-east.

Western English Language School

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (19:06): (354) My adjournment is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is that the minister join me in visiting Western English Language School in Braybrook. As the new minister well knows as a westie himself, Western English Language School plays a vital role in preparing children, especially those from migrant backgrounds, with the linguistic skills needed to participate in an English-speaking classroom. For newly arrived kids these schools are absolutely vital to get them into mainstream learning. Victoria is the Education State, and that is applied to all Victorians, whether they were born here or not and whether they speak English or not. Ensuring that these kids get the best learning outcomes possible is something I know our government strongly believes in, having recently invested an additional \$37.9 million into supporting English language schools across Victoria.

Of course Western English Language School does not just benefit students in my electorate; folks from all across Melbourne's west send their kids to these schools, with five campuses across Melbourne's west. And if I am not mistaken, a new campus has opened in Melton. The Braybrook campus is the main hub, with over 250 students from years prep to 10. It would be a wonderful opportunity for the minister to come and visit this school to see the kids, meet them, meet parents and not only hear firsthand from the school community how this new funding will deliver life-changing benefits but also hear directly about the school's future needs.

Polwarth electorate public housing

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (19:07): (355) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Housing in the other place, and the action I seek from the minister is for her and her entourage to come to Colac to talk to the community about the 50 houses that have been promised under the government's housing strategy. We again in the Parliament heard today from the new Premier, Premier Allan, who reminded the chamber in question time that we are in fact going to receive 50 new houses in Colac. Welcoming 50 new social houses into the Colac Otway shire is a great thing. There can be no doubt about that – that is a great move. The problem is the land has not actually been identified, the work has not been done and the community has not been spoken to about where the 50 houses are going to go.

There is a parcel of land that I worked very hard for for our community to keep reserved next to the school. Our secondary school is a school in Victoria that really needs a lot of support and extra facilities and ongoing support from the Department of Education. It worries me greatly, Minister, that we are going to give away the last parcel of land around our school that will see it basically landlocked without any capacity for future development and growth of our school. There is no shortage of land, Minister, in a country town. In fact in a place like Colac I can take you for a tour of areas of land that you already own. In what were once the public housing areas of Colac there have been homes removed and demolished, and vacant blocks of land are sitting idle. They would be great places to redevelop and look after. There are new housing estates that have got parcels of land available everywhere. In fact the council has just released one and identified an area for social and public social housing. That would be a great spot for the 50 houses – or not 50 houses in one spot, but two or three homes.

We have also got the great community of Apollo Bay. Apollo Bay was again on the front page of the *Colac Herald* advocating for more public and social housing down there. There is a parcel of land that Homes Victoria has knocked back, owned by the local shire. It would easily accommodate three new homes for families and people wanting to live and work and survive and get on with life down in Apollo Bay. That would be a great location.

So, Minister, what I think my community wants is for you and your department to come down and engage with the community in a way that says, 'Here's this allocation – 50 homes. Let's put them in the best spots. Let's make sure best practice around social and affordable housing is not only applied in Melbourne, where a lot of time is spent, but also in our country and regional towns'. It is so important with this level of investment. Fifty homes is a lot – it is probably more than the whole supply of homes built in our town in any one year. It is a great investment potentially for the government, but our community wants it done well. It wants it done properly the first time, and we do not want to repeat the mistake of the past of cramming too much on too little a site.

Veterans support

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (19:10): (356) My adjournment is to the Minister for Veterans, Minister Suleyman, and the action I seek is that the minister joins me in visiting the veteran community in my electorate of Bellarine to see firsthand how the Allan Labor government is investing in projects that support veterans and their families. I am very fortunate to have several active RSLs in my electorate, and regional RSLs like the Queenscliff, Drysdale, Ocean Grove–Barwon Heads and Portarlington– St Leonards sub-branches are all an important part of our community. They are central hubs for veterans and their families to meet and connect with each other and to access support and services.

When I was last at the Queenscliff RSL I met a new group called the Bellarine Young Veterans, who are creating an incredible supportive environment for our younger veterans, and it was terrific camaraderie that they had within the group. The Drysdale RSL sub-branch also has active members across the growing Drysdale and Clifton Springs area, and there is continued growth of this sub-branch with support from this government with the veterans capital works grant. This ensures that RSLs such as theirs can continue to grow and do the essential work that they support their veterans and families in the community with. Veterans and their families have made and will continue to make a significant contribution to our state and our nation, and funding such as the veterans capital works grant is just one way that this government is saying thank you and honouring the service of our veterans. I would be pleased to welcome the minister to visit my community in the Bellarine and see firsthand our government's investment into our regional veterans communities.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind members to only use correct titles.

South-West Coast electorate dental services

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (19:12): (357) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is for increased funding and support to reduce lengthy dental waitlists in South-West Coast. The famous Chinese proverb goes, 'Every smile makes you a day younger'. Well, there is not much to smile about in South-West Coast with the state of our public dental system under this Labor government. I am disgusted to see that South-West Coast electorate has one of the longest average wait times for public general dental care in Victoria, at a shameful 38 months. That is over three years wait. This shameful situation means that in South-West Coast there are 3756 patients on the waiting list for general dental care at South West Healthcare. If you are added to the waitlist today, it is predicted you will be waiting until January 2027. In the meantime, the patient suffers excruciating pain and is often impacted in what they can eat and do whilst their teeth continue to deteriorate. This can impact their broader health and state of wellbeing and compounds the terrible state of Victoria's healthcare system under Labor.

Historically, South-West Coast has not been an outlier for dental waitlists. During the last Liberal government, for example, the waiting time for general dental care from the public dental system in South-West Coast was 14 months, just one month higher than Victoria's statewide average of 13 months. Under a decade of Labor this waiting list has increased almost 300 per cent. It is now 19 months higher than the state average. That is unacceptable. That is a shameful indication of the Victorian Labor government's mismanagement of the public dental system, which they savagely cut funding for in last year's budget, preventing 44,000 patients from receiving vital dental treatment.

They should be nothing but ashamed of the suffering they are inflicting. I have spoken with dentists in my area, and facilities are not the issue. Warrnambool has five dental treatment chairs, yet currently less than two chairs can be used on a full-time basis due to lack of staff and senior dentists. The government has done nothing to attract and incentivise dentists to Warrnambool. Senior dentists are required to mentor and support new and training dentists so that they have the confidence to grow in their profession, yet Labor have no plan in place to address this shortage.

Before I conclude I remind the government that the pandemic is not an excuse. The wait time in South-West Coast had almost doubled to more than two years by 2019. In 2014 over 9000 patients in South-West Coast were being treated, and this is now under 7000. That is solely the failure of Labor, and South-West Coast residents are in this position as Labor will not act – and they must act immediately. It is already well overdue, and every day they delay is another day of pain for people with dental health needs in South-West Coast.

Point Cook Youth Advisory Council

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (19:15): (358) My adjournment is for the Minister for Youth, and it concerns the Point Cook Youth Advisory Council. The action that I seek is for the Minister to join the Point Cook Youth Advisory Council's final gathering of the year here in our Parliament. The Point Cook Youth Advisory Council was established of course to provide input from young people in the community that I represent and the opportunity for them to reflect their peers and their ideas, develop their leadership and critical thinking skills and learn about government and policymaking. So far I have had the privilege of discussing many matters with the council members, including education, public transport, mental health, wages and more – all those things that affect youth in the community that I represent. It has provided me with greater context and understanding, and I thank them for that and for what they have already provided me. I would like to thank the council members Adnan, Alexandra, Jack, Rajesh, Madison, Neda, Charlie, Sam, Andre and Bianca for their input so far, and I look forward to the rest of the meetings that we will have this year, and I hope the minister joins us in the Parliament.

Public housing

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (19:16): (359) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Development Victoria, and the action I seek is to urgently stop the sell-off of public land to private developers at the Fitzroy gasworks. Before the last two state elections this Victorian Labor government promised public, social and affordable housing on this vacant government land. Now, in the throes of a worsening housing crisis, this Labor government is planning to sell off this land – the entire remaining site, almost 3 hectares of public land – to private developers. The public housing has been scrapped and the social housing scrapped – in its place are over 1000 expensive private apartments. The small number of private, so-called affordable units are still not guaranteed, but if there are any to speak of, it will be up to the developer to define what 'affordable' means. If this government's own definition of 'affordable' is anything to go by, that could literally mean no more than market rate. In Fitzroy the market rate is \$500,000 for a one-bedroom apartment. No-one can afford that.

Over 500 residents nearby have joined together in a campaign to stop the Labor government's plan to hand over the Fitzroy gasworks to private developers. They know that there is a huge housing crisis, and they can see that the government's plan will only make things worse. This government has finally acknowledged that there is a housing crisis. That is great, but why is it pressing ahead with the plan to sell off this land? We do not need more expensive apartments for property investors to slap onto Airbnb. We need public housing to make sure every Victorian has a safe place to call home. Minister, I am urging you to stop the sale of public land to private developers at the Fitzroy gasworks and build public housing on public land.

State Emergency Service Pakenham and Officer units

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (19:19): (360) My adjournment is for the Minister for Emergency Services in the other place, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me to visit SES locations in

my electorate – both the SES Pakenham and the new SES Officer unit, which is currently under construction. The State Emergency Service is a vital part of our emergency network. As part of the Victorian government's significant investment in Victoria's State Emergency Service facility infrastructure, a new SES Officer unit is being delivered. Population growth in Cardinia is predicted to increase by 108 per cent by 2030, placing increased pressure on local SES units to respond effectively to the local community and to continue to assist Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria and our fire services throughout the state.

The new unit is a significant investment in safety and emergency response preparedness and capacity in my electorate of Pakenham, serving the people in the growing suburb of Officer. The construction is well underway and on track for completion early next year. As this will be a brand new SES unit, I strongly encourage all the people in my local community to consider learning more about volunteering for the SES and joining up when the unit is complete. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our SES volunteers throughout the state for the incredible work that they do each and every day. I look forward to hosting the minister for this visit.

Responses

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (19:20): The member for Eildon raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action being sought was for the minister to provide more effective traffic management controls on the Melba Highway, particularly around the traffic light at Gordons Bridge. The member for Lara raised a matter for the Minister for Ports and Freight, and the action being sought is for the minister to join with the member and visit Geelong port to see some of the work that they are doing in the wider Geelong area. The member for Ovens Valley raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action being sought is for the minister to coordinate an onsite meeting with him and Regional Development Victoria to discuss the Murray Valley Highway west of Yarrowonga. The member for Laverton raised a matter for the Minister for Education, and the action being sought is for the minister to join with the member and visit Western English Language School in Braybrook to meet the kids and parents to discuss the school's future needs.

The member for Polwarth raised a matter for the Minister for Housing, and the action being sought is for the minister to visit Colac to discuss the 50 houses that are promised under the housing strategy. The member for Bellarine raised a matter for the Minister for Veterans. The action being sought is for the minister to join the member to visit the Bellarine electorate to meet with local veterans and see projects firsthand that have been invested in to benefit veterans. The member for South-West Coast raised a matter for the Minister for Health. The action being sought is for the minister to provide increased funding and support for increased dental services in the South-West Coast electorate. The member for Point Cook raised a matter for the Minister for Youth. The action being sought is for the minister to join with the member and the Point Cook Youth Advisory Council for their final gathering of the year in Parliament.

The member for Richmond raised a matter for the Minister for Development Victoria, and the action being sought is for the minister to urgently stop the sell-off of public land at Fitzroy gasworks. And finally, the member for Pakenham raised a matter for the Minister for Emergency Services, and the action being sought is for the minister to join with the member and visit SES locations in her electorate, including SES Pakenham and the new SES Officer unit, which is currently under construction. I will refer all of these matters to the appropriate ministers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. That is a goodnight from me and a goodnight from you. The house now stands adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned 7:23 pm.