

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION**

TUESDAY, 21 JUNE 2022

hansard.parliament.vic.gov.au

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable JAMES ANGUS AO

The ministry

Premier	The Hon. DM Andrews MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop and Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery	The Hon. JM Allan MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Services	The Hon. J Symes MLC
Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Agriculture	The Hon. GA Tierney MLC
Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Trade	The Hon. TH Pallas MP
Minister for Planning	The Hon. EA Blandthorn MP
Minister for Child Protection and Family Services and Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers	The Hon. CW Brooks MP
Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention and Minister for Racing	The Hon. AR Carbines MP
Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Industry Support and Recovery and Minister for Business Precincts	The Hon. BA Carroll MP
Minister for Energy, Minister for Environment and Climate Action and Minister for Solar Homes	The Hon. L D’Ambrosio MP
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events and Minister for Creative Industries	The Hon. S Dimopoulos MP
Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government and Minister for Suburban Development	The Hon. MM Horne MP
Minister for Education and Minister for Women	The Hon. NM Hutchins MP
Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support and Minister for Fishing and Boating	The Hon. S Kilkenny MP
Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy and Minister for Veterans ..	The Hon. SL Leane MLC
Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services and Minister for Housing	The Hon. DJ Pearson MP
Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business and Minister for Resources	The Hon. JL Pulford MLC
Minister for Water, Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Equality	The Hon. H Shing MLC
Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport and Minister for Youth	The Hon. RL Spence MP
Minister for Workplace Safety and Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep	The Hon. I Stitt MLC
Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services	The Hon. M Thomas MP
Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Treaty and First Peoples ...	The Hon. G Williams MP
Cabinet Secretary	Mr SJ McGhie MP

**OFFICE-HOLDERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION**

Speaker

The Hon. JM EDWARDS

Deputy Speaker

Ms N SULEYMAN

Acting Speakers

Mr Blackwood, Mr J Bull, Ms Connolly, Ms Couzens, Ms Crugnale, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Halfpenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr McGuire, Mr Morris, Ms Richards, Mr Richardson, Mr Taylor and Ms Ward

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

The Hon. DM ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

The Hon. JM ALLAN

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. MJ GUY

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party

Mr DJ SOUTHWICK

Leader of The Nationals and Deputy Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. PL WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals

Ms E KEALY

Leader of the House

Ms EA BLANDTHORN

Manager of Opposition Business

Ms LE STALEY

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly: Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms B Noonan

Council: Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A Young

Parliamentary Services: Secretary: Ms T Burrows

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION

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

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Legislative Assembly committees

Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee

Ms Addison, Mr Blackwood, Ms Couzens, Mr Eren, Ms Ryan, Ms Theophanous and Mr Wakeling.

Environment and Planning Standing Committee

Ms Addison, Mr Fowles, Ms Green, Mr Hamer, Mr McCurdy, Ms McLeish and Mr Morris.

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee

Mr Angus, Mr Battin, Ms Couzens, Ms Kealy, Ms Settle, Ms Theophanous and Mr Tak.

Privileges Committee

Mr Allan, Mr Carroll, Ms Hennessy, Mr McGuire, Mr Morris, Mr Pakula, Ms Ryan, Ms Staley and Mr Wells.

Standing Orders Committee

The Speaker, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Fregon, Ms McLeish, Ms Settle, Ms Sheed, Ms Staley, Ms Suleyman and Mr Walsh.

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee

Assembly: Ms Allan, Ms Hennessy, Mr Merlino, Mr Pakula, Mr R Smith, Mr Walsh and Mr Wells.

Council: Mr Bourman, Ms Crozier, Mr Davis, Ms Symes and Ms Tierney.

Electoral Matters Committee

Assembly: Ms Hall, Dr Read and Mr Rowswell.

Council: Mr Erdogan, Mrs McArthur, Mr Meddick, Mr Melhem, Ms Lovell, Mr Quilty and Mr Tarlamis.

House Committee

Assembly: The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr T Bull, Ms Crugnale, Mr Fregon, Ms Sandell, Ms Staley and Ms Suleyman.

Council: The President (*ex officio*), Mr Bourman, Mr Davis, Mr Leane, Ms Lovell and Ms Stitt.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

Assembly: Mr Halse, Mr Maas, Mr Rowswell, Mr Taylor, Ms Ward and Mr Wells.

Council: Mr Grimley.

Pandemic Declaration Accountability and Oversight Committee

Assembly: Mr J Bull, Mr Eren, Ms Kealy, Mr Sheed, Ms Ward and Mr Wells.

Council: Ms Crozier and Mr Erdogan.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Assembly: Ms Connolly, Mr Hibbins, Mr Maas, Mr Newbury, Mr D O'Brien, Ms Richards and Mr Richardson.

Council: Mrs McArthur and Ms Taylor.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Assembly: Mr Burgess, Ms Connolly and Mr Morris.

Council: Ms Patten and Ms Watt.

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Tuesday, 21 June 2022

The SPEAKER (Hon. Colin Brooks) took the chair at 12.03 pm and read the prayer.

Announcements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The SPEAKER (12:04): We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to them, their culture, their elders past, present and future and elders from other communities who may be here today.

PARLIAMENTARY STAFF

Absence

The SPEAKER (12:04): Members, I just wish to make the house aware that a number of our clerks and parliamentary officials have been struck with COVID. We wish them well in their recovery. We are relying on our remaining faithful clerks and officials to steer us through the week, so I ask for the house's assistance during the week and to remember that we are short-staffed and we will do the best that we can to ensure the smooth running of the house. I trust that members will do the same thing.

Bills

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING BILL 2022

Introduction and first reading

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (12:04): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to re-enact, with amendments, the law relating to the treatment of persons living with mental illness or experiencing psychological distress, to repeal the Mental Health Act 2014 and the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2021, to consequentially amend other acts and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (12:05): I ask the minister for a brief explanation of the bill.

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (12:05): I would be delighted. This bill fully acquits recommendation 42 of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and lays the legislative groundwork to deliver on a number of other recommendations of the royal commission, including establishing a new statutory foundation on which to build Victoria's mental health and wellbeing system, achieving the vision of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. The bill creates several new governance and accountability entities, including the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission and Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing Victoria; modernises our approach to crisis care; establishes new rights-based objectives and principles; and centres the views, values and preferences of lived experience at the heart of the new system.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

VICTORIAN ENERGY EFFICIENCY TARGET AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Introduction and first reading

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (12:06): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Act 2007 and the Essential Services Commission Act 2001 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (12:07): I just ask for a brief explanation of the bill.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (12:07): The bill will amend the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Act 2007 to improve consumer protections and the operation of the Victorian energy upgrades program. It will allow enforcement of the newly established VEU code of conduct and will ensure that the Essential Services Commission has a robust compliance framework to effectively administer the scheme, monitor compliance of companies working on the program, pursue enforcement where necessary to protect Victorian consumers and ensure the program continues to deliver bill savings and carbon reduction.

Read first time.**Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.****RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES, HOUSING AND SOCIAL SERVICES REGULATION
AMENDMENT (ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022***Introduction and first reading*

Mr WYNNE (Richmond—Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing) (12:07): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 in relation to rented premises which are public housing for which Homes Victoria is the residential rental provider, to amend the Housing Act 1983 and the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 in relation to the provision of affordable housing, to amend the Housing Act 1983 to provide for Homes Victoria, to extend the default commencement date of the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 and amend the Supported Residential Services (Private Proprietors) Act 2010 to extend the operation of expiring regulations under that act, to consequentially amend other acts and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (12:09): I just ask the minister for a brief explanation.

Mr WYNNE (Richmond—Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing) (12:09): Do you want me to do that again for you?

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr WYNNE: I will read that bit again if you like. This is quite an important bill. It is a bill for an act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 in relation to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal considering community impact statements submitted by the director of housing. It addresses a gap in the definition of a 'common area' in public housing estates, amends the Housing Act 1983 and the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 in relation to the provision of affordable housing, amends the Housing Act 1983 to provide for Homes Victoria and extends the default commencement date of the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 to 1 July 2024.

Read first time.**Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.****BUILDING, PLANNING AND HERITAGE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
(ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022***Introduction and first reading*

Mr WYNNE (Richmond—Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing) (12:10): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Building Act 1993, the Architects Act 1991, the Heritage Act 2017, the Planning and Environment Act 1987, the Surveying Act 2004, the Domestic Building Contracts Act 1995, the Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Act 2002, the Victorian Civil and

Administrative Tribunal Act 1998, the Sale of Land Act 1962, the Owners Corporations Act 2006, the Cladding Safety Victoria Act 2020 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

The SPEAKER (12:11): I wish to advise the house that general business notices of motion 33 to 35 will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 5.00 pm today.

Committees

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 9

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarnait) (12:11): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 9 of 2022, on the following act and bills:

Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition and Other Matters) Bill 2022
 Environment Legislation Amendment (Circular Economy and Other Matters) Bill 2022
 Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment (Facilitating Timely Reporting) Bill 2022
 Local Government Legislation Amendment (Rating and Other Matters) Bill 2022
 Meat Industry Amendment (Rabbit Farms) Bill 2021
 Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Symbol Prohibition) Bill 2022
 Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Bill 2022
 Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance Scheme) Act 2022

together with appendices.

Ordered to be published.

Documents

DOCUMENTS

Incorporated list as follows:

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

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978:

Orders under s 17B granting licences over:

Lynch's Bridge Historical Precinct Reserve

Queen Victoria Gardens and Memorial Statue Reserve

Orders under s 17D granting leases over—Lakeside Stadium Reserve (two leases)

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

Greater Dandenong—C237

Mornington Peninsula—C291

Towong—C36

Victoria Planning Provisions—VC216

Whitehorse—C240

Yarra—C304, C305

Rail Safety National Law Application Act 2013—Rail Safety National Law National Regulations (Reporting Requirements) Amendment Regulations 2022

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012—SR 42

Dangerous Goods Act 1985—SR 41

Education and Training Reform Act 2006—SR 43

Marine (Drug, Alcohol and Pollution Control) Act 1988—SR 40

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994—SR 39

Tobacco Act 1987—SR 44

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 38, 40, 41, 42

Documents under s 16B in relation to the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003*—Keno Technical Standard Version 3.3

University of Melbourne—Report 2021.

Bills

APPROPRIATION (2022–2023) BILL 2022

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT 2022–2023) BILL 2022

Council's agreement

The SPEAKER (12:13): I have received messages from the Legislative Council agreeing to the following bills without amendment: the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022.

APPROPRIATION (2022–2023) BILL 2022

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT 2022–2023) BILL 2022

AGRICULTURE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

STATE TAXATION AND TREASURY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Royal assent

The SPEAKER (12:13): I wish to advise the house that today I presented to the Governor the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022, to which the Governor gave royal assent. I also inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Agriculture Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 and the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022.

ENVIRONMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022

TREATY AUTHORITY AND OTHER TREATY ELEMENTS BILL 2022

Appropriation

The SPEAKER (12:14): I have received messages from the Governor recommending appropriations for the purposes of the Environment Legislation Amendment (Circular Economy and Other Matters) Bill 2022 and the Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Bill 2022.

Business of the house**STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS**

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (12:14): I desire to move, by leave:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow general business, notice of motion 40 relating to the reintroduction of non-government business to be moved immediately.

Leave refused.

Dr READ (Brunswick) (12:15): I desire to move, by leave:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow general business, notice of motion 40, in the name of the member for Shepparton relating to the reintroduction of non-government business, to be moved immediately.

Leave refused.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (12:15): I desire to move, by leave, on behalf of the coalition:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow general business, notice of motion 40, under the name of the member for Shepparton relating to the reintroduction of non-government business, to be moved immediately.

Leave refused.

PROGRAM

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (12:15): I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5.00 pm on Thursday, 23 June 2022:

Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition and Other Matters) Bill 2022

Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022

Local Government Legislation Amendment (Rating and Other Matters) Bill 2022

Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022

Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Bill 2022.

In presenting this government business program motion to the house I am delighted to see what a cracking government agenda we are setting over the course of this week, with five bills available to the house for debate and consideration, and they are all, each in their own different way, important bills that contain policy reform but significant social reform as well. I will come back to that element of one of the bills in a moment.

Just for completeness sake, for the house's attention, I am aware that there may be a motion coming to us to support a joint sitting of the two chambers of the Parliament to enable the filling of a casual vacancy that is held in the upper house by the Liberal Democrats, and I can advise the house pre-emptively that we will be facilitating that joint sitting and that will take place in the usual way at 6.15 tomorrow afternoon, pending of course the upper house sending us that message in those terms.

I would also like to draw the house's attention to a bill that has just been first read by the Deputy Premier and Minister for Mental Health. The mental health minister has just introduced a bill that, as he has indicated, introduces significant reform to the Mental Health Act 2014. This was a recommendation out of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, and the mental health minister and Deputy Premier has moved very, very quickly—with his department and officials and across government and, importantly too, in consultation with the sector—to bring this bill to the Parliament during this sitting week. It is a big bill, and it is appropriate that it be second read this week and then lay over the winter break to enable there to be further consideration of what is significant reform—reform that is needed and reform that was called for through the royal commission and is

going to be part of the overhauling of the system in a way that makes sure that it works for Victorians, be they people suffering from mental illness or their carers.

I am making this point because I want to advise the house that all of the bills that have been introduced today will be second read on Thursday, and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Bill 2022 is a bill that the Deputy Premier, the mental health minister, will be formally reading rather than incorporating into *Hansard*. It is the old-fashioned way, for those of us who remember what it used to be like in the past, of bills being second read. But it is an important landmark piece of reform that no doubt will attract the interest of people outside of this place, and it is appropriate that the moment is marked in this way by the Deputy Premier and mental health minister.

I also want to draw the house's attention to the arrangements that were put in place last sitting week via a motion through this house to have the co-chairs of the First Peoples' Assembly come and be part of the second-reading process for the Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Bill 2022. The arrangements are in place, and can I thank you, Speaker, and the clerks and other officers of the Parliament for working with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and other officials to facilitate these arrangements. A lot of very careful thought has gone into welcoming the co-chairs of the First Peoples' Assembly into this place. That will take place tomorrow morning and be immediately followed by the second-reading debate on the Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Bill 2022.

As I said, it is a very, very big week of landmark reform, appropriate acknowledgement of our First Peoples and further demonstration of how the Andrews Labor government is not wasting one single day in doing what we said we would deliver for the Victorian community and, most importantly, delivering important reform for the future.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (12:20): I rise to speak on the government business program, the final government business program before we go on the final break for this Parliament. I can advise that the Liberals and The Nationals on this occasion will not be opposing the government business program. As the Leader of the House has noted, there are five bills on the government business program today. I might take issue with her that they are all doing deep reform and really getting on with it. Some of them I think are very much tidying-up-at-the-edges bills, but that is not true of a couple of the bills on the government business program.

I note that, as the Leader of the House has said, we will be going into the second-reading debate on the Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Bill 2022, and before we do that there will be an opportunity for the co-chairs of the First Peoples' Assembly to come onto the floor of the Parliament and address the Parliament in both English and Aboriginal languages and to introduce to the Assembly the members of the First Peoples' Assembly. We will then move to debate on the Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Bill 2022, and I can advise, as the Leader of The Nationals—the shadow minister for this bill—has already said, the Liberals and The Nationals will be supporting this bill through the Parliament, so we look forward to that debate beginning on Wednesday.

The other bill that I particularly wanted to note, which I will be speaking on amongst others, is the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022. I would expect that this bill will have a range of views put to the Parliament. This is one that is close to my heart, as we have timber harvesting in the seat of Ripon, and I am always of the view that timber harvesters should be allowed to get on with their lawful business without being harassed as they do so.

As the Leader of the House has indicated, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Bill 2022 that the minister has just first read will be second read on Thursday, and no doubt he will have plenty to say, as he is choosing to go back to the old-fashioned way of saying it to the house rather than incorporating his statement.

I note for the sake of completeness that we will be facilitating the joint sitting if that motion comes through from the Council. We also will support, I believe, Mr Limbrick to come back into the Council.

This week is the matter of public importance from the member for Morwell, and we look forward to debating that. With those brief remarks I can confirm that we will not be opposing the government business program.

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (12:24): I also rise in support and acknowledge the bipartisan nature of the support of the government business program. It is always a pleasure to hear from the opposition when they are supporting our legislation. As the Leader of the House has already said, it is going to be a very special moment for us all when the co-chairs of the First Peoples' Assembly address us tomorrow. I think it is absolutely fitting given that we all—or at least I would hope all of us—accept that for the treaty process with Indigenous Victorians to work it must be led by Indigenous Victorians. So I look forward to being a part of that, and I hope we have a full house in the Assembly to be part of that process.

Another bill I am looking forward to speaking on, while it is a bit technical in nature, is the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022. This is sort of putting a bookend to the announcement that we made as a government just the other day on Best Start, Best Life. Education really is from cradle to grave these days. It has been a long time since you could put the books away when you left school. To borrow a line from my friend the member for Broadmeadows, it really is lifelong learning, as he would say. With those brief comments, I think I will leave it there. Let us crack on with it.

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (12:26): I will be very brief.

Mr Battin: Hear, hear.

Mr D O'BRIEN: It is always great to have support from your own side. Thank you, member for Gembrook. The government business program is quite a busy program this week, which is quite a change from recent months when we have been lucky to have two bills to debate. Obviously we are getting towards the end-of-term rush and we are now getting quite a number of bills. I agree, though, that there are some very important bills on the agenda this week.

In particular I look forward to contributing on the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022, which is one good thing that this government has introduced to this Parliament with respect to the forestry industry. I look forward to debate on that, to welcoming the First Nations people to the chamber tomorrow as part of the debate on the Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Bill 2022 and later tomorrow to welcoming Mr Limbrick back into the other place, as I understand the joint sitting is intended to do. With those short words, I will leave it at that.

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (12:27): I am pleased also to rise to speak in favour of the government business program, following on from the Leader of the House and the member for Mount Waverley. It is welcome news that the opposition is not opposing the government business program this week. Just reflecting upon this government, it has a strong reform agenda, and we are continuing on with that reform agenda this week. We have not wasted a day in the last 3½ years, and we are getting on with the job of making Victoria an even better and fairer place to live, to work and to study. And it is even now a better place to raise children after the groundbreaking announcement made last week by the Premier, the Minister for Early Childhood and the Minister for Women to transform our approach to early education.

Ms Staley: On a point of order, Speaker, this is a narrow debate about the government business program. The member for Wendouree is so far off that topic in talking about what the Premier might have announced last week. It is not even a bill before the house.

A member interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I was distracted momentarily. I ask the member on her feet to make sure she is referring to the government business program.

Ms ADDISON: I am certainly talking about our great reform agenda, and that reform agenda is continuing this week with the Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Bill 2022 that is before the house. This week we will continue to bring about important and significant change with the introduction of the Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Bill 2022. This is truly significant legislation that I will speak more to later in my contribution.

I would like to be able to just take a moment, though, to acknowledge that it is our last sitting before the winter recess and to thank the Speaker, as well as members of the Department of Parliamentary Services, for the great work that is being done running our Parliament and supporting all members. I would particularly like to thank the staff who work in the chamber, Hansard, security, catering, committees, the procedure office, the mailing and printing office and everyone else who contributes to make this place work. You are greatly appreciated. I would also like to send my best wishes to the Clerk, Bridget Noonan; the Assistant Clerk—Committees, Vaughn Koops; and the Assistant Clerk Procedure and Serjeant-at-Arms, Paul Groenewegen, who are away with COVID. I hope they have a full and speedy recovery.

As already mentioned, we do have a very, very busy sitting week with five pieces of legislation before the house. We have the Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition and Other Matters) Bill 2022. We have the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022. We have the Local Government Legislation Amendment (Rating and Other Matters) Bill 2022. We have the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022 and, as was previously mentioned, the Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Bill 2022.

The Andrews Labor government is clear that it wants to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians, and we are united in our support for treaty and Aboriginal Victorians. We will not play politics with treaty and reconciliation. This is a historic step forward for all Victorians as we reset the relationship between the state and Victoria's First Nations people, and it is one I am very proud to support. We know that the best outcomes for Aboriginal people come from Aboriginal people, and this bill is self-determination in action.

Tomorrow will be a great day in the history of Victoria, as the bill to allow the Treaty Authority to be established as a truly independent umpire to oversee negotiations between government and Aboriginal Victorians will be read for a second time. What a privilege it will be to be in the house and to welcome members from the other place to join us for this landmark day in the history of Victoria. And I note once again that we are leading the nation with our steps towards treaty. I welcome that we will have the co-chairs—Bangerang and Wiradjuri elder Geraldine Atkinson, elected co-chair of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, and Nira illim bulluk man of the Taungurung nation Marcus Stewart, elected co-chair of the First Peoples' Assembly—also attend the house. I welcome that the visitors may carry possum skin cloaks, wooden message sticks, wooden digging sticks and other objects into the chamber and that this is a real sign of respect of this place for the cultures of our First Nations people. This is a very special time to be in the Parliament, and I am so proud to be here. I commend the government business program to the house.

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (12:32): When I say I intend to make a short contribution on this debate, I intend to deliver on my promise to deliver a short contribution. I am very fond of the member for Wendouree, but I was assured by the Government Whip that government members would be making short contributions to this debate. Well, the member for Wendouree took her full 5 minutes.

I am looking forward to the contributions by my colleagues the member for Croydon, who will be addressing the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022 shortly, and later today the Leader of The Nationals, leading the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022. The member for Lowan will take the reins on the Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition and Other Matters) Bill 2022, the member for Polwarth on the Local Government Legislation Amendment

(Rating and Other Matters) Bill 2022 and again the Leader of The Nationals on the Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Bill 2022 during the course of tomorrow.

As you know, Speaker, and as has been identified by the Manager of Opposition Business, we will not be opposing this government program. I will take this opportunity, however, just to mention that tomorrow is 22 June, the feast day of Saint Thomas More, the patron saint of politicians. Long may he watch over us and guide us, because people in this profession need all the help that they can get.

Dr READ (Brunswick) (12:33): (*By leave*) The Greens will not oppose the government business program this week. We strongly support the establishment of the Treaty Authority, and this is why we are not opposing the program. We also support the bills relating to adult and community education and to rate relief in local government and the Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition and Other Matters) Bill 2022.

However, we are deeply concerned about the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022. Masquerading as a worker safety bill, this is nothing of the sort. We have requested consideration in detail for this bill as we have many questions for the Minister for Agriculture about the government's justification for the suppression of protest and of charter rights; about how this will affect citizens studying forests and the impact of logging; about the use of banning notices and how these will impact scientists, citizens and traditional owners; and about how the act may be used to ban the use of cameras, binoculars and other items used to gather important legal evidence. So if the government does not allow the house to proceed with consideration in detail of this bill, then it will be joining the Liberals and Nationals in ramming legislation through which limits the right to protest and movement—a fundamental right in a democracy, a right established in the Victorian charter of human rights.

Motion agreed to.

Joint sitting of Parliament

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VACANCY

The SPEAKER (12:35): I wish to advise the house that I have received a message from the Legislative Council proposing that the Council meets with the Legislative Assembly for the purpose of sitting and voting together to choose a person to hold the seat in the Legislative Council rendered vacant by the resignation of Mr David Limbrick and that the place and time of such meeting be the Legislative Assembly chamber on Wednesday, 22 June 2022, at 6.15 pm.

Ordered that message be taken into consideration immediately.

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (12:36): I move:

That this house agrees to the Legislative Council's proposal for a joint sitting on Wednesday, 22 June 2022, at 6.15 pm in the Legislative Assembly chamber for the purpose of sitting and voting together to choose a person to hold the seat in the Legislative Council rendered vacant by the resignation of Mr David Limbrick.

Deidre Chambers—what a coincidence!

Motion agreed to.

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

Members statements**QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS**

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development) (12:37): Congratulations to Macedon locals Marg Dearricott, Malcolm Clive Grant and Christine Nolan on being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia on the Queen's Birthday holiday.

Marg Dearricott, who is known to so many on this side of the chamber, is the embodiment of community activism and has been rightly recognised for her service to the Kyneton community spanning four decades. This includes as the secretary at the iconic Kyneton Daffodil Festival, president of Kyneton Zonta, secretary of the Kyneton ALP branch, founding member of Friends of Kyneton Botanic Gardens and *Kyneton Connect* editor.

Thank you also to Malcolm Grant, who achieved his recognition for his service to the Gisborne community over 52 years. Malcolm was instrumental in the campaign to get a dedicated ambulance station in Gisborne and also served as the inaugural president of the Gisborne Vintage Machinery Society and a founding member of the Gisborne Olde Time Market and is a Paul Harris Fellow with the Rotary Club of Gisborne.

Finally, my gratitude to Trentham local Christine Nolan, who was awarded her OAM for dedicated service to social welfare organisations across Australia. Christine has worked as a committed professional across the social welfare sector, including as an independent decision-maker for the national redress scheme, chief executive officer of the Breast Cancer Network Australia and secretary of the Queensland Domestic Violence Council.

On behalf of everyone in Macedon I would like to extend a huge congratulations to Marg, Malcolm and Christine. Thank you for the contributions you have made locally and nationally. Our community is proud of you.

PROBUS CLUB OF CROYDON

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (12:38): I rise today to speak about one of the wonderful community groups within my electorate, the Croydon Probus Club. The Croydon Probus Club was first established on 6 June 1984 by the Rotary Club of Croydon, originally only consisting of male members. In 2005 the club introduced ladies into the club, and to this date the club has an equal balance of males and females across both the management committee and the general membership.

It was an absolute pleasure to be invited along to their recent June meeting at Club Kilsyth. This was not only a meeting but also a celebration of one of the members of the club, Dick Neilson, on his upcoming 100th birthday. It was delightful to spend some time with Dick and learn more about his interests. Dick loved to play golf and only stopped playing a few years ago. He also has a wonderful love and talent for reciting poetry. In honour of this momentous occasion I presented Dick with a commemorative certificate and a gift as a keepsake. During my visit to the club I was also able to catch up and speak with other members and to hear about the upcoming events and outings the club has planned for the rest of the year and beyond.

The club also offers a great way for senior members of the community who are retired or semi-retired to keep active and have fun whilst also offering plenty of opportunities for meeting new friends, socialising and even finding new interests. I want to give a special thankyou to Alan Philcott and Rosemary Buchanan, the presidents of the Croydon Probus Club, for the invitation to be part of this special occasion and for the warm welcome I received by the club. I look forward to visiting the club again in the very near future.

MOUNTAIN GATE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater) (12:40): It was great to visit Mountain Gate Primary School recently and be shown around by captains Jack and Grace and principal Cheryl Sampson, and to acknowledge

student achievement at one of the assemblies with the Gaters. It was great also to hear from all the students about how they would improve their community for the better—more art, more PE—and some subtle advocacy for some school improvements, including a woodfired pizza oven, which seemed to be the big-ticket item of the day. Great school, great culture—I am proud to back them in.

SICK PAY GUARANTEE

Mr TAYLOR: You should never have to choose between a day's pay and your health, but for casual and contract workers that is the choice they face when they are sick. I am proud the Andrews Labor government have introduced an Australian first in the sick pay guarantee, giving eligible casual and contract workers 38 hours sick or carers pay. This is a pilot project, with all the admin work done by the state government, taking the pressure off businesses. With around 5000 people in Knox who may be eligible for this program, make sure you check your eligibility today. Register today at the link in the comments for this scheme, which is backing in locals.

POWER SAVING BONUS PROGRAM

Mr TAYLOR: If you want \$250 back in your pocket, tune into this one. From 1 July every single Victorian household can go on to the government's Victorian Energy Compare website and claim the \$250 payment to help with the cost of energy bills. You have also got a good chance to get a better deal while you are there too. It is simple. It is easy. As soon as you see this, go and get it done.

KNOX ATHLETICS COMMUNITY

Mr TAYLOR: In case you missed it, I was proud to announce \$250 000 to back in Knox athletics and support critical upgrades to Knox regional facilities. Thank you so much to everyone who supported my campaign to get this done. If you have not seen the announcement video, which pays homage to *Chariots of Fire*, I am a bit biased but I think it is pretty bloody good. Check out the comments. Proudly supporting athletics in Knox.

MARLO TO CAPE CONRAN BIKE PATH

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (12:41): I want to raise two issues today. The first of those is the Marlo to Cape Conran bike path. This was announced in the months after the fires over two years ago, and work has not started. We want to know why it has not started. I have lodged a question on notice about it this week. The local community wants to know. They see it as an important piece of local tourism infrastructure. We want to know what the reason for the delay is, and we also want to know what the time frame is to have this work completed. It is not good enough that this has gone on for two years with absolute silence from the government.

LAKE TYERS BEACH ACCESS

Mr T BULL: The other issue I want to raise relates to the beach access steps at Lake Tyers. The local community there has been very active. These steps were washed away in a recent weather event, and now we are getting delay after delay after delay from Parks Victoria and the government in relation to rebuilding them. The latest we hear is that they are looking at a new site to build these steps, but the community is not being kept informed about these issues. We do not want this to be another one of these jobs where we hear nothing from a government department for months and months and months and there is no community consultation. We are building back a set of steps, for goodness sake. It should not be a massive project to be undertaken. At the very least the community should be educated on this. I ask the minister to please commit to community consultation with this community group and make sure this job is done in a timely manner.

POLISH COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (12:43): I rise today to congratulate the Polish Community Council of Victoria on their 60th anniversary, an organisation that has contributed so much to Victoria. I want to especially thank Elżbieta Dziedzic, the first female president of PCCV, for her leadership in steering

PCCV over the last 2½ years. I want to also thank the past president, the late Marian Pawlik OAM, a great friend of mine. I recently had the opportunity to join my good friends in the Polish community for a gala night celebrating over 60 years of successful community engagement in sports, folk dance, language and social supports.

I am particularly proud of the Albion Polish Club for all the work that they are doing. In particular I was part of the \$800 000 investment in the club and also the Western Eagles football club in redeveloping their site and really making it a place not only for the Polish community of the western suburbs but also for other community groups. It has become one of the most successful community organisations and soccer clubs, I would say, in Melbourne. It is the envy of the Polish club in Rowville; they love coming out to Albion and seeing the fantastic facilities that are on offer thanks to our government.

COUNTRY FIRE AUTHORITY SOUTH WARRANTYTE STATION

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (12:44): It is hard sometimes to comprehend the contempt in which this Labor government holds my community. When we were last in government we committed funding to the integrated station at South Warrandyte, leaving the volunteer station at Brumbys Road empty. For six years I have approached this government about the use of that station for a number of community groups—the local men’s shed, the local scouts—and I have even put forward, supported by our local paramedic, that the station be used as an ambulance station.

Every time I have raised these issues with the government I have been continuously told that the government is going to use this property for its own uses, perhaps for CFA uses. Whatever the case, the place has remained empty for six years. Any number of these different groups could have utilised that space, but instead the government just completely and stubbornly said that they would not let any community group use it. About a month ago the government put it up for sale; it was advertised to be auctioned off. When I raised in this place that the proper process had not been followed—that the building had not been offered to local government—the sale was pulled. This Saturday it is going up for auction again. The government has refused to let my community use this building for six years. Now it is putting it up for auction. It is an absolute disgrace. The building was largely paid for by the community. The fact that the government is going down this path shows the utter contempt that this government has for the Warrandyte community.

STEVEN LOPES OAM AND NICOLE LOPES OAM

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (12:46): I rise to update the house in recognition of two exemplary community members, Steven and Nicole Lopes. They have been recognised for their service to Little Athletics as part of the 2022 Queen’s Birthday honours with a Medal of the Order of Australia for both of them. They have been involved in community Little Athletics in my patch for about 22 years, joining Waverley Little Athletics in the year 2000. Starting as an age-group assistant, Steven served on the committee from 2000 to 2005 and was president from 2003 to 2005, while Nicole volunteered behind the scenes, and both continued to volunteer in weekly key roles until 2008. Now, while their children finished at the club some 14 years ago, they both continue to volunteer their time at regional and state championship events every year. So on behalf of the Mount Waverley district community I would like to thank both Steven and Nicole for their dedication to serving our community and congratulate them both on the tremendous honour of Order of Australia.

PATRICIA RYAN

Mr FREGON: On another more sombre matter, I would also like to mark the passing of a remarkable member of our schooling community, the former principal of Avila College from 1980 to 1986, Ms Patricia Ryan OAM. Patricia had a passion for humanities and a strong commitment to social justice, and her ability to engage staff and students with fairness and compassion was a hallmark of her leadership at the college. I know the member for Altona, who is a former student of Patricia, would join me in saying my condolences. Vale, Patricia Ryan.

PHILIP SUTTON

Dr READ (Brunswick) (12:47): Today I rise to farewell Philip Sutton, who died aged 71 on 13 June. Philip was an environmental activist for as long as I can remember and with David Spratt co-authored in 2008 the book *Climate Code Red: The Case for Emergency Action*, which used the phrase ‘climate emergency’ for the first time. This alerted many of us to the urgency of the need for effective climate action. His work led to hundreds of local governments around the world declaring a climate emergency, and the first of these was Darebin, here in Melbourne. It would be a fitting tribute to Philip if this Parliament would also declare a climate emergency. Inspired by Philip Sutton, I and the Greens will continue to promote this idea. My condolences are with his friends and family.

AGL ENERGY

Dr READ: On that note, I also raise with concern a promotion for AGL Energy being run through the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. AGL owns three coal-burning power stations, including the brown coal burning Loy Yang A, one of the world’s biggest polluters, which is not scheduled to close until the 2040s—despite the aforementioned climate emergency. I am grateful to a constituent who alerted me to the government’s assistance to AGL in expanding their share of the energy market through marketing their seniors energy plan. I urge the government to promote renewable energy providers instead.

BUNINYONG PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong) (12:49): Yesterday I had the honour to attend a very special moment at the Scotsburn campus of Buninyong Primary School. It was the planting of a tree grown from the original Lone Pine. It was incredibly moving to welcome John Basarin OAM from the Friends of Gallipoli to Scotsburn. This tree will stand for many years and offers a place for children to acknowledge those lost at war. But even more than that, the tree symbolises the extraordinary relationship between the people of Turkey and the Australian people in recognition of the universal suffering caused by war. Friends of Gallipoli promotes friendship and understanding, and I would like to acknowledge Ron Fleming from the Buninyong RSL and Narelle from Buninyong Primary School for encouraging the school to have this tree come.

BUNINYONG ELECTORATE TEACHERS

Ms SETTLE: In the few moments I have left, I would like to acknowledge the commitment of some of our local teachers who have been commended for their service. For 40 years Lyndell Ross has been at Mount Clear Primary School; David Stuchbery, 40 years, Mount Clear College; Angela Crace, 45 years, Phoenix P-12 Community College; Jennifer Ford, 45 years at Phoenix P-12 Community College; and 50 years from Gay Pearse at Woody Yaloak Primary School. These teachers do an amazing job, and I think it is testament to their commitment that they have served for so long. I wish to offer my heartfelt congratulations.

BAIT-UL-SALAM MOSQUE

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (12:50): The Bait-ul-Salam mosque, which translates to the ‘house of peace’, is an Ahmadiyya Muslim Association mosque in Langwarrin. It is a place that I have visited in the past and that I look forward to visiting again in the future. Many colleagues here would have seen recently on the news that this place was damaged quite severely, with up to 12 people coming through, putting ladders through the window and damaging this mosque. As I said, when its name translates to ‘house of peace’, it is very sad to see here in Victoria this happening and this still occurring due the ignorance of some people.

The mosque’s imam, Wadood Janud, lives downstairs with his family. He was roused that evening by the noise, and he tried to scare off the offenders. The imam stated in relation to seeing what had happened:

The praying area is a place where you don’t even wear your shoes—that was really painful ...

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Association president, Osama Ahmed, and the imam stated that the community welcomed the young offenders to come back and learn about their faith and what they do. The imam said:

Most of the members of our community escaped persecution in other parts of the world and they moved here so they could live their life peacefully and worship the faith they want to worship ...

I will be more than happy to show them around and answer any questions they may have.

One of the greatest things I have done is to learn and be educated by going to some of these mosques, as well as the Islamic museum, to understand the Muslim faith more. I invite more people to go and learn about that so we have less of this ignorance in our community.

MELTON ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr McGHIE (Melton) (12:52): The Melton electorate has been getting A-plus results from the recent budget. Last week I turned the sod at the new Rockbank Murry Road children's and community centre site in Thornhill Park. This is right next to the new primary school in Thornhill Park that will open to students next year. Across the fields, land will be purchased for a new secondary school in Cobblebank to go with the new Strathulloh Primary School, which opened this year with 728 kids. Land will also be purchased for a new primary school in Weir Views, and Brookfield primary school has been fast-tracked, opening in 2024. Staughton College was excited to learn that a massive \$31.77 million has been allocated to upgrade and modernise the school, including replacing the existing temporary facilities and adding an additional 400 spaces in permanent facilities to meet growing demand. This will help our wonderful educators to continue to deliver high-quality education to Melton students.

Investment in our schools' infrastructure is important but even more so are our wonderful educators. I congratulate Christine Butcher from Kurunjang Primary School and Helen Kelly from Bacchus Marsh college for 40 years of service, and Judith Meikle from Staughton College on an amazing 50 years of service. What an amazing effort by these three women. Thank you for supporting hundreds of students over many decades. Top-quality education is the result of this Andrews Labor government's investment in education.

GIPPSLAND SPORTS ACADEMY

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (12:53): I recently attended the Gippsland Sports Academy awards evening, which is always a fabulous occasion and an opportunity to celebrate the successes of some extraordinary Gippsland athletes, who are so ably supported by coaches, sponsors, volunteers, family members and the academy itself. From a Morwell electorate perspective, I wish to congratulate the following nominees for awards: Chelsea Elliott, tennis; Jack Johnson, volleyball; Liam Farley, shooting; Grace Van Tilberg, netball; Alexandra Luders, swimming; Judi Buhagiar, netball; Michael Mihaly, swimming; and Nic Ryan, volleyball. Alexandra and Judi took out the overall David Drane and Phil Shelley awards respectively.

GEOFF BLOCK PSM AND RICHARD ELKINGTON OAM

Mr NORTHE: I also extend my congratulations to local teacher and principal at Kurnai College Geoff Block, who was recognised in the Queen's Birthday honours with the Public Service Medal. Geoff has been an incredible educator and leader for many years and is enormously respected for the work that he has done and continues to do in local schools and in our community, particularly when it comes to disadvantage.

Richard Elkington was bestowed with an Order of Australia Medal for his services across many spheres, which are too numerous to mention in this forum. Whether it be the energy sector, regional development, community radio, sport and recreation, education, Freemasons or more, Richard has been involved at some level. Both Geoff and Richard are thoroughly deserving of the honours. Well done.

TRISH SWEENEY

Mr NORTHE: Unfortunately Traralgon icon Trish Sweeney recently passed away following a four-year battle with ovarian cancer. Trish was an absolute champion and pioneer in our community, becoming the first female real estate agent and being heavily involved in organisations such as the Lions Club, Mick's Kitchen and the Pink Ribbon Ladies. *(Time expired)*

HOPPER FAMILY MEMORIAL PLAQUE

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (12:55): With works finally wrapped up on the removal of the Old Geelong Road level crossing at Hoppers Crossing station, it was a great opportunity to unveil a brand new plaque there down at the station. As part of the works at the station precinct, a brand new plaque commemorating the Hopper family was commissioned and installed, celebrating the early history of the area. For years people have assumed Stephen Hopper was the gatekeeper, opening the gates on the railway between Melbourne and Geelong and for whom the suburb was named. As history would uncover, he did not do it alone. While Stephen was in fact an engineer who worked on the rails at the crossing, it was his wife, Elizabeth, who was the gatekeeper and worked day and night to connect what was the only route through Skeleton Creek at the time. After Stephen, sadly, died, Elizabeth would go on to raise their 11 children and set up a thriving community in the area. In fact two of their living descendants, Paul and Les Hopper, were present at the unveiling on Saturday morning. For the time that was the late 19th century, Elizabeth was a trailblazer, a working mum in a time when there were so few women railway workers, and it is fantastic to see her contribution to what is now a thriving community recognised on par. It is an unusual thing for a family to be awarded a boom gate; however, in this instance there is absolutely nothing more fitting to honour a pioneering couple and their descendants, who played such an integral part in the history of the original level crossing. I am sure that the Hopper family will pass down their boom gate for generations to come.

NORTHEAST HEALTH WANGARATTA

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (12:56): I wish to raise three more concerns at Northeast Health Wangaratta that have been brought to my attention recently. Mr Greg Ford of Tungamah was taken by ambulance from Tungamah after a recent bee sting—he is allergic to bees—and he was released at 10.30 at night. There was no room for him to stay overnight. His wife cannot drive at night and he was told that the transport would be compensated, but after a bill of over \$155 for the taxi ride he was told that compensation did not apply to him because he was only 60 kilometres from the hospital, not the minimum 100 kilometres required to qualify for compensation. He is most disappointed. A Mulwala resident was also released at night and was made to wait outside in her nightie in freezing conditions for nearly an hour as her daughter came from Mulwala to pick her up. Finally, another Tungamah man was released from Northeast Health Wangaratta at 1.30 am, and he was forced to hitchhike home. He walked for 5 kilometres in near-freezing conditions before he was offered a ride.

Surely the Andrews government can provide some temporary shelter outside the hospital in Wangaratta if patients are going to get tipped out late at night. The winter weather is hard on even the fittest bodies within our community, but those who have just exited hospital are very, very vulnerable, and this is absolutely outrageous that people are treated in this way. Again, I am not critical of the hardworking staff in our hospitals, but surely the government for Melbourne, who throw good money after bad projects in Melbourne, could at the very least provide warm shelter for those who have been forced to leave the Wangaratta hospital after hours. Show some respect to our people who rely on fair treatment from this government.

HUME CITY COUNCIL

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (12:58): My call to the Minister for Local Government is to report urgently on Victorian government initiatives to overcome the fractured relationships now publicly revealed between Hume City councillors. The just-published Local Government Culture Project report highlights the cost of disputes in legal bills, but there is a higher price to pay if infighting

stymies the vision, funding and partnerships I have built for decades, now delivering results that reimagine Broadmeadows from a rust belt to a green belt and a brain belt. This strategy has inspired \$1 billion in investment for 5000 new jobs at the Ford site at no cost to taxpayers, transforming this derelict site from the rust belt to a green belt.

Australia is one of a small number of countries manufacturing vaccines. Broadmeadows is the epicentre for pandemic outbreaks and remedies, manufacturing more than 50 million doses against COVID and with a \$1.8 billion deal to manufacture new vaccines against influenza soon nearby. This is the brain belt. Vaccine manufacturing is saving lives at home and abroad and is the best diplomacy. I am delighted the Australian government is using vaccines to save lives in the Solomon Islands. Instead of infighting, I call on Hume City Council to urgently announce its proposed \$40 million investment to unlock the value of the Broadmeadows town centre as a catalyst for economic and social development. This is what must be done to deliver new industries and jobs and a better future.

SEAN BELL

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (12:59): I congratulate local resident Sean Bell on his recent completion of an extraordinary run from Cairns to Melbourne. Sean started his epic run on 11 April and completed it at Vermont Reserve on Friday, 10 June 2022. He was aiming to run 60 kilometres per day for 60 days and to raise \$60 000 for Make-A-Wish Australia. He achieved all of his goals and ended up raising just under \$100 000 on his almost 4000-kilometre run. It is a truly outstanding achievement, and Sean and all his support crew, sponsors and donors are to be congratulated on their efforts. Well done, Sean.

BURWOOD EAST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr ANGUS: Last Wednesday I had the great pleasure of visiting Burwood East Primary School at the invitation of the school's community captains, Olyvia and Elyann, to speak to the year 5 and 6 students about my role as an MP and also answer students' questions. It was a very enjoyable time together with some excellent questions being asked and the students being very attentive and well behaved. My thanks to Olyvia and Elyann, classroom teacher Beth Cleary and the BEPS community for having me along.

ENERGY POLICY

Mr ANGUS: The recent revelations that the gas and electricity supply in Victoria is under threat is a stark reminder of yet another area of total mismanagement and failure by the state Labor government. Energy supply is one of the most basic needs of a civilised society, and yet it is another area that state Labor has botched up. In its endless pursuit of green votes, it has put in jeopardy the basic needs of Victorians. The government needs to ensure that baseload power continues to be supplied at a reasonable cost to ensure all Victorians and, importantly, Victorian businesses have a sure supply of electricity and gas for their needs.

GIG ECONOMY

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (13:01): Gig workers across this state deserve a fair deal, and that is what the Andrews Labor government is delivering. We commissioned a landmark inquiry, which was the most comprehensive piece of work ever conducted in Australia on this issue, which revealed gig work was far more prevalent than previously thought. It found that more than 13 per cent of Australians had been gig workers at some point, and that figure likely increased during the pandemic when gig workers faced huge challenges, working incredibly hard in tough conditions with zero job security to help stop the spread.

When the previous federal government refused to act, our government took on a national leadership role. We put the regulation of the gig economy squarely on the national agenda, with over \$10 million in funding so far. On behalf of the Treasurer, I have consulted with gig workers' platforms and experts

on enforceable standards to protect and support our gig workers. These standards will help gig workers better understand their work rights, more easily resolve disputes and secure better conditions and pay.

Our government's leadership, combined with the advocacy of Trades Hall, the Transport Workers Union and other strong unions, has already prompted many platforms, including DoorDash, Menulog and Hireup, to improve pay standards and work security, because they saw us taking action. Now that we have a Labor government in Canberra we look forward to working with Tony Burke, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, to implement the standards we carefully designed.

COUNTRY LEAGUE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION CHAMPIONSHIPS

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (13:02): We know how valuable a role community sport plays in our communities when it comes to supporting children and young people. With the support of the Andrews government, Geelong hosted the Victorian country football soccer championships over the recent long weekend, attracting over 4000 people from all over Victoria to our beautiful city. I congratulate Geelong football, the volunteers and everyone involved for the organisation of this huge event, which was a great success—and of course all participating teams from across the regions. The Geelong teams, particularly the under-14 and under-18 girls teams, did very well in the finals. The member for Lara and I had the pleasure of awarding the medals to the grand finalists.

KARDINIA PARK STADIUM ACCESSIBILITY

Ms COUZENS: Making sure that Geelong is an inclusive and accessible city is something I am really passionate about, so I was delighted to join the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers and my colleague the member for Lara to officially open the new Changing Places facility at Kardinia Park stadium. I thank the Kardinia Park Stadium Trust for this initiative, and I know there is more to come. Now everyone can attend a game or an event at the stadium regardless of their needs. Whether it is the Changing Places facility or the sensory room, it makes a huge difference for people's lives.

Alongside the new facilities is the magnificent wall mural truly reflecting the Geelong community painted by Liam O'Neil. Liam is an active ambassador for autism awareness and acceptance and has donated unique art pieces to charities close to his heart.

CASEY CRUSADERS RUGBY CLUB

Ms RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (13:04): I was pleased to join the Minister for Community Sport and my friend the member for Bass at Clyde Recreation Reserve last week. It was a little bit muddy, but the view was incredibly impressive of the three rugby, footy and cricket ovals; tennis courts; netball courts; car parks; multipurpose pavilions; local art; and playground. I was very happy to see Tom Tufuga there. He called the grounds 'the castle' as they are going to be the home of the Casey Crusaders. On Tuesday night last week I joined the member for Bass at the temporary home of the Casey Crusaders where we caught up with Tom again.

The women of the Crusaders are rippers. While we were cooking up a storm of pizza and pasta for the families, my friend the member for Bass and I were involved in warm and sparkling conversation. Thanks especially to Natu for her leadership in the kitchen and for the extraordinary approach the club take towards the women, men, boys and girls—everyone—who are part of the Casey Crusaders family.

ANDREW GAI

Ms RICHARDS: Finally it is with great joy I congratulate the extraordinary Andrew Gai on his recognition at the refugee achievement awards last night. I know some people are talking about the Logies, but this is actually much more important than the Logies. Andrew is one of my brains trusts in Cranbourne, the driving force of the South Sudanese-Australian Academic Society and the pride of the south-east in so many ways.

ELIJAH BUOL

Ms RICHARDS: Earlier in the week the member for Narre Warren South and I were fortunate to be present at the Just Drop In homework club along with clever Queenslander Elijah Buol OAM, who visited and inspired the kids. We all ended up inspired. The future is bright.

MONASH CITY COUNCIL OUTDOOR DINING

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (13:05): There were very few good things that came out of the pandemic in the last couple of years, but one of them was a bigger focus on outdoor dining across Victoria. Our government, the Andrews Labor government, partnered with councils and businesses across Victoria to provide more opportunities in public spaces for outdoor dining. It was well received in my electorate and I know in other parts of Victoria. It enhanced the areas where they were quite economically depressed over the pandemic years. It also provided some activity for the community and for businesses. Several traders in my electorate invested significant money to create some really desirable spaces, including Wines on Poath in Hughesdale, Greca Street in Oakleigh and Vanilla Lounge in Oakleigh.

In addition to that, our government provided \$1.5 million to Monash council to establish permanent and semipermanent spaces. It is a big success that so many other councils around Victoria are talking to their traders and continuing this arrangement—but not Monash council. They have told businesses that these spaces will need to be shut down by 30 June, despite some traders offering to pay in order to continue those spaces. This is bad not just for traders but for the community, who want to have more safe spaces to recreate and to dine out. It is also a denial of how hard the last couple of years have been both for businesses and for the community. I again call on Monash council to do what almost every other council in Victoria is doing, including the councils surrounding Monash: to allow these traders to continue these outdoor trading spaces.

ANTHONY MARDLING

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (13:07): Vale, Anthony Mardling. We farewelled you last week, the Grapes publican. Rest in peace.

Business of the house**NOTICES OF MOTION**

Mr PAKULA (Keysborough—Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, Minister for Trade, Minister for Business Precincts, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Racing) (13:07): I advise that the government does not wish to proceed with government business, notice of motion 1, today and ask that it remain on the notice paper.

Bills**EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ADULT AND COMMUNITY
EDUCATION AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022***Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Mr MERLINO:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (13:08): It is a pleasure to rise to make a contribution as the lead speaker on the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022. The bill proposes various amendments to several acts, which I will outline, and the amendments are mainly technical in nature and seek to improve various parts of the education and training system in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006. Given that the amendments are mainly technical in nature, I will spend some time just reading them into or putting them into my contribution so that sets the scene for what this bill is and the purpose and the main provisions of this

bill are. Then I want to talk briefly about just a couple of areas that we raised but pleasingly were addressed and a number of questions that were raised and conclude with our position on the bill—that we are not opposing it—and the reasons there.

I thank some of the stakeholders for their contributions in terms of their feedback on the bill. But before I commence once again I want to put on record my thanks to the department and staff from the ministers' offices who not only organised the bill briefing, which is par for the course when we deal with legislation in this place, but—there were a number of questions that were raised at the bill briefing—gave us thorough responses, not just minor responses, which helps me as shadow spokesperson for education because I can circulate those to the people on this side of the house that raised those issues or indeed some of the stakeholders that raised them, and it allows us to go back to them to clarify some of them.

So in particular I thank Paul Frayne, who is the senior adviser in the Minister for Education's office; Caroline Moore, who is in Minister Tierney's office; and also—if I have got all the names right from memory—Tara, Jun, Jeanette, Patrick, Michael and Ben from the department or ministers' offices et cetera, who attended the bill briefing on the day and gave us, as I said, a summary of the amendments and answered our questions, which makes life a bit easier in here. I do put on record my sincere thanks to Paul, Caroline and all the staff in relation to the assistance they have provided.

Turning to the purposes of the bill, the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022 amends the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to modernise provisions relating to the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board, to reflect that AMES Australia is the only remaining adult education institution, to provide the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) with greater discretion to conduct a compliance audit of a registered training organisation (RTO), to modernise the framework for Victorian student numbers and to make other amendments to that act. And I will come back and spend a few moments just talking about the student numbers.

It also amends the Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Act 2021 to ensure the VRQA retains a consistent set of compliance and enforcement powers and to make other amendments to that act. It also amends the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 and the Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021 to provide that persons registered in respect of accredited foundation secondary courses and registered foundation secondary qualifications are subject to the reportable conduct scheme and the child safe standards. The bill also makes related and consequential amendments to the Public Administration Act 2004, the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 and the Worker Screening Act 2020. So you can see, as I commence my contribution, there are quite a number of amendments to several acts—all important and all part of the bill.

The main purposes of the bill are to, as I said:

... amend the **Education and Training Reform Act 2006**—

- (i) in relation to the Adult, Community and Further Education Board; and
- (ii) to remove adult education as a provider of adult, community and further education; and
- (iii) to apply Division 5 of Part 3.3 of that Act exclusively to AMES Australia; and
- (iv) to provide the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority with greater discretion to decide whether or not to conduct a compliance audit of a RTO; and
- (v) to modernise the framework for the access, use and disclosure of the Victorian student number and related information on the Student Register—

I will come back to that—

- (vi) to provide that post-secondary education institutions and post-secondary education providers may provide education to persons who are of compulsory school age; and
- (vii) to make other amendments ...

And then, as I went on to say before, the second main purpose of the bill is:

- (b) to amend the **Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021**—
 - (i) to allow the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority to issue notices to comply to registered schools, registered school boarding premises and RTOs; and
 - (ii) to lower the threshold for the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority to issue a notice to produce; and
 - (iii) to disapply section 41BA of the **Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005** to remove the restrictions on the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority disclosing information it has obtained; and
 - (iv) to make other amendments ...

And then subclause (c), in terms of purposes of the bill, is:

- (c) to amend the **Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005** and the **Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021**—
 - (i) to ensure that a person, body or school that is registered in respect of an accredited foundation secondary course or a registered foundation secondary qualification is subject to the reportable conduct scheme and the Child Safe Standards under Parts 5A and 6 of the **Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005**; and
 - (ii) to make other amendments; and—

finally, nearly there—

- (d) to amend the **Public Administration Act 2004**, the **Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004** and the **Worker Screening Act 2020** to make related and consequential amendments.

There is quite a mouthful there, but as I said in my opening comments to the contribution on the education legislation amendment bill, the bill does propose various amendments to several acts that are technical in nature, and I wanted to outline those and put them in my contribution into *Hansard* so that we are very clear what we are talking about here.

In terms of the main provisions, the bill proposes amendments to the Education and Training Reform Act 2006—the education act; to the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005—the CWS act; and to the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021. Specifically it will amend the education act to clarify and modernise the powers, functions and governance arrangements of the Adult, Community and Further Education Board, known as the ACFE board. The bill will remove adult education institutions as a category of providers of adult, community and further education and confine the provisions relating to adult education institutions to AMES Australia. There are a number of other provisions, or what the bill will specifically do, and I might take a few moments to outline all those points that are within the bill or have been mentioned by the minister in the second-reading speech.

Another main provision is to modernise the framework for access to, use and disclosure of the Victorian student number, VSN, and related information in the Victorian student register. As I mentioned before, I will come back briefly to talk about student numbers. We raised some concerns about how data is held in the Victorian student register and how it is managed by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, so I do want to touch on that and make a few comments.

The bill clarifies, in line with the original policy intent, that post-secondary education institutions and post-secondary education providers may provide education to people who are of compulsory school age, including to ensure those entities are subject to the child safe standards under the CWS act. It provides the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority with greater discretion on whether to conduct a compliance audit of a registered training organisation. It also allows the Minister for Education to appoint an acting member of the board of the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership, and again, time permitting, I will come back and make a brief comment about board appointments.

The bill will also amend the CWS act, as amended by the CWS amendment act, to ensure that a person, body or school registered in respect of a foundation secondary course or foundation secondary qualification is subject to the reportable conduct scheme and the CSS. It allows for the VRQA to continue to use and disclose information about complaints in accordance with existing provisions in the education act and the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014. Finally, the bill will amend the education act, as amended by the CWS amendment act, to lower the threshold for the VRQA to issue a notice to produce and to allow the VRQA to issue notices to comply to schools, school boarding premises and RTOs.

There were a couple of matters we raised at the bill briefing. Sometimes we call them 'areas of concern', but they were really just points we wanted clarification on to give us confidence in the bill and what it was aiming to achieve, so we raised a few of those. I will just put a couple on record here. Again, if I could thank the departmental staff for their clarification of some of those matters, which gave us confidence in those areas. Questions were raised about the change to allow the Minister for Education to appoint an acting member of the board of the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership. Clarification was given that the act currently does not allow the Minister for Education to appoint acting members to the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership and that this is inconsistent with the minister being able to appoint acting members to other boards under the minister's responsibilities. So whilst that might have appeared to us as a bit of a red flag, we understand that is just bringing it in line with the appointment of acting members to other boards under the minister's responsibility, and that change is to bring the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership in line with the current minister's powers. I asked whether all board appointments are still a full cabinet process, and they are; this is just in relation to acting arrangements. Reassurances were given that all non-acting appointments are subject to full cabinet processes and consideration. It was pleasing to hear that those processes still exist for non-acting arrangements.

Concerns were also raised about access, use and disclosure of Victorian student data and information. I will turn to that in a moment. I got some information back on that—again, to give us a bit of confidence about access, use and disclosure of Victorian student data and information, which is front of mind and very important. Questions were raised about the requests for VSNs—Victorian student numbers—and related information from law enforcement bodies to support investigations or justice proceedings. Again, clarification was given regarding these requests: that they must be made from the relevant agency as opposed to an individual. The example that I think we raised at the bill briefing was that these cases can be sensitive but nevertheless it is very important that proper due process takes place—for example, if a parent in a custody case was also a police officer and how that could or could not operate—but participants at the bill briefing stressed the need for student privacy to be enshrined, and we were confident that that would be the case.

I might spend a little bit of time now, having gone through all those technical amendments and got those into the contribution, on a couple of questions that were raised at the bill briefing. Again, I am thankful to the minister's senior adviser, Paul Frayne, who went and researched them and got back to us before the bill came before the house, which was terrific. I will just again put these on record for those who might be thinking about this or making a contribution to the debate on this bill; it may answer some of their questions in relation to that.

The first one was from one of our members on this side: how many requests in relation to the Victorian student number—the VSN—are we getting a year from Victoria Police or Australian Federal Police or other departments? We were interested in that data and those numbers. We were informed that the VSN data is held in the Victorian student register and managed by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, the VCAA. We were informed that the VCAA receives an average of about 50 requests per year directly from Victoria Police, in addition to an average of 30 requests made by welfare agencies such as family violence services, which are explicitly on behalf of Victoria Police. We were also informed that indirectly the VCAA receives an average of 2200 requests annually from welfare agencies investigating child welfare as a result of public reports.

The thorough information that we got back went on to inform us that an average of 1600 requests are submitted annually from other departments such as the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing as well as from a range of first-responder welfare services such as the Orange Door. I digress to just commend the work of the Orange Door which continues to be rolled out. I see firsthand some of the fantastic work that they do, so just while I am talking about the Orange Door I should put that on record. The purposes that the information is used for include the need for the educational history of young people facing the Children's Court for the purposes of working with these young people, with the aim of re-engaging them in their education, which is important.

Again I will digress briefly for a few minutes. We have the Croydon Community School out in my electorate of Croydon, a wonderful school that does some terrific work in re-engaging young people who might drop out of their education or seek alternative paths in education. The old former Croydon secondary college on Croydon Road, which was going to be part of the Maroondah regeneration project, was merged onto one site at Melba Secondary College on Brentnall Avenue. That site was vacant and the school was vandalised and destroyed, but it is pleasing that a new school is being built, which we have advocated for and supported funding for. That school will probably open this year and will be a wonderful school for the Croydon community. I am reminded of their terrific work when I talk about the purposes of re-engaging young people in education. I just touch on that as I digress from the bill, with your indulgence, Deputy Speaker. It is a wonderful asset in my electorate, the Croydon Community School. As I was quoting:

The purposes that the information is used for include the need for the educational history of young people facing the Children's Court, for the purposes of working with these young people with the aim of re-engaging them in their education. The Student wellbeing officers respond to requests from schools about students not attending school and other concerns such as student physical and mental health.

The response we got back went on to say that:

The VCAA has not received any enquiries from the AFP in recent years. Historically there have been a number of requests which involved child marriage, child sex cases and terrorism. Enquiries from the AFP are therefore not received by the VCAA with any regularity or volume, likely because information could not be provided as the AFP is not an authorised user and the request for information does not fall under the Child Information Sharing Scheme and/or the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme.

As I said, the original question was about how many requests there were and what were they used for, and that response alleviated our concerns and answered that question of the member. Another area that was raised at the bill briefing was:

Is there scope for authorised users or other persons who access the information on the Victorian Student Register to use the information for other unauthorised uses? For example, if Victoria Police becomes an authorised user under the Bill, would it be possible for random police officers who are also a parent of a child on the register accessing and using Victorian Student Number (VSN) inappropriately?

I am not for one suggesting that that would go on. But these concerns do get raised by people feeding information back on the bill, so it was important that we raised that question as a hypothetical. The answer we received was:

Access to VSN data is, and will continue to be, strictly limited to those persons who are authorised by the Secretary and for certain limited authorised purposes.

The legislation outlines that it is a criminal offence to access, use or disclose the data other than for the purposes set out in the legislation and the user's authorisation. The maximum penalty for this offence is 30 penalty units (or \$5452.20).

The Department will consider whether any inappropriate or improper access by an authorised user should be reported to Victoria Police and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions on a case by case basis.

The Bill also permits the Secretary to make guidelines in relation to a range of matters including who the Secretary will consider to be appropriate to be an authorised user and also how authorised users should access, use and disclose the Victorian student number in a way that maintains and protects student's privacy. Guidelines will be binding on authorised users and non-compliance with the guidelines may result in the Secretary revoking a person's authorisation.

The advice we got back went on to say that:

It is proposed that the well-established protections in the Privacy and Data Protection Act (PDPA) will apply to those persons and bodies already subject to that Act. Additionally, it is proposed that further protections will be included by applying the requirements in the PDPA to authorised users who are not already bound by either that act or the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) (Privacy Act).

Ensuring all authorised users are bound by robust privacy laws will maintain and protect the privacy of individuals to whom the information relates. There are consequences under the privacy legislation if a person breaches the Information Privacy principles.

An example that was given was that the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner has regulatory powers to undertake an investigation and issue a compliance notice if there is a serious breach of legislation. Further, the database itself is maintained by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority in a secure environment which is tightly controlled, and decisions about access to the VSN are made by the VCAA on a case-by-case basis. I know I sound a bit like a broken record on this, but again very valid concerns were raised about authorised users, information protection and privacy, and that very thorough response that came back from the minister's office was well received and welcome in allowing us to go back to some of the people that asked those questions and alleviate their concerns and put their minds to rest.

There were a couple of other quick ones that we raised. We talked about whether a parent is entitled to see the VSN data stored on the Victorian student register about the student. Is a parent entitled? We were informed that a parent may request a copy of the information held in the Victorian student register relating to their own child under section 5.3A.11 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETRA). This is an existing right and is consistent with the important privacy principle that an individual should be entitled to access any person's information held by government authorities that relates to them and their children.

The final area that we raised was under what circumstances a police officer can access the VSN data, and we were informed that under the ETRA, as amended by the bill, VSN data will be able to be disclosed to a police officer in line with the PDPA. The disclosure can only be made for a limited list of purposes, such as the prevention and investigation of crime, preventing or detecting serious improper conduct or conducting court or tribunal proceedings. If an employee of Victoria Police wishes to access VSN data, they are required to specify a law enforcement purpose and submit a written request for information to the statutory authority that manages VSN data.

Again, it does make the process smooth for us in terms of when we get the opportunity to have a bill briefing to ask questions from people that are put to us, both from those that we consult with—important stakeholders that we consult with about legislation coming to this place—and our own team, the Liberal-Nationals coalition, who raise concerns or matters. We have got wide networks of people out there that raise matters that we can tap into on some of these issues that come up, and it is very pleasing that Paul Frayne, Carolyn Moore and the department officers, Tara, Jun, Jeanette, Patrick, Michael and Ben, were all able to assist in that bill briefing. Again I put on the record my thanks to them.

As I move to my conclusion on this bill, consultation is always important, and important stakeholders were engaged. I think most of us have got the same processes on this side of the house when a bill is introduced. We have a network of important stakeholders that we would engage through email and phone, inviting them to make a comment or give feedback on the bill. I did have a couple of responses in relation to this one, and it is pleasing that people do take the time to get back to us—the Principals Association Victoria; parent associations; the Australian Education Union, Victorian branch; and a number of important people we invite comments from. It, one, alerts them the legislation is coming in. We would hope in many cases the government has gone through a consultation about the legislation so they might be already aware, but it does alert them the legislation is coming in and invites them to make a comment about how that may or may not impact on them, and if it does in a detrimental way, to provide that feedback to us so we can raise it directly with the minister or the department officers or in that bill briefing process we can raise those concerns.

So I went through that process of engaging stakeholders by email or phone, sending them copies and links to the bill.

Ms Ryan interjected.

Mr HODGETT: I have got a list that is on record, member for Euroa. It was very helpful. We received no opposition to the bill by any of the stakeholders, and as I said, a number got back to us. It was pleasing that people were alert, and in the limited time constraints of running legislation through here and responding to it, it was good that they met the deadlines. So we are not opposing this bill. The amendments are mainly technical in nature, as I have said, and seek to improve various parts of the education and training system in the education act. Again, the feedback and advice on the proposed amendments to the legislation from a whole cohort of stakeholders was that the proposed changes will be beneficial to students who undertake training in registered training organisations outside of school settings. The proposed changes will provide greater consistency for students and their parents as they seek to support their child navigating challenges as they arise. So I look forward to the contributions of other members on this bill. Indeed I think a couple of last-minute matters were raised with me by the member for Eildon. The member for Eildon and the member for Euroa did raise some other matters. The member for Euroa in her contribution will raise the matter she wants to seek clarification on, so hopefully the minister may be able to come in, if he sums up on this bill, and perhaps clarify a couple of those matters.

Ms Staley interjected.

Mr HODGETT: Well, we invite him to come in and sum up on the bill. Or indeed if he hears the member's contribution, he may choose to get in touch directly to clarify that. The other matter that was raised, I think that we clarified that and answered that question. So we are not opposing the bill. I look forward to contributions on the bill. I look forward to seeing delivery in terms of what we have been reassured in relation to those concerns that were raised about access to student numbers, data and privacy and seeing how the bill will actually operate or function in what it is intended to do. I thank you for your indulgence. As I said, they are technical amendments. It was important to put them on record and get them into my contribution so that when we refer back to this matter we can actually see what it was designed to do. So with that, I will conclude my contribution, and I look forward to other contributions.

Mr EREN (Lara) (13:38): I am delighted to be able to speak on this very important bill before the house, which is the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022. At the outset I would like to congratulate all of our education ministers: obviously the Minister for Education, the Minister for Training and Skills and Minister for Higher Education, and of course the Minister for Early Childhood as well, because we know that education is cradle to grave and it is lifelong learning. Education is one of those key aspects to making a civilised society, and obviously investment within education is crucial if we want to have a cohesive, civilised society.

I for one on this side of the house am very proud to be part of a government that concentrates very much on education regardless of socio-economic background. Obviously public education is key to making sure that all communities advance as they should, and they are entitled to access proper education as required. I use this phrase often, and it goes something like this: what if the cure for cancer was in the mind of a child that could not afford or access education? What if? That is why it is so important to give opportunities to all communities to have a proper education system whereby they can actually make a huge contribution towards society regardless of their socio-economic background. Before I get to the proper bill in terms of the technical amendments to this very important bill, I do want to highlight the numberplates that we have in this state—I think it is fair to say that we are the Education State. We understand the importance of education, and that is why we have invested literally billions of dollars over the past few years into education, and rightfully so. It does not matter where you live in Victoria, education is an important part of all of our lives, all the way from kinder and preschool through primary school and secondary and then higher learning. It is so important.

I do want to highlight, as the chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, that we have an inquiry at the moment on Victorian universities' investment in skills, which is such an important part of our future, if I can say that, in terms of the expectations of growth within certain industries and sectors and accommodating the need to derive those skills from the population that we have here rather than trying to get those skills from abroad. That is why it is so important that all learning institutions are linked to one another to prepare for the future in terms of the massive pipeline of investments that we are making as a government to accommodate that jobs growth. There is no question that we are looking for many workers, particularly around construction. The infrastructure spend we have in this state is huge—over \$110 billion over the next decade, which is around the same investment that the federal government is making nationally.

From our perspective as a government it is so important to make sure that education covers everything, particularly the health and wellbeing of students. I want to highlight again that since 2015 the Labor government has invested more than \$25 billion to achieve our Education State reforms. Obviously we are committed to investing in school infrastructure. This has been demonstrated through the allocation of \$12.8 billion over the past eight budgets to deliver more than 1850 school upgrades, open 75 of 100 new schools promised by 2026 and support around 17 400 jobs in construction and associated industries. It is worth putting this on the record because I think there is no other state government that invests in education like we do, and there is no state government in the history of this state that has made more investments than we have in our education sector. I think it is worth putting that on the record yet again. Since 2018–19 the Labor government has invested \$592 million in reforming the senior secondary school system to prepare students for successful careers of the future, including \$277 million in the 2022–23 budget. Can I just add that my electorate of Lara has done quite well. We have benefited—

Ms Addison interjected.

Mr EREN: Thank you, as you are. Also, massive investment—since the start of 2019 well over \$75 million has gone into education in the electorate of Lara. I know this firsthand because I have seen the regeneration work that has gone on in the Lara electorate over the past decade, and now we have come full circle with the secondary college getting the final \$15.5 million that is required to refurbish that very important school.

In terms of what the bill's intent is, the bill will amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, which is also known as the CWS act, and the Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021—the CWS amendment act—and it will clarify and modernise the powers, functions and governance arrangements of the Adult, Community and Further Education Board; remove adult education institutions as a category of providers of adult community and further education; confine the provisions relating to adult education institutions to AMES Australia; and modernise the framework for the access, use and disclosure of the Victorian student number, VSN, and related information to the Victorian student register, VSR. The bill will provide the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) with greater discretion on whether to conduct a compliance audit of a registered training organisation (RTO).

It will also clarify, in line with the original policy intent, that post-secondary education institutions and post-secondary education providers may provide education to people who are of compulsory school age, including to ensure those entities are subject to child safety standards under the CWS act. It will also ensure that a person, body or school registered in respect of a foundation secondary course or foundation secondary qualification is subject to the reportable conduct scheme and the CSS; allow the VRQA to continue to use and disclose information about complaints in accordance with the existing provisions in the education act and the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014; lower the threshold of the VRQA to issue a notice to produce; and allow the VRQA to issue notices to comply to schools, school boarding premises and RTOs.

Of course, as I have outlined about the number of investments that have gone into education, those moneys that have been committed to education include capital works, disability inclusion programs, maintenance funding and many other amazing programs that we run as a government, which is fantastic to see, and I am very proud as a member to be part of a government that cares for education.

In addition to this, there have been massive investments into programs that students in my electorate benefit from, such as the school breakfast program and the doctors in schools program. They are wonderful programs that many students benefit from, particularly in areas of different socio-economic backgrounds. The list is truly remarkable, and I am certainly proud to be a member of a government that is so committed to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to learn for their future.

As a government we are investing significantly in senior secondary reform, helping students build their skills and capabilities to thrive in further education and training and move into a rewarding career. It is very important. We have got so many jobs lined up. One of the submissions that was made recently to the inquiry of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, from Engineers Australia, indicated that over the next number of years, because of the large program of investments in infrastructure, we would need something like 40 000 engineers—40 000—going forward, and obviously we need an education system to accommodate not just engineers but many other aspects of careers that we need to accommodate with the massive infrastructure spending. The Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events is here as well. Obviously the Commonwealth Games will be a huge event in 2026 which will need a lot of workers. With those few things, I wish this bill a speedy passage and I commend it to the house.

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (13:48): It is a pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak on the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022. I must at the outset congratulate the member for Croydon, the Shadow Minister for Education, for speaking for his full 30 minutes on this legislation. I noticed with interest that the Leader of the House this morning, when speaking on the government business program, referred to the reforming legislation that the government is bringing forward this week. I would have to say that it is probably a little bit of a stretch to refer to this bill as social reform. I think the Minister for Education himself in his second-reading speech referred to it as largely technical amendments, so due credit to the shadow minister for speaking for 30 minutes. He did list the minister's advisers and departmental officials four times in his speech, but nevertheless, he spoke for his full 30 minutes and for that he should be congratulated.

I do, though, think that it reflects a broader pattern that we are seeing from across the government in terms of their legislative program, where they are bringing forward pieces of legislation in the last sitting weeks of the Parliament that are very much uncontroversial in nature and that they hope or expect will fly through the upper house because numbers there are very precariously balanced for the government. So I do actually think it is quite a stretch to say that the government is bringing in a lot of reforming legislation at the moment.

But some of the purposes of this bill are to make some changes to the Adult, Community and Further Education Board, the ACFE board; to remove adult education institutions as a provider of adult, community and further education; to provide the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority with greater discretion to decide whether or not to conduct a compliance audit of a registered training organisation; and to change the framework for access, use and disclosure of the Victorian student number and related information on the student register. There are a number of other purposes as well.

As the shadow minister outlined, we will not be opposing this legislation, but I do want to make a few comments about the adult, community and further education sector in particular. I had the pleasure of having the training portfolio for the opposition for four years, and I really enjoyed getting to know the sector—ACFE but also the entire sector. I always found the people who are engaged in this space and working in this space to be particularly dedicated and passionate about the work that they do. I had the opportunity to travel the state and meet with many of the ACFE providers that we have around the state. They are so dedicated to their work because they do understand that they really are working at the coalface in endeavouring to get Victorians, many of whom have faced real disadvantage through

their lives, back into the training sector or perhaps into it for the first time, upskilling them and getting them through to the workforce. That is very important and powerful work in changing often generational disadvantage in this state.

In my own electorate I have two Learn Locals that are under the Adult, Community and Further Education Board. I have the Rushworth Community House, and also Euroa Health has started as a Learn Local provider. These organisations in communities like Rushworth and Euroa are particularly important, because for those communities, if you wish to access any kind of training, you would have to travel quite a distance if these organisations did not exist. People in Rushworth would have to go to Bendigo or to Shepparton in order to access training, and similarly Euroa people would have to go to Benalla or Shepparton. As you would know, Deputy Speaker, as a regional member of Parliament, in our communities, particularly for disadvantaged jobseekers or those who are looking to upskill, we do not have a lot of access to public transport and many of those people do not have access to a car, so being able to travel to access those training opportunities is often very, very difficult. And so these Learn Locals, which exist very much at that community level and are very accessible to people, are really important to people being able to, in lots of cases, turn their life around. It might even just be someone who has dropped out of the workforce for a few years—they may have had a baby, they may be a parent, they may have faced some particular obstacles or they may be older or retired and looking to keep their mind engaged and to keep busy. These organisations, particularly in those regional communities like Rushworth and Euroa, are absolutely a critical part of our social fabric, so I certainly wanted to take this opportunity to thank them for that very important work that they do.

I am interested to note that clause 12 of this bill means that the ACFE board is no longer required to have regard to the advice of regional councils, and that seems to me to be a bit of a stripping back of the roles and responsibilities of those regional councils and the roles that they have traditionally played with the ACFE board. It seems to me, from my reading of this legislation, that the government is reducing their role to be basically no more than loose consultative bodies now. We do have eight ACFE regional councils around the state; they are located in Barwon south-west, eastern metropolitan, Gippsland, Grampians, Hume, Loddon Mallee, north-west metro and southern metro. Traditionally they have been responsible for providing feedback to the ACFE board on the specific needs of local regions, advising the board about the specific skills that are needed across their regions and monitoring the delivery of adult education across those respective regions. They also have provided a role in contributing to statewide planning and policy around adult, community and further education, so they do play an important role. I would really welcome government members perhaps explaining why the government is whittling back the role of those regional councils. I would not be surprised if it has been difficult to find people to fill them. I do know they are predominantly served in a voluntary capacity, those appointments, which are made by the minister. But I would really welcome government members seeking to explain that change there.

I also just want to point to clause 15, which changes the set of skills required when someone is appointed by the minister to the ACFE board. The government is changing the wording 'management expertise' to 'government expertise', which they say is broader. Again, I would not find it a surprise if the government was finding it difficult to find suitably qualified people to fill the ACFE board, and in saying that I make absolutely no reflection on the board that is there. I know that it is currently being chaired by Maria Peters, who I had the great pleasure of engaging with when I held the shadow portfolio and when she was the CEO of Chisholm Institute. I know that Maria is very widely respected across the training sector. She was widely respected I think by both sides of politics for the experience that she brought to training and to TAFE in Victoria in particular. But I do find it very interesting that the government is finding it necessary to broaden the skill set that is provided there on the ACFE board, and I would welcome an explanation from government members with respect to that.

With the time remaining that I have, I just want to touch on the area of the bill that deals with giving the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority the power to issue notices to comply to school boarding premises and registered training organisations. My electorate is very, very fortunate to have

two boarding schools in Kilmore, both the Kilmore International School and Assumption College, Kilmore. The international school has been facing challenges in recent times, and I believe it may actually be relocating from Kilmore to Wallan, which is a really big disappointment to the Kilmore community. But we are very fortunate to have ACK, and I am sure many people in the chamber are aware of Assumption College. It is a mainstay of our region, and it is a school of choice for students, particularly historically those coming from northern Victoria but also from the southern Riverina. It takes its governance and its student welfare very, very seriously. It is a Marist school, and I was very pleased recently to actually attend the opening of a new sports pavilion that they have named in honour of one of their alumni, Neale Daniher, who of course faces a huge fight with MND at the moment. It is a real credit to that school and to the strength of its alumni that it has been able to raise the funding to construct that new sports pavilion, but I would also say that the ongoing nature of that school and its strength into the future is incredibly important to the Kilmore community. With those remarks I commend the bill to the house, and we will not be opposing it.

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (13:58): Thanks for the opportunity to speak on the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022. We are indebted to the member for Croydon for taking us through the technical amendments in this bill in quite some detail. I am always delighted to stand in this place and to speak on an education bill, because as we all know it is the Andrews Labor government that has committed to establish Victoria as the Education State. We have done that because we know that education transforms lives, it changes lives and it absolutely shapes lives as well. That is why the Andrews Labor government has committed more than \$25 billion to achieve our Education State reforms. It is something I am certainly very proud of, and I know those on this side of the house are very proud of as well, for the extraordinary potential and opportunity that that delivers not only for our youngest Victorians but for all Victorians as we know education is a lifelong journey. Some of the reforms and some of the amendments set out in this bill address education for adults, for members of our culturally and linguistically diverse communities and for all Victorians. And of course with our \$25 billion investment in education and making Victoria—

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Members

ASSISTANT TREASURER

Absence

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:01): I rise to inform the house that today the Treasurer will answer questions for the portfolios of Assistant Treasurer, regulatory reform, government services and creative industries.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

HEALTH SYSTEM

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Minister for Health. Mandy is 66 years old. She has fallen over several times and has a suspected hip fracture. Recently she had another fall and dislocated the same hip. She is in constant pain, cannot lie flat in bed and spends her nights and days sitting in a chair because it is the only way she can get relief from constant pain. Mandy's surgeon had originally told her her surgery would be performed within 90 days. It is now over 100 days since she was told this. Last week she was told the earliest she can get surgery is now in November—five months away. Why are Victorians like Mandy still suffering despite the government's repeated promises and assurances that Victorians deserve to get what they need in their moment of need?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:02): Can I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. As is my practice in this place when I am provided with specific cases by those opposite, I do not refer to them. What I can of

course say is if the Leader of the Opposition were to provide me with the details of this person in a way that allowed us to identify the case and the circumstances and the health service—which has been a little less than forthcoming in some of the material that those opposite have provided me when I have asked for it—we will follow that particular set of circumstances up. If there is anything that we can do based on, as is always the case, the clinical advice, then we will seek to do that with the relevant health service and the individual’s particular clinician.

Insofar as that then informs a general set of issues that I think the honourable Leader of the Opposition is really pointing to, it is without doubt as a result of a one-in-100-year global pandemic with COVID-19 that we are seeing our health system face pressure and demands that it has never in its life seen before—not just in this state, not just in this country, but around the world. That is why as part of our elective surgery response plan—a \$1.5 billion commitment that the Deputy Premier and I were able to launch back in April—we are determined to, in a set of situations where not only do we have still 1245 healthcare workers this very day off on furlough as a result of COVID-19, and that is before we then add the flu and the other care-providing responsibilities where we are seeing every day over 2000 workers out of our healthcare system—if you take people out of that system at that level for over 100 days straight now, then you are going to have a significant impact on our healthcare system.

That is why our \$1.5 billion elective surgery recovery plan is so important and why we will see as a result of those investments starting to come on the partnerships with the private sector, the new systems in place for how elective surgery will be delivered, the rapid access hubs right across the state, the investment in more theatres and the partnership with the private sector— *(Time expired)*

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): Mandy’s family actually directly contacted the minister’s office last week, directly detailing her plight, but as late as 1.00 pm today have not received a reply or follow-up. Last week the Premier told the Parliament:

I do not want any patient to get anything less than what they need in their moment of need.

Minister, Mandy needs her surgery now. This is her moment of need. Why is the government continuing to ignore her?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:05): The Leader of the Opposition’s premise is flawed. I did actually check immediately before coming to question time: the 62 cases that those opposite have provided to my office or to the Premier’s office over the course of—

Mr Guy: On a point of order, Speaker, just on relevance. The minister had made a point that I had passed this information to the minister. My question actually detailed that in this case, Mandy and her family have in fact directly contacted the minister—

The SPEAKER: Order! I heard the question.

Mr Guy: I did not pass that on.

The SPEAKER: Order! Points of order are not an opportunity for questions to be repeated.

Mr FOLEY: In terms of how the government and the health agencies all go around engaging with the legitimate issues that many honourable members bring to our attention, we deal with them on the principle of clinical merit.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:07): I am delighted to rise to update the house on the government’s transformation of early childhood education and care. Last week I was very pleased to join the Minister for Early Childhood and the Minister for Women to announce a \$9 billion investment over the next decade to expand the Best Start, Best Life program with three major new initiatives—making kinder free across the state from 2023, a very significant support and a very significant decision in the context of the cost of living for families with young kids; delivering a new year of universal pre-

prep for four-year-olds; and establishing 50 government-operated low-cost, high-quality childcare centres in what are often referred to as childcare deserts.

This is about meeting demand where the market simply is failing to do so. This reform will ensure that our kids have the skills from play-based education and learning—play, exploring, making friends, learning about the world around them. These are skills that they need—socialisation, all of those skills that are quite obvious. They are not just needed for school, they are needed for life, and the earlier you start the better you finish. That is what all the international evidence tells us. That is what common sense tells you. It is why we are rolling out 15 hours of universal three-year-old kinder and leading the nation and doing it. But we can always do more, we can always go further. And that is why working in close partnership with the New South Wales government we were able to make these announcements—a common statement of intent and purpose. This is a terrific partnership for families, for cost of living, for our youngest Victorians and indeed for those in New South Wales, for their brain development, their life opportunity. It is a very significant boost to economic power for women—they being able to choose and be involved at the level they choose. It is about the best start for the best life.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (14:09): My question is to the Minister for Ambulance Services. On 24 May Glenis Coucaud, an 80-year-old woman, sustained serious injuries from a fall at Fountain Gate cinemas. An ambulance was called. Glenys lay where she fell, attended by cinema staff, for more than 4 hours. Moviegoers passed in and returned out of movies, with Glenis still lying there in pain. Eventually her family took her to hospital as hours later overworked paramedics were still not able to get to Fountain Gate. Can the minister explain how a situation like this is acceptable—that an 80-year-old woman who sustained a fractured cheek, a laceration to her eye socket and severe bruising to her clavicle, shoulder, femur and fibula was unable to get the care she needed when she needed it?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:09): Can I thank the member for Gembrook for his question. I am sure I speak for not only all honourable members here but all Victorians when I clearly acknowledge that in the circumstances that the honourable member has relayed those sorts of circumstances are unacceptable to any government, community member or indeed family. Indeed in terms of the specifics I am not privy to the particulars that the honourable member refers to, and it is not actually clear from what the honourable member has presented whether that is an issue relating to the 000 ESTA call-outs or indeed, once it has gone through that system, the dispatch processes.

Regardless of where that issue falls, whether it is in the Minister for Emergency Services portfolio of responsibilities or my portfolio of responsibilities, the issue is how that happens. But what we do know is that this is a government that, when it has been faced with ambulance services that have had, quarter on quarter, one after the other, the busiest demand in their history, in an environment whereby it came into the pandemic after record investments in our ambulance service, had the highest—84 per cent—and best response times for code 1 since records were introduced and certainly much higher than the previous record lows when those opposite had the benches. Since that time of course we have seen a global pandemic that has seen huge demand and that has continued to increase quarter on quarter to the point where we now have record demand on our ambulance service and indeed record numbers of calls—more than doubling—to ESTA and the 000 emergency ambulance service line. This is in the context of a one-in-100-year global pandemic that has had to see mechanisms imposed whereby ambulance services, paramedics and the entire health ecology introduced new systems of infection prevention and control measures that in that combination of events have applied untold pressure, which is why this government has doubled the investment in ambulance services as a result of that. This is why we have opened, not closed, ambulance services across the state—for instance, in the honourable Leader of the Opposition's seat in most recent times. This is why we will work with our paramedics rather than declare war on them and resolve these issues, as challenging as they may be.

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (14:13): Glenis's daughter, a nurse, has said:

She could've had a bleed on her brain ... we really didn't know but we felt we had no choice but to drive her because she was in a lot of pain and we had no idea when an ambulance would arrive.

When Glenis was taken to hospital, she was forced to wait an additional 10 hours at the Dandenong and then Monash hospitals, one of which had her outside in a tent. Glenis was eventually seen at 5.30 am, 14 hours after her fall. Why are Victorians being forced to drive their loved ones to hospital because the government has allowed a crisis to develop in our overworked ambulance and health systems?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! When the house comes to order. The member for Gembrook is warned. The member for Gembrook will come to order.

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:14): Can I thank the member for Gembrook for his supplementary question. At the heart of the honourable member's supplementary question is a profound error. The notion that you ignore at the heart of this—that there has been a one-in-100-year global pandemic that has reshaped the entire landscape of our health services—is a serious flaw of those opposite.

In regard to how services are delivered in an infection prevention and control safe way in line with clinical advice, I would refer those opposite to our public health officials' published advice on how these matters are dealt with. In regard to how we get out of this, it is by a \$12 billion pandemic healthcare response plan that invests record amounts in people, systems and infrastructure rather than cutting them.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (14:15): Part of the transformational early childhood and economic reform announced last week is the commitment to establish 50 government-operated, affordable and integrated childcare centres to deliver child care, kinder and pre-prep. We know that thousands of families live in childcare deserts, areas where there are more than three children per one centre-based day care place. We also know that our most disadvantaged communities have the least access to child care.

With the first centres to open from 2025, these publicly run childcare centres will help address market failure where there are not enough private and not-for-profit operators to keep up with local demand. Where possible the centres will be co-located with schools to avoid the double drop-off or alongside hospitals, TAFEs and major employers to create convenient access for working parents. Where there is demand centres will operate extended hours and on weekends so parents in industries like hospitality and health care have more options. These new centres will accommodate approximately 5000 children—thousands and thousands of families where an extra parent can return to the workforce, providing an immediate boost to the economy, because on this side of the house we recognise that it is impossible to have the choice to participate in work if you cannot get care for your child in the first place. That is why in 2020 we provided \$81 million for 400 new outside-school-hours care services at government schools. We have now got statewide coverage. There are new government schools that have a kindergarten on site or next door. It is why we have been rolling out universal three-year-old kinder. All of this is the nation's biggest investment in children's development and economic reform. On the other side of the house, a childcare policy desert.

ALBURY WODONGA HEALTH

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) (14:17): My question is to the Minister for Health. When it is raining in Wodonga, as it is at the moment, staff at the Wodonga hospital have to put out buckets for leaks and put towels around glass panes to keep the corridors dry. The staff open up day procedure rooms at night because they do not have enough beds. Nurses are doing 18-hour shifts. Last night the hospital issued yet another alert for the demand and wait time in emergency. Can the minister finally tell the

people of Wodonga when this government will provide their share of funding to build a new Albury-Wodonga hospital?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:18): Can I thank the member for his question, and can I just start by saying what a fantastic job the Albury Wodonga Health service does for communities on both sides of that river. Can I also say that those opposite could not deliver a stethoscope, let alone a new healthcare project. There are some in this place who are knowingly running around our state committing a deliberate fraud—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Just before calling the point of order, I warn members that the level of shouting has escalated to the point where members will be removed without further warning.

Ms Staley: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question, and I ask you to bring him back to answering it.

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

Mr FOLEY: Thank you, honourable Speaker. The Albury-Wodonga health service delivers world-class service to the people of both southern New South Wales and north-eastern Victoria. What this government is doing is going through a process of engaging with the board, with the community and with health service providers in a methodical way to plan the delivery of the service in partnership with the New South Wales government. Despite what some would say as they go around this state committing a hoax on regional and rural Victorians—that somehow there is this magical partnership that just sees money rain from Canberra and Sydney at a click of their fingers—as opposed to this, we are undertaking careful, methodical planning with the healthcare services and the New South Wales government to deliver these arrangements.

We will go through as we are: a careful, methodical planning process in consultation with the board. And can I just take this as an opportunity to pass on my condolences to the family of the chief executive of Albury Wodonga Health, who tragically passed away from COVID over the course of this process, which has naturally seen that planning process delayed somewhat. I welcome the appointment of a new CEO, I welcome the constructive engagement with the New South Wales government and I acknowledge that the New South Wales government have in their budget today committed some \$45 million for ongoing arrangements, which they first committed to in 2019 while—

Members interjecting.

Mr FOLEY: There the honourable member is wrong. That is where the honourable member is wrong. The honourable member needs to check his facts because what those opposite do is commit fraud and a deliberate misrepresentation on regional and rural Victorians, making promises they know they would never deliver.

Ms Staley: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister just used the phrase ‘deliberate misrepresentation’. That is just another way of saying ‘deliberately misleading the house’.

Members interjecting.

Ms Staley: He used the phrase ‘deliberate misrepresentation’.

Mr FOLEY: On the point of order, Speaker, I think a check of the record would show what I was referring to was the comments some make outside of this place, not in this place but outside of this place, as they misrepresent a genuine funding arrangement that is in place and that some have no intention of ever delivering on. Out there in the real world—

The SPEAKER: Order! I will check the record and report back to the house.

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) (14:22): My supplementary is to the Minister for Health—the tone-deaf Minister for Health. Cassie Metcalf had an emergency gall bladder operation through Albury Wodonga Health last September. Part of that operation included a stent that should have been removed just one month later. It is almost July. Cassie has lost track of how many times that surgery has been cancelled. She thinks it is about eight or nine times so far. On Friday she was told it was all go for this week. Twelve minutes after being told that, she was told that it was off again. The reason? There are not enough beds. She does not want the surgery anymore. The ups and downs are too much. Given the government has not built a new hospital on the border, what is the government doing to fix the immediate pressure on beds and elective surgery waiting lists at Albury Wodonga Health?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:23): What this government is doing is investing record amounts in the service delivery of Albury Wodonga Health. What this government is doing is investing record amounts in the people, the systems and the infrastructure of regional and rural health systems right across this state. What this government is doing is investing record amounts in how we turn around elective surgery waiting lists which have grown as a result of a COVID-19 once-in-100-year pandemic that is seeing people in record numbers being furloughed out of our healthcare system—not just in this state, not just on the southern side of the Murray River but on the other side of the Murray River and in every state and territory around the country and in every comparable system around the world. That is why we are investing \$12 billion in more people, more systems and better infrastructure so as to make sure that this government delivers the world’s best health system again in a post-pandemic environment.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong—Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) (14:24): You would be surprised to learn that today I rise to update the house on the Andrews Labor government’s commitment to improving outcomes for Victorian women through our landmark early childhood reform. When it comes to achieving gender equality, we know almost all roads lead to childcare reform. For too long, unaffordable and inaccessible child care has held women back. That is a fact. Our career, our share of the care, our income, our superannuation, indeed our identity have been shaped by a childcare system that is rooted in inequality.

The current system disproportionately keeps women at home and men at work, and this has lifelong consequences. There are almost 27 000 women in Victoria today who are not participating in the workforce at all due to childcare requirements. Many more will be forced to work fewer hours than they would like. This time out of work stalls career progression, and this drives the gender pay gap, the representation and leadership gap, and the superannuation gap. This sees woman over-represented in low-paid and insecure work, more likely to be unemployed and twice as likely to be underemployed. It sees women do twice the unpaid care at home and retire with about half the superannuation. This is a system that fundamentally does not work for women, and it does not work for women who want to work.

Under the Andrews Labor government, though, this is all about to change—free kinder, universal pre-prep, 50 brand new government-run childcare centres. This will give every parent a legitimate choice about who returns to work and when, not one forced by the limitations of our early childhood system. This will progress gender equality in homes and in workplaces. It will drive up women’s workforce participation, allow career progression and in doing so address the leadership gap. It will address the retirement poverty that too many women experience, and it will meaningfully operate to close the gender pay gap. This is structural reform in action. It is good for the economy. It is good for kids. It is good for women. It is good for equality. It is game changing. The fact is when women get the opportunity to achieve, our whole community and our economy benefits.

NATIVE FOREST LOGGING

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:26): My question is for the Minister for Agriculture. Minister, native forest logging in Victoria is pushing our threatened species closer to extinction and making climate change worse. With the government continuing to log our native forests, the only thing protecting

them right now are citizens defending them on the ground and in the courts. Yet the government is now trying to change laws to stop peaceful protests and to make illegal logging legal. Why is the government—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! When the house comes to order. There is too much interjection. I ask the member to start his question again.

Mr HIBBINS: Native forest logging in Victoria is pushing threatened species closer to extinction and making climate change worse. With the government continuing to log our native forests, the only thing protecting them right now are citizens defending them on the ground and in the courts, yet the government is now trying to stop peaceful protest and make illegal logging legal. Why is the government continuing to do everything it can to log our native forests instead of protecting them?

Ms Allan: On a point of order, Speaker, perhaps you could give some guidance to the member for Prahran that some of the content of his question was straying into matters that are actually before the house this week for debate and are listed on the government business program in the government's Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022. It is indeed sponsored by the Minister for Agriculture into this place. I seek your guidance on whether that question should stand in order given it appeared to pre-empt debate on that bill.

Mr Hibbins: On the point of order, Speaker, the specific question I asked was: why is the government continuing everything it can do to log native forests instead of protecting them? I think it was a fairly wideranging question in terms of logging, and the minister can very easily answer that question without in any way straying into debating the bill before the house.

Mr Blackwood: Further to the point of order, Speaker, the member is not only breaching the conventions of this house, he is also misleading the house with the way he went about his questioning.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Narracan will resume his seat. It is not an appropriate point of order. I would ask the minister to answer the question without anticipating debate on the bill. The question asked at the end of that preamble was broad enough for the minister to be able to answer it.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development) (14:30): We are not.

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) (14:30): Supplementary question to the Minister for Agriculture. I will pick up that answer from the minister. Is the minister seriously coming into this chamber and telling this chamber that the government is not doing everything it can to log our native forests?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development) (14:30): Look, to give the member for Prahran some satisfaction, it is obvious that he has no understanding whatsoever of our government's *Victorian Forestry Plan* and the commitment that we have to a managed transition in our forestry industry, so I can only suggest that the member read the forestry plan. It is very clear that this government has a commitment, on account of the reduction in available timber, to end native forestry here in Victoria by 2030. We understand, and we want to build a strong forestry industry here, but it will be built on plantations. I thank the member for his question and suggest that he inform himself of our government's commitments.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (14:32): I rise to provide an update to the house on one of the biggest public policy and economic reforms that this state has ever seen. Last Thursday the Andrews Labor government announced Best Start, Best Life—an ambitious overhaul of the early childhood education and care policy areas—with a massive \$9 billion investment over the next decade to save families money and

to support women to return to the workforce. It is an investment. It is an investment in families and in the future of our state.

We know that childcare costs are crippling family budgets. We are seeing households spending up to 20 per cent of their income to cover these ever-increasing costs. And without better access to child care many parents, mainly women, are being held back from working the jobs and the hours that they want. We know that workforce participation is key to driving economic growth, and this reform will provide a massive boost to Victoria's workforce. Families tell me that child care is too expensive, while many employers tell me that they are struggling to fill labour shortages. This once-in-a-generation reform can help fix both of these problems and deliver massive dividends to our state by reducing disincentives for parents to work. This investment is a down payment on our future productivity. As Sonneman and Jackson said to the *Australian Financial Review* just days ago, these childcare reforms will deliver economic benefits for decades to come. Modelling from the Front Project and PwC indicates that for every dollar government spends on child care and preschool, \$2 will be returned to the economy.

ENERGY POLICY

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (14:34): My question is to the minister for energy. With Weston Energy leaving the Victorian gas market due to financing being withdrawn over uncertainty in the Victorian gas market and regional manufacturers now being hit with gas contracts rising from \$12 a gigajoule to \$42.50 per gigajoule, will the minister release her gas substitution road map, or will she allow regional businesses dependent on gas to go to the wall, costing hundreds of rural jobs?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:34): I thank the member for her question. Certainly what we have seen occurring across the gas and electricity systems now for a number of weeks is an absolute sign of the failure for nine years of federal leadership at the national level—absolute failure at the national level.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Benambra!

Ms D'AMBROSIO: They may not like to hear that, but that is the sheer reality. We have always been clear with our plans here in Victoria in terms of the new energy supply coming into our system and the move towards electrification. All of these put Victoria in the best possible position to have insulated ourselves against the worst aspects of what has been happening in the last two weeks right across the rest of the country. The reality is this: we always stand ready to help households. We always stand ready to help businesses no matter where they are right across our state, and we are absolutely delivering on that through lower bills for them of course and their customers.

What is really important here is that those opposite should really turn their question to themselves, because the fact is failed leadership at a federal level has absolutely left us in this terrible situation. Having said that, we have been really clear for a number of years now that too much of our gas supply is leaving the country for the benefit of others globally at our expense, both in terms of supply and in terms of pricing. We have advocated under their friends, governments in the past who totally ignored the calls for action and intervention in the market, to put the power back in the hands of businesses across the state and households across the state.

We have had our conversations with the federal government. We look forward to working with them, and we encourage them to look at fixing this broken system, which has left Victorian businesses, those that are needing to use more gas, exposed to the high prices that are being charged because of global exports of gas right across the rest of the globe. We look forward to this commonwealth government making the right decisions and doing that very soon. In the meantime we have got the best insulated system in terms of electricity and gas prices of any of the other states, and that does not happen by accident. That happens when you have got a plan for delivering clean energy and more supply to the

market, you believe in science and you help businesses and households deliver savings each and every day in their pockets. Let there be no doubt that when they were in government they delivered a 35 per cent increase in electricity prices for everyone.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! When the house comes to order. The member for South Barwon! The member for South Barwon has only just returned to the chamber.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (14:38): A \$12 per gigajoule rise to \$42.50 per gigajoule is, as one business owner has said to me, a business-threatening, unsustainable increase. What options does the minister have for small businesses in western Victoria to access gas at sustainable prices, or is she comfortable if places that rely on gas like brick manufacturers in Stawell simply close their doors?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:38): I thank the member for the supplementary question. I will inform the member that we are working every single day with the businesses that are in this situation. The fact is, what is needing to happen is that we need leadership at a federal level to actually fix the situation. We are absolutely helping businesses choose energy efficient products to actually reduce their power bills but also their gas bills, and we are working with these brick manufacturers. You might not know this, Louise, but we are actually working with your members and your businesses—

The SPEAKER: Order! Minister, correct titles.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: to help them work their way through this. The answer is this: you can either believe those opposite, who claim they care about rising power and gas bills but in fact delivered a 35 per cent increase in electricity prices when they were in government, or you can believe this side of the house that is actually delivering the real savings to businesses right across the state.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:39): As tempting as it is to give this ministers statement to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, I am very pleased to rise to update the house further on our nation-leading partnership with New South Wales. I want to speak specifically about the pre-prep year, doubling the hours from 15 to 30 hours per week for four-year-olds. This is about making sure that we acknowledge that 90 per cent of a child's brain development occurs before the age of five. This is about socialisation, play-based learning, skills for a lifetime. It also means women, of course, can go back to work—not only women but largely women—and the Minister for Women has gone through those female participation numbers.

This is about choice, but it is also about the cost of living more broadly. If you can replace 15 hours of very, very costly child care with 15 hours of free prep, then you are a long way in front of where you were. You might then be able to not so much work for the Australian Taxation Office if you did, say, an extra day or an extra shift, you might be able to work for your own household budget. This is profound change. This is the sort of change that will change lives and set us up for the future. Of course those littlest Victorians who will benefit from this in 20 years time when they are joining the labour market, when they are working, will have the skills that the economy will demand of them to do those jobs of the future.

Can I thank colleagues who have worked on this important policy. Can I thank the New South Wales Premier. Can I also pay special mention to my good friend the former Premier of South Australia, Jay Weatherill. I want to also single out for praise Nicola Forrest. The Thrive by Five agenda has been pushed by the Minderoo Foundation and by the Forrest family. This is all about the best start for the best life—great for the economy, great for families, great for women and great for our kids.

Constituency questions

CROYDON ELECTORATE

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (14:41): (6416) My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and it relates to the new \$250 power saving bonus that will be available to all Victorian households from 1 July 2022. Minister, many of our older constituents who do not have access to a computer were completely frustrated when they contacted our office during the last round of the power saving bonus scheme. That round was only available to constituents who were in receipt of concession payments. Their frustration related to not being able to easily access the \$250 payment as they had to rely on a phone service that was completely overwhelmed and understaffed. They often had to leave messages and wait, sometimes for weeks, to receive a call back before even starting their application. This generated a large volume of calls and visits to my office. I am aware that participating community outreach partners were also brought on board to assist with the higher demand for those payments. However, with every Victorian household now being eligible for this latest round, what guarantee can you give Croydon constituents that they will not have to battle to get hold of overwhelmed support staff and community partners to receive their much-needed \$250 payment?

NARRE WARREN SOUTH ELECTORATE

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (14:42): (6417) My constituency question is for the Minister for Solar Homes and concerns the Solar Homes program. Minister, how many households and businesses in Narre Warren South have made the switch to renewable energy through the Solar Homes program? Unfortunately over the last decade we saw a federal government that was so busy denying that climate change exists that they wound back environmental policies and hardly invested anything towards a changeover to renewables. The Victorian Labor government has been doing all the heavy lifting in this state and leading the way with investments in renewable energy infrastructure to ensure that this state can meet its energy needs while pushing Victoria closer to net zero emissions by 2050. The Solar Homes program is a major part of this clean energy revolution, having just ticked over 200 000 rebates for solar panels, batteries and hot water. I would appreciate any further information that the minister can provide on how my constituents in Narre Warren South are embracing the Solar Homes program.

EVELYN ELECTORATE

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:43): (6418) My question is to the Minister for Education on behalf of the students, families and teachers at Birmingham Primary School in Mount Evelyn. Will you provide the much-needed funding to Birmingham Primary School for a new and adequate indoor gym facility? Currently the school has no indoor space that can accommodate all the teachers and staff in one location, and school assemblies or physical activities currently held outdoors are compromised when it is raining or stormy, as is often the case in Mount Evelyn. Birmingham Primary is an excellent local school and one of the largest schools in our community, with nearly 700 students. The current open-air court covers are totally inadequate and no longer fit for purpose. I have visited Birmingham Primary School many times, and given the shift to learning in larger and more ventilated spaces as a result of the pandemic, it makes sense to have a new indoor gym that could accommodate assemblies and physical activities during poor weather. Also this would provide a much-needed community hub in times of fire or storm emergency, an initiative supported by the local fire brigade. I ask the government to provide this much-needed funding for Birmingham Primary in Mount Evelyn.

PASCOE VALE ELECTORATE

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) (14:44): (6419) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education, and the question I ask is: what is the latest information in relation to the \$50 000 that was allocated to Coburg High School for them to develop a master plan for rebuilding the Coburg High School? Coburg High School is a fabulous school in my electorate, and it is growing bigger and bigger by the day. The school community is a very proud community and they are interested in a widening curriculum, but they need more facilities to provide for the number of students who are

now attending Coburg High School. To think where we have come to in Coburg High School in just the last few years truly is amazing, and it is so important that our facilities keep pace with the demand. It is important that the school has sport facilities that are accessible and meet the needs of the school and an arts hub as well as facilities for the technical subjects that the school would like to offer for a full curriculum, so I ask for an update on the master plan.

EUROA ELECTORATE

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (14:45): (6420) My constituency question this afternoon is for the Minister for Emergency Services, and I would like to ask her when the Andrews government will fund a new CFA station for the hardworking, dedicated CFA volunteers at Heathcote. I wrote to the minister a number of months ago asking her to come and speak with the brigade about their needs. The shadow minister has very kindly visited and sat down and had an extensive conversation with those volunteers about what they are looking for. I know that the minister came last week to announce a new weather station in Heathcote, but I would really like to know when she is going to take up the concerns of those volunteers and progress a new station for the town. We know that the Andrews government is collecting a staggering \$800 million through the fire services property levy this year from landholders. They are paying out just \$11 million in new CFA initiatives.

HAWTHORN ELECTORATE

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (14:46): (6421) My question is for the Minister for Health and is regarding the new funding for newborn screening in the state budget, specifically the \$4.1 million over four years to add spinal muscular atrophy, or SMA, severe combined immunodeficiency and congenital adrenal hyperplasia to Victoria's newborn screening program. My question is: how long will it take for this screening to become available to the citizens of Hawthorn? My office and I have had extended contact with residents of Hawthorn whose families have been affected by SMA, and I was glad to see this program get funded. A child with SMA type 1 rarely lives beyond the age of three; however, this program will greatly improve the quality and length of the lives of those diagnosed with this condition.

BRUNSWICK ELECTORATE

Dr READ (Brunswick) (14:47): (6422) My constituency question is for the Minister for Crime Prevention. I am regularly contacted by Brunswick constituents annoyed by the proliferation of tagging graffiti in the area. Constituents are not bothered by street art, but they are distressed by the repetitive tagging that covers newly painted walls, public infrastructure, shopfronts and houses, particularly those on corners. There is no simple solution, but despite the government's current programs, the tagging is getting worse. My question to the minister is: what will the government do to address this problem in Brunswick?

BUNINYONG ELECTORATE

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong) (14:48): (6423) My constituency question is for the Minister for Workplace Safety. The trial of sick pay for casuals is a transformative policy. Casual work and the gig economy have seen employers' responsibility for superannuation, sick pay and annual leave shift to working people. COVID shone a terrible light on the impact of that shift, as people had to choose between a day's pay and their health. This shift in responsibility to workers has crept into critical industries like aged care and security, and we have seen the consequences. We will all benefit from this policy. By supporting working people, we are protecting ourselves. The previous federal government was missing in action when it came to looking out for working people, and the state government has had to step in, first with portable long service leave and now the casual workers sick pay trial. It is important to register in advance; that way when you get sick there is nothing to worry about but getting better. My question to the minister is: how many casuals in my local area are eligible for this transformative program, and how will it support them?

SANDRINGHAM ELECTORATE

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:49): (6424) My constituency question is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and I ask: how and by what time will the Andrews Labor government provide greater protections for the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary in Beaumaris? Crystal-clear shallow waters, reef networks, sea caves and rock pools are just some of the natural wonders that distinguish Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary, located in my community. It attracts all types of flora and fauna species and is a place of education and recreation for my constituents. I recall my childhood playing on the beach and exploring rock pools at Ricketts Point, and now I enjoy the same experience with my children. But it is important that we preserve Victoria's rich marine life and that we commit to always improving protections for our natural environment for the next generation. To achieve this we need funding for better boundary signage, education, more frequent patrolling by Parks Victoria and smarter use of technology through motion-activated cameras on buoys to ensure our marine sanctuary's ongoing preservation and protection.

RINGWOOD ELECTORATE

Mr HALSE (Ringwood) (14:50): (6425) My constituency question is to the Minister for Early Childhood. Minister, for those in Ringwood, what are the anticipated benefits of the revolutionary Best Start, Best Life program announced by our government last week? From 2025 every four-year-old will have access to fully funded pre-prep, with hours of the program increasing to 30 per week by 2032. For so many children this will mean access to education where there was previously no access. Universal rights of access are the foundations of a fairer, more just, more equal society. The benefits will not only be limited to children; this will give women, too, choices that they have always deserved. I look forward to the minister's response.

Bills**EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ADULT AND COMMUNITY
EDUCATION AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022***Second reading***Debate resumed.**

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (14:51): Before question time I was speaking on this bill, an education bill, and I was talking about the significant investment—more than \$25 billion—made by the Andrews Labor government to support and to drive Victoria as the Education State. Of course we know that this includes building new schools, more than 100 of them, and upgrading more than 1850 schools across Victoria, including can I say every single government and Catholic school in my electorate. We are reforming our secondary school system, and this is something that is really exciting and really compelling, because we want to make sure that we are setting up our senior students for life and best supporting them for jobs of the future. We are reforming our vocational and applied learning, making sure that it is available to every secondary student wherever they go to school across Victoria. We know from next year we will have the first cohort of students who receive their VCE vocational major and the Victorian pathways certificate. This is tremendous reform. It is going to make an enormous difference in the lives of so many Victorian students. We are also aligning our VET with industry needs and employment pathways, and we are going to work with the commonwealth, the federal Labor government, on national skills reform.

We do this because we know that every single student, every single Victorian, has an equal right to gain the knowledge, the learnings, the skills, the experience they need to get the jobs that they want and of course the jobs that Victoria needs. We are talking about jobs that Victoria needs. We know from things like our Big Build, where we are transforming our road and rail networks, and the Suburban Rail Loop, the Metro Tunnel and the level crossing removals just how many thousands of new skilled jobs we are going to need for that.

If we are talking about jobs and education, I do want to mention what we were talking about earlier and what everyone is talking about, and that is our major announcement and our extraordinary reform to early childhood education and care in Victoria. This is a reform agenda of almost incomprehensible proportions. The significance and the benefits and the outcomes from this are quite extraordinary. They are far-reaching. They are generational. We have heard that making three- and four-year-old kinder free for families from next year will tremendously support Victorian families with their household budgets. We know moving to 30 hours of a pre-prep year for four-year-old children is going to unlock so many more people, particularly women, and support them getting back into the workforce, which is just going to significantly boost not only productivity here in Victoria but our economy and our state and of course independence for women. I do also want to acknowledge the Premier; the Minister for Early Childhood in the other place, Ingrid Stitt; the Minister for Women; and so many people who have worked tirelessly on this reform agenda. It is truly a \$9 billion investment worth every single cent.

This is transformational news for our youngest Victorians, but we know that learning is for life, and this bill picks up on some of those matters, particularly education for adults. As I said, we are indebted to the member for Croydon, who took us through the very technical amendments in this bill. But this bill does recognise the importance of adult education and the importance of getting adult education right, because again it is making sure that those people in our community are best equipped to take advantage of the educational opportunities that are available for them and that lead them to pathways for future jobs as well.

Among other things, this bill will amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 in relation to the operation of the Adult, Community and Further Education Board—the ACFE board—and AMES Australia, which was previously known as Adult Multicultural Education Services. The bill before us will also do another thing, which is to allow the Minister for Education to appoint an acting member to the board of the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership. Obviously these are technical amendments, but they are necessary and important improvements to the government's education and training system. That is because we want to make sure that this system of education and training is the best it can be so that we are supporting all learners wherever they are in that learning journey in their life to achieve their best and to develop the skills that they need for the best life possible.

In terms of the ACFE board, the bill before us will implement recommendations of the review of governance of ACFE in Victoria and help ACFE best meet its goals and aspirations. This is most aligned with Learn Locals and the tremendous organisations that support community members to gain confidence, to gain educational opportunities that they may not have had before. This is important work to enable ACFE to better implement its goals and aspirations.

The bill will also support AMES Australia. Again this is an extraordinary organisation, and it is fitting to speak about this in this Refugee Week. AMES Australia started back in 1951 with teachers who volunteered their time to support new migrants to Australia, whether it was with English or other skills, to best allow them to settle. It is really considered probably Australia's pre-eminent settlement agency. Amendments in the bill will operate to recognise AMES Australia's significant role and to emphasise one of its key functions—namely, to develop and provide specialist settlement services for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers here in Victoria as well as across Australia. I really want to commend AMES Australia for the extraordinary work that they do to support so many migrants here. I am really pleased that we are able to contribute to that work and to support them to further their work and help migrants settle here in Victoria.

Finally, there are amendments that relate to the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership. This is an extraordinary academy that is going to support some of our best teachers to further develop their skills and to pass on those skills and knowledge to support our Victorian students. I commend this bill. Again, this is about setting up Victoria as the Education State.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:59): I rise to make a contribution on the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022. I will just pick up from where the previous speaker left off in terms of the importance of the many migrants that come to Victoria and are searching for that further education, that support, that language training and the other skills that they need to ensure that they can find a job and take their rightful place here in the community.

Particularly I want to raise some of the great work that a couple of my adult learning centres do in the electorate of Caulfield: firstly, the Glen Eira Adult Learning Centre under Philippa Caris and also the Caulfield South Community House under Tracey Burt. Here we have two centres whose work is absolutely focused on ensuring that the people that choose to come and settle in Victoria are provided with support, with awareness, with skills, with development and with training. In particular I know in both organisations they do a lot of great work in digital training: being able to use some of the technology to be able to search for jobs, to be able to put resumes together and to even be able to access a number of government services. The Glen Eira Adult Learning Centre has recently been running a whole lot of programs around health, particularly with the issues that we have all been going through in terms of awareness and vaccinations. I know that on Thursday they are doing a health forum about navigating the health system in Australia and the role of the GP and health checks—a whole range of that information is quite crucial. I want to give a special shout-out to both the Glen Eira Adult Learning Centre and the Caulfield South Community House and the work that they do in terms of training, particularly in ensuring that people who need those skills are provided with some.

I also want to raise some of the work that the local learning centres are doing in this space. This is really, really important. I think one of the things that we have been very focused on is the training that is provided, particularly when adults are looking at going back and being re-skilled to get a job—that that training ultimately leads to an employment outcome. One of those focuses is looking at what jobs might be available and matching skills to those jobs. I have met a number of times with the Bayside Glen Eira Kingston Local Learning and Employment Network, and they do a great job. I know the member for Sandringham is in here. He has had a number of meetings with them and has been working with them as well. This organisation has over 100 members in the Bayside, Glen Eira and Kingston LGAs, and it has a strong relationship with 33 secondary education providers and 100 local businesses. The work that they do is very much matching many of those students with real-life experience—giving them a real taste of work and hopefully being able to give them the skills necessary to get that job at the end of it. This is really important; it is absolutely crucial. I cannot speak highly enough of organisations like this that actually prepare young people for that work down the track in terms of whatever passion and career they want to enter into.

When we look at our education system and what we can do in terms of championing and transforming the education system, I know many of those from the government talk about the numberplate which talks about us being the Education State. I think the focus needs to be really on practising what we preach: more than just what is on a numberplate, what we can do in terms of transforming that education to ensure we give young people the skills necessary to follow their passions and to follow their dreams. That needs to be done at a very, very early stage and it needs to be championed all the way through.

I often talk about things like robotics and coding—a whole range of things which will enable many kids to again think in terms of what that future job might be. We talk about STEM, which is all about science, technology and engineering—those important elements. Some also refer to STEAM, which has the arts component as well—the creativity that is needed in terms of being able to think when utilising many of the skills that we have. Our education system needs to be transformative, relevant and ultimately able to ensure that young people are able to be creative thinkers and to be flexible, and that there is a job opportunity afterwards.

Certainly in my experience in the portfolio that I currently have for small business, with every business that I talk to that look at employing a young person, one of the things that they constantly say to me is

that no matter what they have done, in many instances, whether it be school or university, there is a whole lot of reskilling and retraining that needs to happen because a lot of those basic skills are not learned. We need to get a better intersection between those skills that are necessary—ultimately help that young person have a stronger marriage between that—and the actual work environment they are looking or seeking to be in. That is where I think there probably has not been that intersection. I know there has been a lot of stuff in the training space that is all about registered training organisations effectively just pumping people through a system but not necessarily being able to train them in the areas where there is a real skill shortage and a real need.

So legislation changes are important, and I note that a number of those in the legislation that we are talking about today effectively clean up elements of the legislation, which we have constantly got to be doing. But I think what we are really in search of and what we really need and what we should be talking about in this chamber are some of the things that are going to be transformative, some of the things that really provide those young people and those businesses the real synergy to be able to get Victoria to a place where we are leading the game in so many different areas. If you look at places like Cremorne, where you have got a lot of tech and startup businesses that are doing a fantastic job, and you look at a lot of local businesses that have been created from that, things like Carsales, realestate.com.au, Seek—they are websites that employ hundreds of people and that have been created locally. Well, we have got to harness that. We have got to champion that. We have got to grow that.

I note that the Bayside Glen Eira Kingston Local Learning and Employment Network have been championing a program called the \$20 Boss. This is a fantastic program which is providing enterprise and entrepreneurial education to give those young people the opportunity to actually take \$20 and grow it. This has been around a while. The BGKLEN actually are looking at making this special and scaling the work of this group to provide young people with disabilities the necessary skills to thrive in the new work order. I say that because this is great. This is where you have got, particularly, young people with a disability being able to learn those skills and being able to ultimately find employment and a job.

We have something here in Parliament that we have never done before, which is autism week. We have been recognising that, and I know, Deputy Speaker, you have done some important work in an inquiry which you have been involved in in this important space. This is great. These are the kinds of things that are transformational in terms of looking at those with special needs—those with autism—and giving them the opportunity to gain the skills necessary to find employment and take their rightful place in our community. I think we should be looking at training opportunities and support opportunities. The \$20 Boss, which was very much mainstream—being able to take a mainstream program like that and operate it for those with special needs is terrific. We should be doing more of that. We should be encouraging more of that.

I want to give a shout-out to Amaze and all the groups in Parliament at the moment that are looking particularly at autism and how we can ensure that many of the features—not just training, which we are talking about today, but many of the broader areas around education support and services for those with autism—are properly supported. This is certainly a bill that we support, and I think we should be doing whatever we can to help those people that want to further their educational needs.

Ms HALL (Footscray) (15:09): It is an absolute pleasure to make a contribution to this bill. To echo the sentiments of the member for Caulfield, it is a very special week here in Parliament, with the Amaze organisation in here. I would like to thank them for all of the work they do for our neurodiverse young people in Victoria and for the autism community, and I acknowledge the Western Autistic School as well in this contribution about important education reforms.

This bill will make important improvements to the education and training system, including in relation to the modernisation, continuation and effective functioning of the Adult, Community and Further Education Board and AMES Australia—and I will speak a little bit about AMES Australia, who have a very proud history in my community of Footscray, and the powers and functions of the Victorian

Registration and Qualifications Authority as a regulator of registered training organisations and the integrated sector regulator of schools, school boarding premises and other education providers for the child safe standards. The bill also modernises and simplifies the provisions regulating the use, access and disclosure of the Victorian student number.

AMES Australia will be familiar to many people in my community of Footscray. It was established in 1951, and AMES Australia arose from the work of hundreds of dedicated teachers who volunteered their time and skills to help new arrivals from postwar Europe to learn English and to settle in Australia. I think this is especially significant this week, which is Refugee Week. I know many of the organisations in my electorate of Footscray, including AMES, which is based in Barkly Street, and the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, do so much to support our refugee and migrant community to establish themselves not just in my community in Melbourne's inner-west but across Victoria.

The story of AMES in Footscray reflects the area's history and waves of migration. At the time of its establishment, AMES Footscray was a hub mostly for Greek, Italian and former Yugoslavian migrants. In more recent times it has become a second home for Vietnamese and East African immigrants in Footscray. We know that one of the most important aspects of finding your place in a new country is being able to speak a shared language—it just makes those everyday activities so much easier—and AMES Australia has played a major role in successfully helping hundreds of thousands of new Australians with a range of settlement, English language and employment services. I would like to acknowledge all of the staff at AMES in Footscray and thank them for the work that they do every day in our community. They use a unique strength-based approach to successful settlement, recognising and harnessing the resilience of refugees and migrants and building on their personal strengths. This might not sound like much, but it is so important on a few really key levels. Rather than making new Australians feel disempowered, AMES looks at what they can do and where those skills can be applied in new contexts.

Education unlocks doors and changes lives. In my first speech in this place I spoke about education being the great leveller, and having access to high-quality public education is something that the Andrews Labor government is very proud of. We are the Education State, and in Footscray there is an absolute revolution happening in the provision of high-quality education. The Footscray learning precinct I think will be the envy of Australia. It incorporates Victoria University, Footscray High School, Footscray City Primary School and Footscray Primary School, and importantly in the last couple of weeks we have added a new piece to the Footscray learning precinct puzzle, which is the beautiful Billy Button learning centre, which is co-located with Footscray City Primary School. It is a 90-place long day care centre with three-year-old kinder and four-year-old kinder, and last week on that very important day when the Andrews Labor government announced a transformative \$9 billion reform to early childhood learning in Victoria we opened the Billy Button centre. I was so pleased to have the minister from the other place, Minister Stitt, join me on such a monumental day for our littlest Victorians but also for predominantly the women of Australia, who during those crucial years often have to make the difficult choice about whether they can afford to go back to work or whether the cost of long day care and kinder does not make it stack up. It was such an important day, and to have that announcement of 50 new government-funded centres and a transition to a 30-hour play-based pre-prep year is just such a game changer. It is such an enormous social reform, but also an economic reform that I am very proud of. I know that the feedback from my community, from the families and women of Melbourne's inner west, is that it will change their lives not just in terms of cost of living but in having their children access such a substantial amount of kinder. We know the evidence is there, and we have known it for a long time, but this is a really huge reform. I am so proud that it is happening and that it is starting next year.

One of the things that stood out to me when that announcement was made was a statistic I heard the Minister for Women speak about, which was that if we had the same level of workplace participation between women and men, that would increase our gross domestic product by 8 per cent, so

\$350 billion in terms of economic uplift by increasing access for women to the workforce. I am enormously proud of that.

In Footscray, brick by brick, we are transforming the schools in my community. Just recently I was delighted to attend Footscray North Primary School, which is the primary school my dad went to, in Rosamond Road in Footscray, and we opened a \$16 million upgrade of that school. That is just going to absolutely transform learning for those children and for those families to have the absolute best facilities there in Footscray. Just last night I was at another terrific school in my electorate, Footscray West Primary School, where I was able to speak with the school counsellor about some of our education reforms and what they will mean for the students at Footscray West Primary School—a beautiful school in my electorate of Footscray. Footscray City Primary School will be getting an upgrade, and Footscray Primary School's upgrade is underway now.

At all ages and stages of life you will be able to participate in the Footscray learning precinct. From early childhood at Billy Button Children's Centre you can just go next door to Footscray City Primary School, then you can go across the road to high school at Footscray High School and then you can cross back over the road and go to Victoria University to complete your further education or to attend free TAFE, which of course the Victorian government is rolling out across Victoria with much success, again particularly for women who are wanting to retrain and enter the workforce. This is another important reform in the Education State, and I am very pleased to support this bill and wish it a speedy passage.

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (15:19): I also rise to address the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022, and in so doing I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Footscray, who has just made a contribution on the bill, and also my colleague the member for Croydon, who went through in some detail the bill and the provisions within it.

I want to address this bill in a couple of parts—firstly, in relation to the amendments that are sought to be made in the adult education space. I think the Minister for Education in his second-reading speech summarised it best in the penultimate paragraph, where he said:

In summary, the amendments in this Bill are mainly technical in nature and seek to make important improvements to a number of components of the Government education and training system established under the Education Act.

There is nothing like going through four pages of text—five in fact—before getting to the punchline. And I think largely that is true—the purpose of this bill is to make those amendments to tidy things up and appropriately do so. The second part of this bill is of course in the child safety and wellbeing space, and I do not think there is anything more important than that. The member for Croydon and Shadow Minister for Education has indicated that in fact the opposition on this occasion will not be opposing this bill.

I would like to start at the beginning, funnily enough, with the purpose of education. My own experience in this space is not only as a student. I studied teaching at Deakin University, secondary teaching. I started a double degree there. I worked in a secondary school, my alma mater, St Bede's College, as the youth minister there for a 12-month period and enjoyed that work while I was also studying to be a teacher. Then I had the great privilege of working in Catholic education as well, at Catholic Education Melbourne, during some fairly feisty debates with the then federal government over federal government Gonski funding. The federal member for Maribyrnong, a new minister in the new federal government, was the then education minister, and I remember some discussions about education funding that were had with him at that time. I am now at the stage of life where my four-year-old daughter is attending school next year, so my perspective on the policy area of education has become very personal and is becoming increasingly so as I age and the years go on. I do want to say that in my view the purpose of education is pretty simple. In my view the purpose of education is to prepare young people for life after they leave school. It is very easy to get caught up in the day to day of school life and get caught up in the day-to-day outcomes of school life. But I think what we should be all aiming to do is to prepare our

young people to tackle the challenges of life beyond the institutions of schools. That is the best gift that we can give them, and as legislators it is incumbent upon us to do everything we can to provide them with that framework that prepares them to contribute to life beyond school.

Like the member for Caulfield, I would like to acknowledge or call out a number of local institutions within the Sandringham district which do have an interest and a concern in the adult education space. The BGKLEN of course, which the member for Caulfield referred to—that is, the Bayside Glen Eira Kingston Local Learning and Employment Network—recently had a careers expo at the Beaumaris Secondary College, which they invited me to open. Sadly, it was a parliamentary sitting day and I was not able to attend that, but I understand that they do some outstanding work in connecting young people with potential future career opportunities—once again, preparing young people for a life outside of the institutions of school. And what marvellous work they do. I was thrilled that the member for Caulfield referred to just one of their programs that they are undertaking, a program called the \$20 Boss BGKLEN program, making enterprise and entrepreneurial education special, where some of those students start with 20 bucks and they do whatever they can to try and, well, make that more than 20 bucks through enterprise and entrepreneurship. What a wonderful thing to encourage young people to do.

I acknowledge the community houses in my constituency, and I acknowledge the minister responsible for those community houses, the Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, who is at the table now. I thank him for his support of those community houses in a recent decision, made just a day or so before the handing down of the Victorian budget in fact, to continue the funding for some of the programs at those community houses, and I have spoken to the minister directly about that. Those community houses in Hampton, in Highett and at the Sandybeach Centre as well provide educational programs for some members of our community who would otherwise not feel that connectedness to a community. They provide that environment which is right for them so that those people, if they are people who feel a disconnection from their community—and they might be older people—do feel connected to their community. They provide that space, they provide that safety and they provide those programs for adult learning. I am just so grateful for the work that they do for our community, especially after the last couple of years that we have been through.

At the Sandybeach Centre, I acknowledge the recent passing of one of its founders, Bruce Morey. Bruce Morey was one of the founders of the Sandybeach Centre and died only in the last month or so. He started an institution within the Sandringham district, within the Sandringham community, which arguably on one scale is absolutely unrivalled. Bruce Morey has passed from this life, but his legacy remains at the Sandybeach Centre. I am sorry that I was not able to make his memorial service on that Saturday just a couple of months ago, but I think that the greatest tribute I can pay Bruce is by continuing to support the Sandybeach Centre, as I do and have great pleasure in doing.

Of course there is the U3A in Bayside as well, another wonderful institution where there are gifted people from our community who contribute and give back to our community without expecting anything in return. These people have been professionals in their life, in engineering, in languages, in arts, in culture, in history, in sports and exercise science and other areas, and take up these classes at U3A and through their volunteer work give other older people an opportunity within our community to learn and to continue learning. This is my point: we are all on a journey of lifelong learning, no matter who we are, no matter what stage of life we are at, and that must be acknowledged. I am just so grateful to those institutions within my own electoral district whose very purpose is to enable people within my community to continue their path of lifelong learning, because it is not just about what they learn but it is about the community connections that they make, and it is about bringing people together in our community so that our community can thrive even more.

It would be remiss of me not to make some brief final remarks about some of the broader educational needs within my own electorate. Beaumaris Primary School and Beaumaris North Primary School are in desperate need of new school halls. I have made that request of the government. I have made that request of the Treasurer and of the education minister. I will continue to fight for new school halls at both Beaumaris Primary and Beaumaris North Primary. Mentone Girls Secondary College, the only

all-girls state secondary college in the southern region of Melbourne, has not had a brass razoo of fair dinkum major infrastructure dough in about three decades, and they desperately need their master plan finalised and for the rebuilding of their school to commence. Of course Sandringham College, a wonderful educational institution over two campuses within the electoral district of Sandringham, have received through my advocacy and the advocacy of others the first \$10 million for stage 1 of their redevelopment. Ten million bucks does not build a new school; they need their second \$10 million committed. I will continue to fight to deliver that outcome.

Mr HAMER (Box Hill) (15:29): I too rise to make a contribution on the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022, which is seeking to modernise and improve aspects of the Victorian education system, from secondary school system reform right through to adult and multicultural education services. It does seek to amend a number of pieces of legislation. The main focus of my contribution will be on the reforms to the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, which has some important legislative amendments, and I do thank the Minister for Education and his office for bringing this important bill to the house. As other speakers have said, it is always a good time to speak about education. It is so important to giving members of our community a step up and helping them on their journey for life.

I do want to focus initially on the changes to the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 that will amend part 3.3 of that act to modernise the current functions and governance arrangements of adult, community and further education, or ACFE as they are commonly known, in addition to changing the provisions for AMES Australia. The bill is implementing recommendations from the review of AMES Australia to facilitate this organisation to better fulfil its functions relating to settlement services, employment services and vocational education and training for multicultural communities.

I do want to reflect a little bit on the value that AMES brings, particularly to my local community. It does have a large presence in Box Hill. Before I do so I just want to reflect on my own family's experience. I touched on this a little bit last week, but when my father's family arrived in Australia in the late 1940s it was before a lot of these settlement services and languages services were available. So while my dad and his sister were able to go to school—and they had a crash course in learning some basic words in English before they were promptly put into grade 3 in late 1947—his parents did not have that opportunity. There was not the opportunity to have the English language services and the settlement services that obviously the migrant populations of more recent times have been able to enjoy. That always was a struggle for them. They did run a small business when they were in Australia, and they picked up a few words here and there just from dealing with customers. But they were reliant very heavily on their children because their children had had the education in English, and even to their dying days their level of comprehension in writing and reading English was a great challenge to them.

Obviously in Box Hill we have a very large multicultural community, and it has come in waves over a period. Particularly going back to the 1960s there was a significant influx of the Greek community coming into Box Hill. Later there was quite a number of Vietnamese and much more recently there has been the Chinese community. It is interesting; I was having a look at the census data which is now to 2016, so it is a little bit dated, but within the Box Hill electorate there are approximately 70 000 residents in total and close to 40 per cent of them were born overseas. Almost 50 per cent of that cohort that were born overseas actually arrived in the period 2006 to 2016, the largest numbers being from China, from Malaysia, from Hong Kong and from India—so, the vast bulk of those requiring language services. I do see that a lot in my constituency work. I reflect back on, like I said, my family's story, that it is often very difficult for the parents. The parents have not necessarily had that strong English language education from their home community, and it is often the children who are translating for the parents whenever we are having that conversation. So the services that are being provided by AMES Australia across the board, but particularly in my local area, are of vital importance.

I do want to also just draw attention to a particular initiative that AMES Box Hill ran a few years ago. I think this may have been with the South Sudanese community at the time. Part of the resettlement program was they did resettle some of the South Sudanese community in Box Hill South. AMES Box

Hill set up a learn-to-swim program—it was particularly geared towards adults, but children could participate as well because a lot of people in these migrant communities had never had the opportunity to go in a swimming pool or attend the beach and whatever. There had been a spate of drownings, particularly in a number of migrant communities, and lifesaving required, so a partnership between AMES Box Hill and Life Saving Victoria ran a learn-to-swim program at the local swimming pool. It is not just about language, it is also about life skills which are a critical part that we take for granted having grown up in Australia.

The bill amends a number of other elements of the act. It also modernises the framework for Victorian student numbers. Every Victorian student has a right to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to plan and shape their lives on the journey from secondary school through whichever education pathway they choose to take. The Victorian student number was introduced 14 years ago as a unique identification tool for all Victorian students under the age of 25 who are enrolled in a training or education program. This number tracks and collects information, including name, gender, date of birth and details of enrolment. In those last 14 years there has been a proliferation of new technologies and operations which the old system cannot effectively capture, so the bill does seek to modernise the current legislative framework for accessing, disclosing and using Victorian student numbers and the data they track so that the mechanism can accommodate new requirements for the students of today and into the future.

These amendments mean there will be more accurate reporting to the community on the state's education and training system and will provide a clearer picture of the future of the education system. The changes brought about will also ensure that student numbers remain faithful to their intended purpose—namely, monitoring enrolment details, verifying student identity and providing data for strategic insights into the movement of students, including identifying students at risk of disengaging from education or training. These amendments will help to buttress the student number system so that we as a government, as a Parliament, can better meet the education needs of Victorian students and adequately plan for the educational needs of tomorrow's students without compromising their privacy. Information collected at enrolment or following cancellation of enrolment will be stored securely by schools in the register.

The many ways that education services are delivered and engaged with mean that the system does need to be modernised. An example which illustrates why the system needs to be modernised is that the IT department staff, who were never more vital to our kids' education than during the periods of remote learning, may be engaged by the department on a contract basis and be unable to access the student information as they are not considered authorised users. While IT staff needed access during remote learning, many Victorians found themselves in a position where they needed to adopt software in order to access education or employment opportunities, and not all third-party operators kept their promises to protect consumer privacy.

There are a number of other amendments which are proposed in the bill, all of which will be going to improving the way that education services are delivered in this state. Anything that can go to contributing to making education easier to access and lifting up education is to be commended. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (15:39): I too rise to speak on the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022. Just reading through my notes here today, I have got six pages of notes, and I have no doubt I will struggle to get past the first page because I absolutely love standing here in this place after almost four years to talk about education. I feel that over the past four to eight years we have gone through an absolute—what would you say?—reformation in this state when it comes to education. I think that can be best described as being the education revolution that is happening right now in my electorate of Tarneit. Two of the fastest growing suburbs in this state, Tarneit and Truganina, have benefited immensely from our investment in education. Looking at my notes, I can see that since coming to government in 2015 we have invested more than \$25 billion in education. Just a couple of sitting weeks ago, or I think it was in the previous

sitting week, I stood here in this place talking about our amazing investment in schools that came out of the budget a couple of months ago and the major wins for communities like Tarneit and Truganina when it came to schools. That \$25 billion can be seen in statistics like this. Since being elected in 2018 I have opened three schools. I always go through and I count these schools. I feel like it should be more because what I know is that in the pipeline of opening schools—and I have had to triple-check this number a number of times—11 schools are sitting in the pipeline, 11 schools that we will have built, starting to open their doors as of next year. There is no suburb that is benefiting more than our mighty Truganina.

In Truganina last year we announced that we were going to purchase land in Elements estate. It was land that otherwise the developer was going to sell off and build more houses on because we could not find an independent school to purchase the land. It was earmarked for an independent school there in the heart of my Truganina community. Elements estate is full of families. The demographic in Wyndham, in my patch, is 32-year-olds with two young kids. To give you an idea of the type of extreme growth that this part of Victoria is experiencing, last sitting week I think I came here and talked about 120 babies being born in Wyndham each and every single week. The member for Cranbourne is over there—I do not know if you have quite hit 120, but we worked out that is four classrooms of prep that need to come online each and every single year, which is why you can see our recent kinder announcement, including building 50 extra kinders across this state, is so very important. Four prep classes are born each and every single week. I say to the member for Cranbourne and this house: I can raise you when it comes to babies being born in Wyndham now. Having been out with Wyndham City Council last week, I was reminded that it is no longer 120 babies being born each and every single week; it is 130 and on the rise. I am not sure if that is a hangover from COVID. I am really not quite sure, but I am reminded that that is not going to slow down. That is what we are talking about when it comes to population growth, how extraordinary it is and how fast it is happening in the outer western suburbs of Victoria.

\$25 billion of investment since 2015 means two really important things in my patch. It means new schools are being built and coming on line sooner rather than later, but it also means that for the existing schools in my electorate—you know, that were built in the 1950s and 60s—that are looking a little bit older and needing a little bit of a facelift and an upgrade of facilities, we are also going ahead and doing that, which is really important in communities like Hoppers Crossing. Two major schools in Hoppers Crossing have received a lot of money from our government. We have Hoppers Crossing Secondary getting an upgrade that is worth over \$10 million, which was announced a couple of years ago, and works will soon be underway. Then we have the mighty Grange P–12 College. The Grange P–12 College is your ultimate *Friday Night Lights*-type of Hollywood story. It is a working-class community. It is a vulnerable community. Lots of mums and dads there are doing it very tough. We deal with issues with single parents, domestic violence and drugs—you name it, it is happening there in Hoppers. The Grange P–12 has been able to take a school that was struggling with the behaviour of youth in the local community and turn that around through wonderful things like sport, engaging kids in sport and through sport teaching them to respect themselves, respect others, respect the community and go on and have a career pathway towards secure work that they would not otherwise have had.

Now, The Grange college for too long had had facilities that were quite run down. I remember when I was campaigning—thinking back now, it might have been the end of 2017 and certainly all throughout 2018—going to The Grange numerous times, having a look at those facilities, having a look at the classrooms that kids had to be in, checking out their bathrooms and making sure that toilet facilities were up to par. Well, we came and announced in 2018 that we would invest \$9.5 million at The Grange P–12 College to upgrade the senior campus. Certainly the Premier was able to come out with me—I am thinking back now—just before the last lockdown last year after he returned to work after his injury. He came out to The Grange, and he had a look at these first-class facilities for delivering a world-class education to local kids—to kids in Hoppers Crossing, to Victorian kids. And I have to say it was a really proud moment, being there in the classrooms but also heading on over and

watching students kick around a rugby football—this is a big rugby union school—on a football oval that was covered in beautiful, beautiful green grass.

When I was there in 2018 they had this huge oval. They were state champions for rugby union and had beaten all the private schools—I went and watched a couple of games where they kicked the butts of schools like Xavier at rugby competitions—but these kids did not have a rugby pitch to play on. They actually did not have goals to kick the football over, and yet they were state champions. Their football pitch was more like moon rock and probably belonged on something like Mars, and that was through years of drought, with no ability to really water and keep the football pitch there covered with lush green grass. So these kids would play on this football pitch—all kinds of injuries. They were big kids taking heavy hits, and I cannot imagine how much it would have hurt in that dirt with that kind of rock. We fixed that, and the Premier came out and was able to look upon that field and see those kids, Victorian kids, playing at their best—state champions—but also having a pathway to work, whether they would go on to more education at uni or they would be looking at doing VCAL and going on to a trade or just going into a job. These were kids that would otherwise have been left behind. That is what \$25 billion worth of investment means, whether you are in a new and emerging community or you are in an existing one that really needs us to upgrade its schools.

I promised you I would not go beyond page 1 for this speech. I have talked about education a lot over almost four years and it is something I feel very, very passionate about. Just very quickly, this bill is about us going ahead and building upon our continuing commitment to ensuring that education providers at all year levels are operating under the right oversight framework to deliver safe outcomes for Victorian students. Again, this is about us being committed to Victorian families, mums and dads, wherever they are in the state, and ensuring that every kid has first-class facilities for a world-class education, because what we know is that education can break that systemic cycle of vulnerability and of disadvantage. It is something that Labor stands for at its very heart. It is something that Labor governments do very, very well. And I wholeheartedly commend this bill to the house.

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (15:49): I also rise to speak on the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022. Like my colleague from Tarnet, who I am privileged to follow, I am also very excited to have any opportunity to speak about education and the educational matters in the Mount Waverley district. Whilst I agree with other members—the member for Sandringham talked about the technical nature of this bill, and that is very true—nonetheless these technical bills just improve our system and are an important part of progressing the framework that allows us to push forward our Education State. The minister should be congratulated for not just this bill but obviously many, many years of great work in our education system.

The amendments in this bill I will address are predominantly technical, as I said, and seek to make important improvements to a number of components of the government's education and training system established under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006. Importantly, the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022 will make necessary improvements to various components of our system, including the modernisation and continuation of the effective functioning of the Adult, Community and Further Education Board and AMES—Adult Multicultural Education Services. I thank the member for Box Hill for his contribution in regard to AMES. It is a very, very worthy part of our system, and it was great to hear his insights on that. The bill addresses the powers and functions of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority as a regulator of registered training organisations and integrated sector regulator of schools, school boarding premises and other education providers for child safe standards. It also modernises and simplifies provisions regulating the use, access and disclosure of the Victorian student number.

Over the last number of years that I have had the privilege to be in this place we have made significant improvements to the infrastructure in the area of Mount Waverley, which I am very proud to have had my small part in, but it is not just infrastructure that creates a world-class education system. We can put the bricks and mortar in in the suburbs, but without the teachers, teaching assistants, principals, administration staff, parents, students, curriculum and everything else that goes towards creating a

system, without all those parts of the jigsaw coming together, we would not have a system like the one we have in Victoria, which we can all be very proud of.

Whilst I am no expert in the details of the education curriculum and the standards of teachers—I am certainly not a teacher myself, although I know a few—I was very happy, I remember, a couple of years ago when I was first in this role and spoke to a number of principals in my area who were overwhelmingly glowing about the curriculum and the processes of our education department. I think we should thank our department officials and everyone who works in that area, because it is work that is often not championed—all of the things that go on behind the scenes—but our bureaucrats and department officials, day after day, turn up and make the system function, along with our principals, teachers and everyone else.

We are obviously committed to investing in not only that workforce and the department but also the infrastructure, as I have said, and this has been demonstrated through the allocation of \$12.8 billion over the last eight budgets. It is an amazing amount of money to go into the education of our next generation. The bill we are talking about today is partly affecting continuing education, adult education. Those of us who are my age, when we were a bit younger thought that we would go to school, we would find our way, whatever that might be. We would enter our vocation and we would be pretty well set but life is rarely like that these days. These days having the ability to retrain is not only something that many people face through whatever chances happen in their careers but also something that even within careers is mandated. Vocational learning within teaching, within any career, is a necessary part of one's career these days.

So having the ability to retrain, whether that be through registered training organisations, whether that be through TAFE, whether that be through other organisations like the University of the Third Age—however that may be—is crucial to opening up opportunities for not only adults and young Victorians but also people who are just learning other skills. Third-party providers creating small businesses that are in their area of education are a very important part of the sector that sits outside obviously the public education sector but nonetheless fits in and trains our young or old in other skills—it could be sport, it could be dance, it could be art. There are so many different ways of educating ourselves that keep us, one would hope, young in heart and mind. I am often surprised to see the diligence with which our education staff play their roles. As I have said before in this house, I know many teachers, and obviously my wife is a teacher, so I get a fairly good portrayal of the working life of a teacher. Our teachers do so much work outside of their allotted hours that it would almost be impossible to overstate their work ethic, and I thank them for their work.

In Mount Waverley we have had a number of advancements in our schools over the last 3½ years. I think the first commitment that we got, which I was lucky enough to get in the 2019 budget, was a new senior centre for Brentwood Secondary College, which I was lucky enough to be a part of the opening of this year. It is a fantastic building and a world's best practice learning environment, and it is really a home for the seniors in the school, something they can call their own, which they did not have before. It ticks other boxes in that this new building allowed for the removal of some portables, so from an infrastructure point of view it is fantastic. But what I notice about our students in the senior areas is they seem to be—and obviously I would not reference you, Deputy Speaker—a lot more mature and switched on than I was in year 11 or year 12. Their ability to go about their learning is quite remarkable if I consider myself back in 1985 or whenever it was—1986—and I think that is testament to an education system that has underpinned their learning from the start of their education to where they are now. To have a system that acknowledges and benefits the future learning of all of us, of those young adults or further, is very, very important. So this bill adds to our provision of that, and I commend the bill to the house.

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (15:59): I rise to speak on the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022, and I too echo the sentiments of the previous speakers. There is no doubt that since being elected the Andrews Labor government has made its very core for government to establish Victoria as the Education State, where every Victorian student

has an equal right to knowledge and skills to shape their lives. It is an important and integral layer of their lives as they begin their journey.

Since 2014, as I have said previously, we have wasted no time in getting on with the job, with building the Education State and investing more than \$25 billion to achieve these reforms in education, whether it was investing in school infrastructure or whether it was the allocation of \$12.8 billion over the past eight budgets to deliver more than 1850 school upgrades, including in my electorate of St Albans, where just recently in the budget we have seen the rebuild of and close to \$13 million invested in St Albans Heights Primary School and also investment in St Albans Primary School—two local schools that really needed that little bit of investment to bring forward confidence and learning rooms upgrades for their school. But we have also seen the opening of 75 of 100 new schools, which will continue to 2026 and support around 17 000 jobs in construction and associated industry. That is really critical, because not only are we building our schools and education but we are also creating those valuable local jobs in our communities.

Since 2018 the Labor government has invested over \$592 million in reforming the senior secondary school system to prepare students for successful careers of the future, including \$277 million in the 2022–23 budget. As recently as last Wednesday I actually met with the principal for Victoria University Secondary College, Elaine Hazim. She does a tremendous job at Victoria University Secondary College. It has campuses at Deer Park and also in Cairnlea and St Albans. We were talking about the valuable investment by our government and how these reforms have meant so much to her students and her school community.

With this bill we are continuing that strong record of ensuring that Victoria is the Education State but continues to build on the Education State. There will be important amendments paving the way for our game-changing senior secondary reforms and improving adult and community education, and we have heard how important that is. This bill will introduce a range of amendments to the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, the education act, the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 and the Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021. Such is that some of these are technical in nature, but this will strengthen the frameworks for the education system and ensure that it is fit for purpose now and also into the future.

Of course I have spoken about the investments just recently funded for St Albans, with St Albans Primary School and St Albans Heights Primary School, but as many would know, St Albans is home to a very diverse community. Over 70 per cent come from a non-English-speaking background, and I am very proud to represent such a diverse and multicultural community in St Albans. Close to 80 per cent have both parents born overseas according to the census, so we are really an extreme and very proud diverse community. I know how important English is for my community, especially for those who have migrated or arrived newly to Australia or to Victoria. Centres and service providers such as Comm Unity Plus in St Albans, a service provider of English, AMES in St Albans and the Migrant Resource Centre North West Region in St Albans do a tremendous job in teaching the English language and just providing the support services for newly arrived migrants, because we know how challenging it is for those who come here to make their home, whether it is from war-torn countries or whether it is to migrate—as my parents did in the 1970s—for a better life in Australia as 18-year-olds with no English.

The importance of kinder was not in the thoughts of parents back in the 1970s, in particular for multicultural communities where English was not their primary language, nor understanding and navigating the system when it came to kindergarten, so I certainly did not attend kindergarten. I recall attending prep the first day, which was such a daunting experience for me. I probably had anxiety, and the fact was I did not know what the teacher was saying to me because I did not speak English with my parents. Attending prep with no English was a little bit difficult, but I did learn as I progressed. It was a very tough prep and grade 1 for me, but I ended up at a point where I was translating for my mum in my primary school years. Then I had the fun of translating for my mum in my secondary

years, and that was always fun at high school, translating those reports to your parents. It was to the amusement of my teachers at Kealba High School what I was actually saying—

Ms Green interjected.

Ms SULEYMAN: Thank you, member for Yan Yean. It was always positive reports, as I would say to my mum. I could not get away with it with my dad, but with Mum I could. These are some of the stories that I am sure many migrant families have experienced and continue to experience, but I am so happy and pleased that there are the support services in our communities that are ready to assist, and of course the role that our multicultural community organisations play as well. They are also a level of support to families to assist in the journey to a different life, may I say.

When it comes to investing in education and especially the recent announcement of Best Start, Best Life, it brought a tear to my eye because I knew the difference that it would make to every family who had a child to know that they would be able to access free kinder without the hassles of navigating the system. This is about building a strong foundation for these kids to continue on and really prosper in their job opportunities and in their lives. I want to commend our government and in particular the numerous ministers that were involved in the new free kinder program announced last week. In a growing community where the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital delivered 6659 babies last year and which continues to grow this year, it just tells you about the absolute demand for these services. The learning years, as we have heard, from zero to five are absolutely where the skills are developed. Most importantly, it is the best start for a child to be able to get every learning experience from those early years.

This is a bill that I support. I want to thank all the teachers in my electorate. In particular I would like to thank, for 40 years of service, Cinzia Cunningham from St Albans Secondary College and Linda Maxwell from Keilor Downs College; for 45 years of service, Lorraine Bell from Monmia Primary School, Alfrieda Caban from Victoria University Secondary College and Kerrie Dowsley at St Albans Secondary College; and for 50 years, Janice Brown from Jackson School.

Mr TAK (Clarinda) (16:09): I am delighted to join the previous speakers from all sides to speak on the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022. I would like to concur with the member for St Albans with her experience interpreting for her mum and dad and certainly include myself. I still remember walking with my mother to attend her evening class at AMES, her English class, very well. But I would like to share a story—English is one part—but in a good way. You know how newly arrived migrants enter this country and learn a bit of English and at the same time never get the system? My former colleague at the City of Greater Dandenong Cr Loi Truong keeps reminding me how he was walking with his family to a bus stop, where he could read a little bit of English. It said, 'No standing', so what the whole family did was keep walking around while waiting for their bus to come—because it said 'No standing'. They were standing but it said 'No standing', so to avoid that they kept walking. That is a good one.

This is another important bill, one that will implement a number of technical amendments to make important improvements to various components of the government's education and training system. Education takes many forms in our Education State, and our adult and community education providers are vital resources for so many of my constituents. This bill has three major objectives, the first one being the modernisation, continuation and effective functioning of the Adult, Community and Further Education Board and AMES Australia.

Just for some context, the Adult, Community and Further Education Board's role is to plan and to promote adult learning, allocate resources, develop policy and advise the Minister for Training and Skills on matters that relate to adult education in Victoria. Through the board the Victorian government provides funding to registered Learn Local providers to deliver education and training programs to a broad range of Victorians who are above compulsory school age and who are seeking to gain the educational capacity and core skills they need for study, work and of course life. The board provides

funding for around 250 Learn Local providers as well as AMES Australia and the Centre for Adult Education to deliver preaccredited training and other programs that support learners to return to study and improve their core skills, such as literacy, numeracy, English language, employability and digital skills. This helps many in the community to gain qualifications, broaden their employment options and learn new skills.

Learn Local providers are all non-profit community organisations, and we are so lucky in Clarinda to have several of these wonderful providers. We have the Cheltenham Community Centre on Chesterville Road. Arna O'Connell is the centre manager there; I have met her, and she is a wonderful advocate for community education. I was lucky enough to join the centre's AGM last year to say thank you to their board of governance and their volunteers. It is a wonderful community organisation.

In recent times the centre has been providing vital support to many Ukrainian students attending English classes at the centre. It is a major focus of the centre—helping migrants with limited English levels to improve their English language skills to settle into Australia. We heard from the member for St Albans, who shared her story, and now from me in the electorate of Clarinda about how in the 1980s we saw many Indo-Chinese migrants resettling here in the south-east. Again, regarding the Ukrainians, they have 180 students a week from the local community come to learn English, to improve their English conversation skills and to meet other local migrants, both newly arrived and settled residents. With the current crisis in Ukraine resulting in millions of displaced Ukrainians, many recently arrived Ukrainians have come to Cheltenham Community Centre to join the English classes and seek support from the community centre. I would like to commend the centre for this outstanding work.

We are a very diverse community in Clarinda, with more than half of us born overseas or with a parent born overseas. So the English classes provided are a very important resource for many. Across our providers there are opportunities to improve spoken and written English. These classes are designed to help everyone, including in their English. These classes are also designed for newly arrived migrants and refugees settling into Australia. They also offer adults English classes and the skills that they need to live and work in the community, to keep their job and to gain entry into further study and also complete a qualification. I come back to my good friend and former colleague at the City of Greater Dandenong. Of course he did go on and complete his 510 hours and complete a bachelor of arts at university. Things like this are things that we ought to celebrate to remind ourselves what education can bring to one family who arrived here for a better life and a better future. These services are important resources to help people communicate with others in their community and also to build language and life skills.

In fact there are thousands of short courses available each year, and you can check out the Learning Local course guides and browse through learning topics on the website. As mentioned, we have several amazing providers in Clarinda. There is the Springvale Learning and Activities Centre on Osborne Avenue, and I was fortunate to join the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, who is at the table here, in recent times to visit the centre, with their wonderful services during COVID—a difficult time. They provide English for citizenship, English for safe work and functional English courses, and there are other subjects, including budgeting and also writing a resume and all of that.

I understand that in this bill there are other amendments, important amendments and technical amendments which are very important, but I just would like to lastly make another comment on the Victorian student number, the VSN. The VSN was introduced over a decade ago, and the governance provisions around VSNs need to be updated. The bill will provide greater flexibility for persons and entities who may be authorised to access, use and disclose VSNs and related information in the Victorian student register and expand the purposes for which VSNs and related information can be accessed, used and disclosed. These are important amendments that will facilitate more accurate reporting to the community on the state's education and training system.

There are a whole host of important changes, and I thank the Minister for Education and the Minister for Training and Skills for bringing this bill forward and for all the work that they do to deliver our

first-class, world-class education system here in Victoria. I am happy to support these amendments here today that will help to deliver our adult and community education programs, which as I mentioned, are very important resources for many of my constituents and many Victorians, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr BRAYNE (Nepean) (16:18): I also rise today to speak on the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022, and of course it is great to follow my good friend the member for Clarinda and his very considered contribution. The member for Clarinda does not tell enough stories in this place, so when he does tell them they are usually great. I urge the member: please, please tell some stories when you are up on your feet.

The Victorian government is committed to establishing Victoria as the Education State, where every student has an equal right to the knowledge and skills they need to shape their lives. Our numberplates say ‘The Education State’ for a reason. Since 2015 this government has invested more than \$25 billion to achieve these Education State reforms. Of this incredibly substantial amount, \$12.8 billion has been invested into school infrastructure right across the state, including 1850 school upgrades, opening 75 of the 100 new schools by 2026 and supporting 17 400 jobs in construction and associated industries. This has been one of the great pursuits of this government.

It is one that I have seen reflected in my community on the southern peninsula time after time. Since I was elected in 2018 my community has seen more than \$40 million in investments and upgrades to our local schools. \$13.77 million, and I have mentioned it almost every speech, was invested to rebuild Rosebud Primary School. This will provide extra places for local students. \$8.7 million was invested to upgrade Dromana Primary School and \$10 million to upgrade Rosebud Secondary College, and works are beginning very soon on that one. That is without mentioning the single largest capital investment in Red Hill Consolidated School in 50 years. I was fortunate enough to visit Red Hill a few weeks ago to tour the brand new buildings, and I was able to see firsthand the world-class facilities that Red Hill Consolidated School students are learning in right now. Whether it is in Red Hill, Dromana, Capel Sound, Rosebud, Rye or Sorrento, our kids deserve the best chance to develop the knowledge and skills they need to shape their lives. It starts with investing in world-class facilities and modernised buildings. These are real investments. These are really making a difference in the lives of local students who live on the southern Mornington Peninsula. That is why I was so excited to see that Peninsula Specialist College would be receiving \$9.4 million from the 2022–23 budget to upgrade and modernise that school, including the construction of a new classroom building.

As I said, every student regardless of their background should be given access to the best education with the best facilities. I also take this opportunity to thank all teachers, principals, teacher aides and administrative staff for their huge efforts to support our students’ learning throughout the pandemic, the really difficult period we have had over the last couple of years. I know that the investments in school infrastructure I have seen in my community of Nepean will also help local kids on the southern peninsula and shape their lives for many years to come. There are so many communities right across the state that can say the same. I am sure you can as well, member for Melton. That is the power of investing in our kids’ future. That is why this government is absolutely committed to building the Education State here in Victoria.

This commitment goes beyond investments just in school infrastructure, though; it is about ensuring that the education system itself is the best it can be so that students are prepared for successful careers in the future. That is why since 2018 the Andrews Labor government has invested a huge amount of money in reforming the senior secondary school system. The 2020–21 budget invested \$38 million to commence reforms to vocational and applied learning in senior secondary schooling in response to John Firth’s review into vocational and applied learning pathways in senior secondary schooling. This was followed by substantial investment in the 2022–23 budget to continue to support the implementation of the recommendations of the Firth review. This review recommends that the government address issues through a place-based approach to planning, coupled with the introduction of a VET core offering and scaffolded with additional supports to address access barriers. This

government is committed to listening to the experts and delivering the Education State. That is why the recommendations of this review have been implemented.

As a result, high-quality vocational and applied learning will be available to every senior secondary student no matter where they go to school. It starts with the introduction of the new VCE vocational major and the Victorian Pathways Certificate, with the first student cohort commencing these certificates in 2023. This investment will see students better prepared for in-demand careers in trades and services and represents the biggest reform to our state's education system since the introduction of VCE.

I could name so many other investments that are putting our students first in creating the Education State here in Victoria, whether it is the \$131 million to lift student literacy and numeracy support for students who need it most; \$37 million to continue the student excellence program, which supports higher ability students to reach their potential through enrichment opportunities; \$779 million to reduce face-to-face teaching hours by 1½ hours progressively over 2023 and 2024 to make sure our teachers are looked after too; or the school breakfast program. These are just some of the many investments that this government is making in our education system so that our students and their teachers are prepared for the future. Now more than ever it is essential that we are setting students up for success, and ensuring that they have access to world-class buildings and a world-class education system is the best way to do this. So in any of the number of investments that have been made in our education system, establishing Victoria as the Education State will remain a top priority for this government, and the bill we are debating today is no exception.

The Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022 will make important improvements to various components of the education and training system, including in relation to the modernisation, continuation and effective functioning of the Adult, Community and Further Education Board and AMES Australia; the powers and functions of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) as a regulator of registered training organisations and as the integrated sector regulator of schools, school boarding premises and other education providers for the child safe standards; and modernising and simplifying the provisions regulating the use of, access to and disclosure of the Victorian student number.

In particular this bill will amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 and the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021 to modernise and clarify the powers, functions and governance arrangements of the Adult, Community and Further Education Board, remove adult education institutions as a provider of ACFE and confine the provisions relating to adult education institutions to AMES Australia. It will also modernise the framework for access to, use of and disclosure of the Victorian student number and related information on the Victorian student register. It will provide the VRQA with discretion on whether to conduct a compliance audit of a registered training organisation. It will clarify that post-secondary education institutions and post-secondary education providers may provide education to people who are of compulsory school age, including to ensure those entities are subject to the child safe standards. It will ensure that a person, body or school registered in respect of a foundation secondary course or foundation secondary qualification is subject to the reportable conduct scheme and the CSS. It will allow the VRQA to continue to use and disclose information about complaints in accordance with existing provisions in the ETR act and the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014. It will lower the threshold for the VRQA to issue a notice to produce. It will allow the VRQA to issue notices to comply to schools, school boarding premises and RTOs. Finally, it will allow the Minister for Education to appoint an acting member to the board of the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership. The combination of these amendments will modernise and improve these components of the education and training system.

Regardless of whether it is amendments like the ones outlined in this bill or the billions of dollars of school infrastructure investments, this government is committed to establishing the Education State here in Victoria, and seeing the Education State come together in the southern peninsula and across

our state has been one of the most rewarding parts of my time in this role. An equitable education system is the bedrock of any fair society. I am proud of the continuous work that this government has done to improve all aspects of our education system, so whether it is seeing construction finish on Rosebud Primary School or construction begin on the new Peninsula Specialist College upgrade, I cannot wait to continue to see these investments in education come to life on the southern Mornington Peninsula and across the state. I commend this bill to the house.

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (16:28): It gives me immense pleasure to speak on the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022. This is a bill that effectively continues the reform and modernisation of our education system. As clichéd as it sounds, as the most senior member of this chamber I feel as though I have the weight of my experience to lean on when I say that education is truly a lifelong journey.

I, like I am sure many members here, have a University of the Third Age located within my electorate, and I cannot stress enough the value of this institution and institutions of its ilk. When I look at the Hawthorn U3A and the one at Deepdene as well, I am just amazed how well patronised they are. When you ask for their prospectus, there are such an enormous range of different subjects on offer: modern languages of quite a number of countries, politics and arts of all kinds. The fact is that they are, certainly in my electorate anyway, extremely well patronised. I am just delighted that, whatever happened before I arrived there, these universities of the third age got underway. I am informed that the politics and current affairs group, at which I am scheduled to debate my honourable opponent in the coming election campaign, has a sizeable waiting list. Whilst it could certainly do with a few more members of the Labor Party in it, I for one am glad to see this kind of civic engagement in my community. Representative democracy works when people care and when people show up, and these seniors certainly do. I use this as an example of the kind of good that our adult education system can do and why the improvements contained within this bill are so important.

We are committed to not just adult education but the education of all Victorians. Since 2015 we have invested more than \$25 billion to achieve our Education State reforms. We have built schools with \$12.8 billion in the last eight budgets for a massive 1850 school upgrades, opening 75 out of 100 new schools by 2026 and creating around 17 400 more jobs in construction and associated industries. These are not just empty statistics, these are lives changed and opportunities given to all Victorians. Education is a human right, and this is a government that will fight tooth and nail for every student in Victoria, no matter their age and stage.

I was a principal for decades and spent over 40 years in education, and I can tell you that the reforms I have witnessed during my time in this chamber are absolutely revolutionary. I am proud to say that anywhere in Victoria you can get a first-class education, whether at a public or a non-government school. These reforms are not just helping students Victoria-wide but helping students in my leafy electorate of Hawthorn. After decades of neglect by my conservative predecessors, I have spent the past four years trying to take in every piece of funding I can for all our schools. Whilst I hesitate to applaud myself—out of modesty of course—and my colleagues on this side of house too much, the results speak for themselves. Whilst I could speak on the subject for an eternity, I would like to go over the highlights right now: \$5.731 million for Hawthorn West Primary School, \$11.5 million for the Fritsch Holzer developments at Swinburne Senior Secondary College and \$10.13 million for Auburn High School in the 2020–21 budget, on top of the \$5.5 million delivered in the 2019–20 budget. I could go on, but all I can say is that this is a government that lives and breathes education. That is why this bill is fundamentally about making improvements to the system we have worked so hard to rebuild after the neglect of those on the opposite benches.

I will just turn to aspects of the bill itself. This legislation represents our government once again not just going for the big picture reforms but getting into the nuts and bolts of the policy itself. Measures like changing the Victorian student number identifying system might not be flashy or glamorous but make a tangible difference to our students' lives. It will now be easier to track and support students as they embark upon their promising careers.

I can tell you right now that it is these incremental changes, combined with the big-picture measures, which saw us rank first or second in 15 of the 20 NAPLAN assessments in 2021. Education is the great equaliser in our society, and whilst my electorate of Hawthorn is home to some of our state's most prestigious schools, it is also home to a large student population. Over one-quarter of students in Hawthorn live below the poverty line, believe it or not, yet the callous federal government kept dropping welfare and attacking our universities, lifting their fees and so on. Nevertheless we in our state Labor government are committed to an education system that is fair, productive and compassionate. That has been my mantra for the whole time I have been here—striving for a situation that is fair, productive and compassionate and recognising that you cannot have any one of those without the others. We will keep working to ensure that we are able to achieve the best outcomes for all students.

We all know how hard our underappreciated teachers work, and legislation like this is intended to ease their burden. It is an important part of the broader program aiming to help our teachers and complements policies like the establishment of the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership, which was funded by the Labor government to the tune of \$148 million over four years. The teaching excellence program is a one-year program with 238 teachers in its first year and with 500 teachers per year once the academy is fully up and running. We need teachers—it is as simple as that. They are the bedrock of our society, not just instilling knowledge but instilling values. They are a shoulder for students to lean on in tough times and are vital for their communities. I am sure all of us in this chamber can think of at least one teacher in their lives who had enormous impact on them. Unfortunately—or fortunately, you might say—I taught the esteemed Tony Abbott at Riverview, but I clearly did not teach him well enough.

I want to just repeat the importance of what is happening here, not just focusing on the age group of the moment. We are not just focusing on teenagers or children, we are focusing on adults of all ages and saying that education is really a lifelong process. In one way, when you stop learning, you stop living. That is very easily said—and it can be a bit glib saying it, I know—but it is on us to provide resources to make sure that adults of all stages of their lives have an opportunity to continue their learning. These sorts of reforms are able to produce that sort of outcome. I am proud to have spoken on another piece of innovative education legislation by this government, and I commend this bill to the house.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (16:39): I am delighted to follow the esteemed member for Hawthorn. It is great to join the debate on another piece of groundbreaking education legislation within the Education State. When the member for Nepean was on his feet—and I listened intently to his contribution—as he got up he commended the member for Clarinda and said that the member for Clarinda needs to tell more stories when he speaks in the chamber, because he has really got some interesting things to say. There is never a concern with having to encourage the member for Hawthorn to tell a story or two in this chamber. I love working with the member for Hawthorn, and it has been a real joy to serve these past almost four years with him and reconnect our friendship and working relationship that we have had from the beginning, since I was elected to this place in 2002.

The member for Hawthorn was the founding principal of Loyola College in Watsonia, and I was reminded of the contribution of the member for Hawthorn when I was there only about three weeks ago for the 60th wedding anniversary celebration of Mary and Val Simpson, who also recommitted their wedding vows in the hospitality centre at Loyola College. That centre was opened under the leadership of the member for Hawthorn, and I was at that opening. I think it was in around 2006, but it is still a very good centre. Sadly, since that day Mary Simpson has had a stroke, and I really wish her all the best. We want to see her back on the campaign trail, because she is a great community person in Mernda. Val Simpson OAM, her husband, is a past president of the school council at Loyola, and son Sean is now a teacher at the school, is a past assistant principal, is also a former school captain, I believe—he might have even been the inaugural one—and is past president of the alumni of Loyola College.

It is a really great thing in our Education State that we have magnificent, quality institutions in the Catholic system, in the independent system but also, most importantly, in the state system. I was very privileged when—it would be almost eight years ago—the then Leader of the Opposition, now Premier, and the now Deputy Premier and Minister for Education announced in Hilltop Park in Mernda that, if we were elected as the Andrews Labor government, Victoria would become the Education State. I can see across those almost eight years that this vision has been delivered in spades. We were up on this big hill, not far from now Bunjil Place, which is an Aboriginal healing place, looking across to those beautiful mountains and seeing all those communities there. ‘Mernda’ means ‘young girl’ in the traditional language spoken by the Wurundjeri and ‘Yan Yean’, the electorate that I represent, means ‘young boy’. I really think that the educational needs of the Merndas and the Yan Yeans have been really well taken care of under the leadership of this government, but particularly in the Mernda and Doreen postcodes.

Young Jeremy was before the press. I think he was four at the time with beautiful golden blond locks, a local boy with his mum there. He had not started primary school then, but I know he attended Arthurs Creek Primary School and I suspect he might have started year 7 this year, so I must catch up with where he is. He was absolutely rapt to launch that first Education State numberplate, and he actually got to take it home as a prized possession. But since then we have delivered on saying that we would build the Mernda Central P–12 College, and they are having their first year of year 12—so they are going from nothing, out of the ground and nothing being delivered. It was really needed for that community. No secondary schools were built in the north and school capital was cut by over 50 per cent, and so we have caught up with that. It is a fantastic school and it has got great outcomes.

Hazel Glen College, the largest single campus school in the country, goes from birth to year 12. We completed that school with the senior college. It will be an exemplar of what we will be able to do because it already begins at birth. Part of the governance of that school is early learning, so I think that it will be one of the leading centres when we move to having that pre-prep year introduced across the state.

I was pleased to visit Doreen Primary recently with the Labor candidate for Yan Yean, Lauren Kathage, and announce on the day of the budget actually—it is one of the oldest schools in my electorate; it has been around for, I think, 165 years, it might be 166—that it is getting over \$5 million in this budget to rebuild this great little rural school. What it will mean is that in all six schools in the Mernda and Doreen postcode, which has grown from 1200 people when I was elected 20 years ago to now 50 000 people, not one permanent building will be more than 15 years old. That is just an example of the Education State at work.

We have had particularly the Whittlesea Tech School initiative, the Banyule Nillumbik Tech School initiative, doctors in schools at Whittlesea Secondary College and at Wallan Secondary College and additional mental health and welfare professionals rolled out throughout secondary schools across the state and now this week’s announcement that after the successful pilot in primary schools this will roll out across the state as well. I really want to commend all students across our state and thank them for their diligence and indeed their parents who supported them with that home learning in the disruption of the pandemic. I think it shows, with the introduction of these mental health professionals, that we really want to try and smooth out those difficulties that students experienced over that time.

I certainly want to thank teachers and education professionals. We value you. We absolutely value you and everything that you have done over the last two years in particular. I say to students: look at those teachers that you admire. I want to acknowledge the late Delma Clapp, who taught me at St Ann’s College. She was an amazing teacher, an amazing community leader and a Warrnambool City councillor, and I learnt so much from her. For students today, look at the Delma Clapps of today. I have met so many of them even as recently as last Friday at Wandong Primary—these brilliant teachers. We are going to need so many more brilliant teachers, and I would say to those young people in education now that they will have a great career. Whether it is in early learning, whether it is in our tech schools or in our TAFE system, we are going to need many of you to prepare our young people for the jobs of the future.

But I also say to those that have been displaced in employment over these years of the pandemic and maybe have been struggling, particularly women in low-paid and casual employment, now is the time to retrain and examine the offer of free TAFE across Victoria but particularly at Melbourne Polytechnic and GOTAFE that serve my electorate, because there are so many free TAFE courses that are there in professions that are in need—in health and in education, but particularly in education. Think about retraining and giving back to our community.

I want to commend the Minister for Education for the great work that he does, his parliamentary secretary and the departmental people who have worked on this bill. There is always so much to talk about in education. I am sorry I have not talked much about the bill, because there has been so much happening on the ground, but this piece of legislation is just yet another example of Victoria leading, whether it is cooperating with our New South Wales partners or talking about these issues at national cabinet. I commend this bill to the house.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (16:48): It is a real pleasure to follow such a comprehensive contribution by the member for Yan Yean. I want to say that clearly this is an important bill for a range of reasons, and data management and privacy is one of them. Obviously we know that the bill will give government and the sector better tools to manage data while also ensuring privacy for students. When you look at the concept of education being predominantly a core service for our government but also a core need and right for the community, that is number one. But number two is it is also an export industry, both the non-tertiary side of it and the tertiary and further education side of it. This bill will allow students to better manage their interaction with education institutions, so it is important for a range of those sorts of reasons. There are some other amendments proposed in this bill which give the minister and the secretary more power to deliver high-quality education at a governance level, at a privacy level and at a data level.

But just to pick up from the member for Yan Yean, it is very difficult to stop any member of this government talking about the wholesale support and investment, both regulatory and budgetary, in education. It is really, really profound. If you look at just this afternoon in question time and the contributions by the Premier and the Deputy Premier on three-year-old kinder, it is really our government that has brought kinder—I mean, there are a lot of great providers, but our government has brought kinder out of the realm of what was conceptually known as babysitting into the realm of being an important part of the start of an education journey. That is what kinder is, and with the year 4 program that we announced the other day, which will lead to 30 hours of pre-prep education, that part of the education sector is now playing the role that it always deserved to play, which was a key fundamental and foundational role for an education pathway. As the Premier said today of two years of kinder, international research strongly indicates it leads to better life outcomes, better quality jobs, higher educational attainment and generally higher income earning for an adult that as a child attended two years of kinder.

Then you move on to the primary and secondary sectors—enormous investments again just this week in expanding the mental health support from the pilot sites that we had in primary schools to 100 schools after the royal commission and now to every school in the public sector and low-cost, low-fee independent schools. You could see that as a mental health investment, but you could also see that profoundly as an education investment because you cannot have the concentration and the learning if you do not have the supports that enable that—the context. That is why breakfast clubs in schools matter. That is why disability and all-ability supports in schools matter. That is why Safe Schools and anti-bullying programs matter—because they provide the context where kids can learn in a first-class education system. That is why moving forward the mental health supports will be in all primary schools and all secondary schools, and all the other supports. That is why buildings matter. That is why this government has made such a big, big deal about school buildings—1400 school buildings have been upgraded; 100 new schools are being built. Of course you do not learn from the bricks and the mortar; you learn from the teachers, the staff, from other students and from parents, but the context matters. We want, as others have said, including the Minister for Education, first-class educational

facilities for a first-class education. This bill also speaks to governance and to data privacy in the sector generally. They too matter.

You go from kinder to primary to secondary and then you go to TAFE, and we see in TAFE—the member for Yan Yean talked about it—free TAFE for hundreds of courses but not just a random selection of courses, courses that absolutely fill a skill gap in the economy, a skill gap that employers have told us they need filled. Two days ago I had the pleasure of attending Holmesglen TAFE’s tunnelling centre. It is squarely in my patch; it is the only campus of Holmesglen which is squarely in my patch, and I love it and I claim it. I attended with the Minister for Training and Skills in the other place, Ms Tierney, and newly elected federal member Carina Garland was there because it is in her federal electorate of Chisholm, and the Prime Minister came. All the show and tell on that day was Victorian.

I am sure the Prime Minister will have a chance, given his passion, his interest, his genuineness and his authenticity, to build that profile that the Victorian government has built in terms of education and a bunch of other areas. But he was being told about all these good things happening at Holmesglen TAFE, including the workforce investment fund or something to that effect—I cannot remember the exact name of the fund—which actually develops the tools for students to learn. For example, students who are seven storeys down below the streets of Melbourne building the tunnels for the Metro Tunnel, building the tunnels for the North East Link, building the tunnels for the Suburban Rail Loop are learning at Holmesglen TAFE in Chadstone in the electorate that I proudly represent. One of the many tools is a 3D goggle set which actually places a student in the context that they will be in on the job with all the safety requirements, all the alerts. The entire experience of being underground is what they are experiencing there. We are investing in the TAFE sector, developing that innovative technology, and there is a whole bunch of other stuff which is amazing—like we are drilling a hole through this automated kind of simulation. You have a simulated vehicle where you are digging holes and breaking through walls. All this is a function of the investment we have made in TAFE, not just in terms of core funding but in terms of the workforce link and investment back into the workforce. This is all the stuff that the Prime Minister was shown, as we were, the rest of us.

I reflect on the fact that this is an entire circle of fulfilment, economically, educationally, personally and professionally, for a bunch of Victorians. I say that because you have free access to many of these courses, so that is number one. You can always do more, but you have a very well funded TAFE sector that can provide a robust first-class learning environment. And what do you have after that? You have a government-backed scheme which says to the major employers in the world who want to do business in Victoria, particularly in construction, ‘You will make sure that you’ll have 10 per cent apprentices on major construction jobs’, because we want to build a domestic labour force in Victoria that is trained and can do the next generation of projects. So there is free entry into a TAFE course, and there are excellent TAFEs that have incredible innovative learning and a pipeline of work through major contracts and major infrastructure projects.

I know I am going to sound like the member for Bayswater in his enthusiasm in a lot of his contributions in this place, but it is extraordinarily impactful when you actually take an education view across from kinder right the way through, after high school, to further education. I will not even get started, because I do not have time, on our investment in the university sector, which is squarely a sector the federal government should invest in and look after. During COVID we gave that sector hundreds of millions of dollars because we knew how important it was. We did not, like somebody in Canberra, tell international students to go home and come back when we are ready for their economic support of us and our economy in the future.

This is a bill that adds to the breadth of work that we have done in a legislative sense and a budgetary sense to support our education sector. This is about governance, this is about privacy and this is about a range of other supports that that sector needs. But we have a far, far bigger track record on this, and I look forward to more investment in the education sector in Victoria. It is good for people in Victoria, it is good for the economy and it is good for our future. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong—Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) (16:59): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

SUSTAINABLE FORESTS TIMBER AMENDMENT (TIMBER HARVESTING SAFETY ZONES) BILL 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ms THOMAS:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (16:59): I rise to make a contribution on the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022. I suppose I might start with the Minister for Agriculture's second-reading speech and make some comments on the second-reading speech and then move on to the details of the bill. In the minister's second-reading speech she spoke about how all Victorians deserve to have a safe working environment. Forestry workers, like other workers, are entitled to be mentally and physically safe as they go about their work, regardless of how people may view that work, and the same principle applies to authorised officers and police officers as they go about performing their duties.

I think you will find that there is absolutely unanimity on that particular statement from all members in this chamber: we all believe that workers deserve a safe environment to work in. The trouble is that forestry workers in Victoria have not had that for a number of years now. They have been victims of protesters and the tricks that protesters play that have put their lives at risk, put their machinery at risk and put their livelihoods at risk and have caused them untold mental and financial anguish over that time. The minister touched on that further down in her second-reading speech, where she said:

Since the announcement of the Victorian Forestry Plan in late 2019, not only has forest protest activity increased in Victoria but protesters have developed dangerous new tactics to deploy at these protests. These tactics are continuing to evolve. These activities create an unacceptable risk to the safety of workers, authorised officers and police officers and the protesters themselves.

The Victorian government's forest plan was released in 2019. We are now in 2022. To have had the forest workers of Victoria exposed to those risks for three years before we saw this piece of legislation coming forward I think is unacceptable. It is not something that a good government would do. If it was identified that there was a problem after the forest plan release in 2019, why did the government not act sooner to make sure that our forest workers were protected into the future? The minister went on further to say:

As a result, this shift in protest tactics has had a significant and detrimental impact on the mental health of some native forestry contractors and their families who are placed at risk of hurting themselves or others by these tactics.

I could not agree more. All the forestry workers that I talk to and particularly that a member for Eastern Victoria Region in the other place, Melina Bath, who has done a lot of work with the forestry industry in Victoria, talks to—they have been at their wits' end. They have been suffering mental anguish. They have had severe financial pressure put on their businesses. Quite a few of those harvest-and-haul contractors have actually left the industry. They have left the industry for a number of reasons, the first obviously being that they were not getting enough work, and they had the challenges that I have just talked about that are mentioned in the minister's second-reading speech. But they have lost staff. Their staff were not guaranteed continuity of work because of the protesters, so they had to go and find other work to make sure that they could feed and house their families, and the workers had the mental anguish of not knowing what was going to happen next with the protesters in those logging coupes.

This legislation is a good start in protecting the forestry workers in the logging coupes, but it is a start, it is not the end. There needs to be more done in the future to make sure that they actually have a safe workplace. But the fact that it has been basically three years that the government has known something should be done and nothing has been done I think is a total dereliction of duty on the part of the minister of the Crown and the industry that she purports to represent.

If you talk about, as in the second-reading speech, the three most common and dangerous tactics which have emerged in forest protests in logging coupes, they are:

The erection and occupation of 'tree-sits' at hazardous heights. These 'tree sits' have been built at heights where falls can cause death and with structures that are intentionally built to collapse if they are attempted to be removed.

For a logging team to have someone up a tree that they do not know how they can get down and not to be able to go about their role in actually harvesting that timber is something that I think is totally unacceptable, and a resolution should have been found before this legislation was brought before the house. Another tactic is:

Protesters locking onto or attaching themselves to active timber harvesting machinery. Due to the nature and size of this machinery this can cause significant safety issues.

It is not only a safety issue for the protester, it is a safety issue for the operator of that machinery. I do not know if other members have used large machinery in the past, but to have protesters in the close vicinity of that machinery and potentially locking themselves onto it while it is moving—I think it is just absurd that a protester would think that is acceptable behaviour at all, let alone doing it in a logging coupe, which puts them at even more risk.

Then they talk about the black wallaby tactics, which involve camouflaged, masked protesters running in and out of timber harvesting zones and back into the surrounding bush, causing significant safety issues, and they are very hard to detect on the premises. Again, why should that be allowed in today's society and in a workplace? There should have been something done about this far sooner than the three years it has taken to get this done.

So under all that duress and stress, I would like to put on record from our side of the house our total support and thanks to the timber workers and the timber industry participants here in this state for what they have put up with over the last few years with protesters and for what they have done to make sure that they can create the employment they do down the value chain with the sawmills, with the furniture manufacturing industry, with the door makers, with the floor makers and with the stair makers. I would like to put on record our thankyou to those people for doing what they do to make sure we have the timber in this state under what I consider as quite significant duress.

Might I say also that some elements, I believe, of the Andrews government, if not directly, have tacitly supported these protesters and what they do, because there is this agenda from some in the government who want to appease the inner-city Greens to get preferences and do not really mind if there are protesters. They do not really mind that the workers in the timber industry were put through the circumstances that they were put through over the last few years. Yes, this legislation is a good first step in correcting some of that, but it has been far too long in coming. As I said, I believe not everyone in the government has been as firm as they should have been in making sure that these issues were resolved sooner.

One of the things that I think is lost sight of by those people who have been opposed to the native timber industry is that it is a sustainable industry. It is an excellent carbon store. If you look at the research, one of the best carbon stores we have is actually taking a mature tree, harvesting it, turning it into furniture, turning it into a sustainable product and then growing a new tree, because it is in that first 30 to 35 years of a tree's life when it stores the most carbon. So it is important that we recognise that the native timber industry as part of climate mitigation is an excellent tool in storing carbon into the future. But there is an ideological view that you have to lock forests up and leave them. Now, that

may have some benefits, but I suppose the key issue there is if you do not actually manage fire, if you do not actually manage the landscape, you have a worse outcome because you have the mega-fires we have had over the last couple of decades. If you have not done the controlled burns, if you have not managed the forest, you actually have more carbon released than any harvesting activity would release at all. And you only have to go to the 2009 Black Saturday royal commission to see the reports there and that particularly recommendation 56—that recommendation about planned burns and managing the landscape—has not been implemented. Initially the Andrews government embraced those recommendations, but it has since walked away, particularly from that recommendation. It is not doing the planned burns, it is not doing the management of the landscape, to make sure that we reduce the risk of mega-fires into the future.

One of the things that, again, Melina Bath in the other place has done a lot of work on is the firestick program, which is where we can work with our Indigenous community to actually manage the landscape in a better way. Victor Steffensen from north Queensland is an expert in this. We have had him down a number of times. He has run workshops to talk about how you manage the forest better, how you have white smoke compared to black smoke and how you do not have too hot a burn; you actually go back to managing the landscape as it was managed in the past, and you would not have that risk of mega-fires.

So I am very concerned that there seems to be an ideological view from the other side of the house that we lock our forests up, we do not harvest them, we do not manage them and somehow that delivers a good outcome for the environment. I do not believe that is the case, and I wish the other side would actually do something about that particular issue.

To get to the bill, the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022 amends the Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004 to strengthen the existing regulation framework for timber harvesting and timber harvesting safety zones. This includes increasing penalties for existing offences, creating new offences and the introduction of a regime of banning notices.

Timber coupes are defined in a timber release plan that sets out the defined area that can be logged by VicForests contractors. There are signs up that define those coupes. There are signs up that actually designate the roads where the trucks will go in and out, and those coupes, as I said, are defined. This legislation applies to those coupes and within a 150-metre boundary of those coupes. I suppose the concerns that I would have, that this side of the house would have, with the legislation are that by having that defined as the coupe and the 150 metres a protester can effectively step over the line and an authorised officer or police cannot do anything about them as a protester, even if they know that as soon as they go away that protester will run back into the coupe and potentially cause trouble. As I said, this legislation is an important step in keeping the workplace safe, but I do not think it necessarily gives the authorised officers and the police the powers to deal with protesters who will game them and make sure they go on one side of the line and then run back across the line and cause trouble into the future. So I think there is the opportunity there to give the authorised officers and the police a little bit more power about potentially the intent of what someone might be doing to make sure they can actually move them on so they cannot just wait there for the police to go home or for the authorised officers to go home and then cause trouble into the future.

There has been a lot of support for the legislation. All members of Parliament would be aware of the email campaign that we had, where we all received a lot of emails from people out of the forest industry supporting this legislation, supporting it as a good first step. An example of the emails that I received—to me, obviously—is:

We support The Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022

Timber workers, like all Victorian workers have the right to go to work each day and do their job without having their health and safety compromised.

The Victorian Government has acted in the face of persistent and shocking behaviour by workplace invaders intent on disrupting activities in Timber Harvesting Zones in a way which is detrimental to the health, safety

and mental wellbeing of forest contractors and crews and the economic security of workers, contractors, and timber communities.

People have a right to protest but the actions should be safe, properly targeted and appropriate and certainly not be directed toward timber workers, contractors and crews just trying to work on land allocated by the State for timber production.

Kind Regards

Et cetera, et cetera. So the minister has, as I said, got a good first step and the industry is supportive of that first step, and I commend everyone who got behind that and ran that particular campaign. Deb Kerr, the CEO of the Victorian Forest Products Association, again with her group was very supportive of getting change in this industry. But if you talk to people out of the industry, like I said at the start, they believe it is only a good first step and they believe it should have happened a lot sooner than it has happened.

This bill increases the maximum fines, but one of the concerns historically the industry has had is that the court system does not necessarily use those higher fines as a discouragement into the future, or if they do, through crowdfunding or rich benefactors protesters effectively have their fines paid for them and they can go back and protest into the future without worrying about how they are going to pay those particular fines. I think a classic example of that is the fact that MyEnvironment got found guilty of an offence against VicForests for what they had been doing illegally previously. They were taken to court, they lost and they had costs awarded against them to the tune now that MyEnvironment has a debt to VicForests of something like \$2 million. That has been sitting there for something like five or six years now, and at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing this year on 19 May, the Minister for Agriculture, under questioning from the member for Gippsland South, effectively conceded that VicForests has been instructed not to pursue that debt.

The minister—and I will paraphrase the minister—effectively said that she had instructed VicForests to be a model litigant and that if VicForests or the government was of the view that MyEnvironment could not pay that debt, they should not be pursued for that debt. Well, if the Victorian law got to the point where those who were viewed to not be able to pay a fine should not be fined, I think there would be a whole breakdown of the justice system of Victoria—

Mr M O'Brien: They chased after the plaintiff in the curfew case for costs.

Mr WALSH: They did. Again this legislation is a good first step, but if the Andrews government is serious about protecting workers in logging coupes from protesters, it would be a good sign of intent to the industry if VicForests was actually allowed to pursue MyEnvironment for the \$2 million in court-ordered debt that is owed to them. That is a debt to all Victorians. That sits somewhere in the balance sheet of the collective government. The \$2 million is owed to Victorian taxpayers by MyEnvironment. Why shouldn't that money be pursued? Why shouldn't that money be paid? Why should you and I have to have that debt sit there? Why shouldn't our taxes have that money put in so we can have services delivered here in Victoria? So, yes, this bill goes as a good first step, but let us make sure the government actually shows it is serious. That seriousness would be a very good thing. It would be a very good sign of intent if the government pursued MyEnvironment for the \$2 million that they are owed.

In, as I said, this bill not going quite far enough, there are restrictions of powers on police officers and authorised officers. For argument's sake, they cannot do body searches of protesters. If a protester is standing there with a relatively tight pair jeans on and you can see a device in their pocket, like a thumb lock, for argument's sake, which is a prohibited item to be having in those particular harvesting coupes, a police officer is unable to do anything about that because it is on the person's body, even though they might see it in their pocket. The member for Benambra looks puzzled. As a former police officer, I am sure he would wonder: why, why, why? Why if an authorised officer or a police officer can see that someone has an illegal object in their pocket that no doubt is not there just for the picture of it—not just there because they want to feel it in their pocket; it is there to be used at some stage in the

future—why can't an authorised officer or a police officer do something about that particular device that is in someone's pocket to stop them doing something?

As I said before, the restriction on the actual 150-metre radius around a logging coupe—again, why can't an authorised officer or a policeman actually go outside that area if they believe there is an intent there for someone to do that? Because they can literally stand metres over the line and a police officer or an authorised officer cannot do anything. They are not going to be there 24/7. At some stage the shift is going to change. There are never enough people. It usually takes a day or two for authorised officers to turn up at these coupes where there is a protest. They are not going to stay there forever. They are going to go home at some stage. That protest is in the bush. They can come out and then they can do damage to the machinery of the contractors that are there. They can drive spikes into trees, which are very, very dangerous if hit with a harvesting saw. So they can do all those things by just waiting out there until the authorised officer or the police officer goes home. I think there needs to be an expansion of that in the future. They can effectively be taunting the authorised officers or the police and they cannot do anything about it at all.

One of the things that I find intriguing in this piece of legislation is that the government has increased the fines for having a dog in a harvesting zone. If I am a harvesting contractor and I have my faithful dog that goes everywhere with me, goes in the ute with me—when I was on the farm I had a dog that was in the ute or in the tractor or in the truck with me all the time—I cannot take it into a logging coupe. I cannot take my dog into a logging coupe. The excuse that is given is that it might be dangerous to the protesters if it attacks a protester. Spare me. If a protester did not go in there, they would not be at risk, so I do not see why a forest harvest worker is being denied the right to take his dog to work. What is he supposed to do—tie it up on the road before he goes in? Leave it at home when there is no one there and it is not being socialised at all? That part of this legislation should be changed. A forest worker should be entitled to take his dog to work. Plenty of builders, plenty of brickies and plenty of tradies take their dogs to work. Why shouldn't a forest worker be able to take their dog to work? I just do not see why they should not be able to do that. The context that was given to us in the briefing was it could be dangerous to a protester. As I said, if the protester does not go into the coupe and the protester does not cause any trouble, they will not be at risk, so I do not know who we are trying to protect in these particular circumstances.

The fines, as I said, have been increased substantially. The fines have been increased in line with the Wildlife Act 1975 to have a similar quantum of penalty units for the fines in this piece of legislation. What I find intriguing is that when we dealt with the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2022 a few months ago we moved amendments to increase the fines in that legislation to the same level as is in this legislation and in the Wildlife Act, but the government opposed those increases. I do not know why farmers are not entitled to the same penalties against farm trespassers as there are in the Wildlife Act or in this forest legislation.

I pay tribute to John Gommans, who tragically passed away a month or six weeks ago. He was the owner of the Gippy Goat Cafe who suffered all the trauma and anxiety of the invasion there, which was the start of the whole campaign to get the farm trespass bill through this Parliament. Even now, if someone did a repeat offence at Gippy Goat, they would only get a maximum fine that is not as high as the penalties in this legislation or the Wildlife Act. I do not know why the government opposed those increases in fines that the coalition moved to the farm trespass bill that would have brought it into line with the Wildlife Act and the Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act. Again, I would urge the government to go back and bring before the house a bill to increase the fines in the farm trespass act to marry them up with these other two pieces of legislation. If they do not and we have the opportunity to be in government, we will do that in the future.

I would just like to finish off, as I was paying tribute to the industry earlier, by thinking about all those harvest and haul contractors who are now working in the Wombat State Forest doing salvage timber there and what they have had to go through to get in there and be able to do the valuable work that they are doing. We all remember the storms of June last year and the literally thousands and thousands

of trees that were blown over in the Dandenongs, in Gippsland and in the Wombat forest. There is an estimation that in the Wombat forest there are something like 500 000 tonnes of windfall timber, and it has taken far too long, with the government red tape and the issues that the department have put in front of the industry stopping them, to get in there to get that particular timber.

As the member for Narracan would know, if you do not harvest that timber in a certain time, the quality diminishes over time and it will not be sawlog, it will effectively just be firewood. Given the shortage of timber in Victoria, it would be a criminal action by the government if that timber ended up being downgraded to firewood rather than being sawlog. But if you look at those people that are in there now harvesting that timber for the good of all Victoria, they have got not only the protesters working against them, which this legislation will help to mitigate in some ways I hope, they have got the conservation regulator and the department working against them. Not only are they facing protesters, they have effectively got quasi-protesters from the government through the department that are putting them at risk and causing a lot of angst for them.

If you look at a particular contractor, Mr Greenwood and his wife, Chris, run a small business, JD Logging, with three harvest workers and four or five truck drivers, and the conservation regulator had demanded that they actually have documentation for all the truck routes, their drivers' names and addresses, workers' time sheets, all their business records—everyone that is linked to them and the salvage operation in the Wombat forest, and if they did not provide that they were going to face a fine of something like \$18 000. So you have got someone who is going about their work harvesting this timber to clean up the fire risk and for the good of Victoria to have that timber, and you have got the regulator saying they demanded all this extra paperwork, otherwise there was going to be \$18 000 fine. They actually demanded that there be:

- COUPE attendance and sign-in sheets for all workers
- ALL business records of dates and hours of work of employees
- LISTS of all activities undertaken by employees relevant to each day of work
- DETAILS of haulage operators if subcontracted outside JD Logging Pty Ltd
- DATES and times of all haulage activities such as arrival and departure
- DETAILS of vehicle types used, e.g. semi or B-double

Why does the regulator need to know what sort of truck is actually carting this timber away? It defies logic to me, some of these things I am reading out.

- VOLUMES of timber removed from the coupes

Well, that is for VicForests to manage and the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, who are actually doing this particular contract. I do not see how it is an issue for the environmental regulator.

- ROUTES by which timber haulage vehicles accessed the coupes

Why does the environmental regulator need to know what roads a truck is going to drive on? This is just crazy, crazy red tape stuff.

- COPIES of all pages of the coupe diaries
- ALL documents relating to any lease, licence, permit, agreement, arrangement or authorisation that authorised or authorises active or planned timber harvesting operations at coupes
- DOCUMENTS pursuant to any contract or subcontract agreement for the conduct of timber harvesting operations at coupes

Why? Why do they have to provide all is paperwork to the environmental regulator? It just defies logic. It is government red tape gone mad to try and drive the timber workers out of a job into the future. Fortunately after a lot of complaints this request was actually withdrawn by the environmental regulator. So after causing the Greenwoods huge grief, huge worry, having to do a lot of work to produce all this paperwork, they actually withdrew that particular request.

I go back to where I started: I think the Andrews government over time has been very comfortable with the protesters and with the problems that have been caused to the native forest industry to try and drive them out of business. The Andrews government have made it very clear they are going to close the industry down by 2030. Can I say that I do not think the majority of the industry will survive past the end of 2022. If you look at the sawmills, they are only getting 50 to 70 per cent of their log requirement at the moment. Fenning in Gippsland, as I understand it, will be out of timber in the next couple of weeks. Australian Sustainable Hardwoods in Heyfield, something the government owns a half share in, are actually now bringing timber from Tasmania to process and from overseas because they actually cannot get enough to be here.

The Andrews government, I think, is just effectively committed to destroying this industry, destroying a key industry of regional Victoria. This legislation gives the harvest and haul contractors some protection. It does not give them protection from government policy to actually put them out of business, and it is an absolute shame that a government of the Crown, that ministers of the Crown, would so actively work to destroy what is a sustainable industry here in Victoria—an industry that actually is a good start carbon store and creates a lot of employment in regional Victoria. All it will mean is that we will actually be importing more timber from overseas—from countries that have less regulation than we do, less environmental regulation than we do—and I just think it defies logic. But this bill is a good first step, and the Liberal and National parties will be supporting it.

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (17:29): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022. I do so as part of a government that actually understands a collective ethos and actually understands the principles which guide us through every single piece of legislation in this place. Firstly, principles of fairness; secondly, the principle of sustainability to ensure when transition does occur that it happens in a sustainable way not only when we are speaking locally but globally as well; and thirdly, that safety considerations are taken into account. Taking those three principles into account—that of fairness, that of sustainability and that of safety—we know on this side of the house is excellent for workers. It is actually pretty good for the markets as well, and it is fantastic for the economy. Everyone on this side of the house is very, very pleased to speak in favour of this bill, and we are certainly not divided as I know others are.

This bill is a part of the much broader *Victorian Forestry Plan*, which is designed to ensure smooth transition out of native forestry for workers, businesses and communities that have relied on the industry for generations. The plan itself supports the transition of the native timber industry to a future that is based on plantation supply while protecting as many jobs as possible. That transition has been made with a \$200 million package.

The transition has started and there is already a good take-up of support and evidence of innovative thinking within Victoria's native timber industry. Since the announcement, however, there has been an increase in protest activity. It is sad to say this, but protesters have developed dangerous new tactics to deploy at these protests. The tactics are continuing to evolve, and they create an unacceptable risk to the safety of workers, authorised officers and police officers who are present on site—and indeed to the protesters themselves.

Having been a longstanding union official that has worked in the private sector with that union for decades, it occurs to me that safety has to be paramount to any of those other principles that I spoke about earlier, or it has to sit very consistently with those principles of sustainability and fairness. To not have a safe workplace is just absolutely unacceptable to this side of the house. To that end, I note that Mick O'Connor, the CFMEU national secretary, has this afternoon put out a media release saying that, sure:

People have a right to peacefully protest but they should not target timber workers—

because like all workers, timber workers—

... have the right to go to work each day and do their job without having their health and safety compromised by dangerous activity.

I note from some comments in the house earlier today that the Greens will be opposing this bill. But I point to a line from Mick O'Connor's press release from the CFMEU saying that:

The flawed logic that we should wait for a death or serious injury of a worker or protestor before we take action to better deter misconduct should hold no weight with serious legislators.

I think that rings very, very true. Not only will this bill achieve safety for workers but it will also achieve some safety for the protesters too. The government does not oppose peaceful protesting. It does not oppose protesting that takes place in these areas. But what it does oppose is protesting that inhibits workers' safety and inhibits the safety of the protesters themselves. As a government, we will not stand for that.

As I said, the government respects the rights of those who are opposed to native timber harvesting to protest as well as the contribution of citizen scientists undertaking research in our forests, but the timber harvesting safety zones are not suitable for those protests. So this legislation will be covering those particular zones. The timber harvesting safety zones are relatively small. They are restricted areas where forestry activities are being undertaken and are inherently dangerous for members of the public due to, amongst other things, the use of heavy machinery. They are hazardous worksites in these places, and they must be carefully managed to ensure the safety of those working on or entering the sites. This is no different from the obligations that apply in any workplace or any worksite. Indeed this government, as I have previously said, has a very, very proud history of supporting workers and their safety in the workplace, whether it be through the introduction of workplace manslaughter offences or investing in on-farm safety. Irrespective of the kind of business, safety of employees is paramount, and the primary goal of any workplace safety program is to reduce the risk of injury, illness or death to workers. Additionally, a safe work environment can lead to better mental health and less anxiety and stress for employees.

Timber harvesting safety zones are already restricted areas under the act. In prohibiting certain items, however, we need to respond to the enhanced use of new and sophisticated tactics that protesters are using, which have placed the safety of workers and protesters themselves at significantly higher risk. This also includes the mental health of forest workers who fear seriously harming or accidentally killing a protester as they go about their work. Just to give you some examples of the types of dangerous tactics that have been employed, they are as follows: the erection and occupation of tree-sits at dangerous sites where falls can cause death and with structures that are intentionally built to collapse if there are attempts to remove them; increasing evidence of protesters locking onto or attaching themselves to active timber harvesting machinery—and due to the nature and size of this machinery, this can cause significant safety issues—and what they call black wallaby tactics, which involve camouflage, where masked protesters run in and out of safety zones and back into the surrounding bush and can cause significant safety issues, as it is very difficult for a forest contractor to detect their presence while driving their truck. These tactics have all led to increased reports from timber contractors who fear unintentionally causing the serious injury or death of a protester.

So you can see that the purpose of this legislation is completely sound. I will be leaving it to some of my other colleagues to speak to some more specifics of the bill, including enforcement and some other jurisdictions which have followed our lead here. But at the end of the day every single Victorian is entitled to a safe workplace, and this bill will ensure that that occurs. No worker or their family should have their livelihood and wellbeing adversely impacted by illegal activities at their workplace. Unsafe workplaces can have significant mental health impacts, especially when the illegal activities make them unsafe, potentially endangering others while they are working too. We of course respect that right to protest, but we will not tolerate illegal behaviour where that illegal behaviour is causing safety concerns. I would like to commend the work of the Minister for Agriculture in bringing this bill to the house. It is good legislation, and I commend it to the house.

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) (17:39): Whilst it is a pleasure to rise to speak on this particular bill, it has been such a long time coming. It is pleasing that it is happening, but my experience goes back over 30 years, and for a large part of that time this activity was occurring—back in the late 1980s and 90s, so it has certainly been a long time coming. The suggestion that the current Labor government really care about forestry workers I question, given their propensity and their promise to shut the industry down by 2030, but worse still is the breaking of their promise to ensure that industry could keep harvesting at current levels—2014 levels—until 2024–25, which is clearly not going to be able to happen unless they take further action. This action is welcome, but there is more action needed in terms of third-party litigation and making sure that that does not shut the industry down by Christmas, because that is effectively what is going to happen. I will talk more about that later, but certainly the supplies that are supposed to be arriving at sawmills at the moment have stopped. We have sawmills that will be standing down staff probably by the end of July and early August, and worse still there are 1000 jobs at Opal Australian Paper that are at risk as they will run out of supply of fibre by August as well.

So this is a very, very serious matter. I will talk a bit more about the Wombat as well in terms of how that has progressed, because the way that has been managed to me is an indication that we have one minister working against the industry trying to undermine it and another minister, the Minister for Agriculture, trying her best to keep things going. How that can happen within the confines of one government I do not understand, but maybe it just shows the shambolic mess that this current Labor government are really in. It is an absolute disgrace.

But anyway, in terms of public safety it was actually the Napthine government and the member at the table, the leader of The Nationals, as he was minister then that made amendments to the Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004 to introduce timber harvesting safety zones. We recognised back then the need to protect our forest workers—and also protect our protesters, but I question the integrity of protesters who break the law. They break the law to protest, and there is no need to break the law to protest. If that happened here in the city on a worksite, the police would be there in no time and they would be marched off the site. Why should forestry workers be treated so differently? Why should they have to wait three, four, five, six, eight or 10 days until search and rescue arrive to move those protesters on? That is what has got to happen in terms of tree-sits and lock-ons to machinery, which I will talk about later.

However, getting back to the timber harvesting safety zones, these are to ensure that workers are safe and that others that come onto the coupe are safe as well while timber harvesting activities are occurring. The safety zone is a coupe or it is any road within that coupe that has been closed for timber harvesting and any area of state forest that is within 150 metres of the boundary of that coupe. Surely there is plenty of opportunity outside that 150 metres for genuine protesters to stage a genuine protest. They can do what they like—sing hallelujah, do whatever they want to do, bring in Hare Krishna on the side of the road. Do not block the traffic, but just stage your public protest.

Mr Walsh interjected.

Mr BLACKWOOD: Yes. I just do not understand why they have got to break the law to get their point across. They can do all sorts of things. They can come here to the steps of Parliament. They can come into Parliament and talk to us about it, but do not hamper the legitimate activities of timber workers and their families. Do not hamper their income. Do not stop their activity. Do not shut their job down for weeks at a time, and that is what has been happening for nigh on 20 years now—probably more, probably longer. Closer to 40 years, really, it has been happening, and now all of a sudden we need to do something about it. What worries me is that you fix this problem—maybe, I do not think it goes far enough but you fix this problem—but with the way things are going, as I said before about third-party litigation, if you do not fix that, there will be no coupes to harvest and no coupes to protest in. So if you really care about the protesters, fix that problem so they have got something to protest about. Otherwise the industry is gone and the protesters will have nothing to do. They will have to go back to university or wherever they do nothing. Anyway, it really does worry me, this whole issue.

This is just one problem. The industry does not deserve to be treated like it has been treated. It does not deserve to be told ‘Your jobs will be gone by 2030, but we’ll keep you going until then with a gradual staging back of production from 2024–25’ and to now be facing a massive decline in access to resources because of third-party litigation, which is going to mean the industry closing by Christmas. I am serious—it will genuinely close by Christmas unless these two ministers get their heads together and sort this out. But like I said, I do not believe, sadly, that the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change has got any inclination to do that. She is too influenced by people like Lindsay Rayner and others in the department who are just purely there to ensure that the industry is shut down. There are too many environmental activists within the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and that is making it harder and harder and harder for the Minister for Agriculture and for VicForests to keep operating, which in turn impacts those hardworking timber people and their families. It is just not fair. I have never known an industry to be treated so roughly and so harshly and without care by any government in my life.

In a physical sense the timber harvesting safety zone replaces previous public safety zones, and as I said, that was done through an amendment that we, the coalition, when in government, put through the Parliament in 2014 under the leadership of the Leader of The Nationals. In terms of the safety zones, they commence when the coupe becomes active. So until that coupe is active, there is no issue for people to drive past the coupe, have a look, do what they like. But once that coupe becomes active, once the machinery moves in, once trees start to be felled, processed and removed from the coupe by truck, then it is off limits. It is closed to unauthorised persons, including protesters.

Back then, going back to 2014, we, the coalition, decided to introduce penalties for breaches of the timber harvesting safety zones, and we introduced offences which included:

- entering or remaining in a timber harvesting safety zone if you are not an authorised person
- removing or destroying a barrier or fence that has been erected to prohibit or restrict access to a timber harvesting safety zone
- allowing a dog to enter a timber harvesting safety zone—

so a little bit in conflict with what the Leader of The Nationals wants to do, but I am backing him—

- hindering, interfering with or obstructing timber harvesting operations;
- possessing a prohibited thing in a timber harvesting safety zone ...

This is what amazes me: a ‘prohibited thing’ is defined as ‘a bolt cutter’, ‘cement or mortar mix’, ‘a constructed metal or timber frame’, ‘a linked or a heavy steel chain’ or ‘a shackle or joining clip’. These are the sorts of things that these feral green protesters will bring onto the coupe to try and disrupt harvesting. They will lock onto the machinery. They will employ ‘black wallaby’ tactics, as the previous speaker mentioned.

One of the most frightening things that I have heard happen: in most cases those that cart the wood, transport the wood, out of the coupe to sawmills or Australian Paper or other clients will start their working day at about 2, 2.30 in the morning. They will get up there early, and the drivers will load the wood themselves—so they will back into the loading area, they will drop their trailer, they will get out and they will go out and get an excavator and load it themselves. What is happening is the poor truck driver gets out of the truck, and it is pitch black—very little lighting—until he gets to the excavator to turn the lights on. These feral protesters—hooded, masked—jump around the corner of the truck or jump out of the bush and frighten the daylight out of him. That is just absolutely disgusting. If you understand what the environment is like—pitch black, dark—it is a fairly scary place. I have been there often in the dark, and I get scared too, I can tell you. But then to have someone jump out of the scrub at you and frighten the daylight out of you—you know, we are talking about mental health issues, we are talking about bullying, we are talking about harassment. We are talking about things that contravene a safe workplace, and that is just an example of the sorts of things that they will take on: black wallaby tactics, running through the bush while a tree is being felled. And honestly, how would you feel as an operator if you killed somebody? (*Time expired*)

Mr Walsh: By leave, can I seek an extension of time for the member for Narracan.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Suleyman): No.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (17:50): I also rise to make a contribution to the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022. This of course continues to build on the work that the Andrews Labor government is doing around Victorian forests and the *Victorian Forestry Plan*. In 2019 the Andrews Labor government announced the *Victorian Forestry Plan* to assist the timber industry as it manages a gradual transition away from native timber harvesting while protecting as many jobs as possible. In December 2021 we boosted funding to more than \$200 million to continue this support for workers, businesses and communities as they move out of this unsustainable industry.

Labor governments have had a proud history of supporting workplace safety, whether it has been in recent times with the introduction of workplace manslaughter offences or taking action on the increasing rate of mental injuries through provisional payments and also adding particular on-the-spot sorts of infringements to the list of things that WorkSafe inspectors can do when they see breaches in workplaces. I think it is very true to say that Labor governments are the ones that are most interested in and most concerned about workplace safety, and really this amendment is all about making sure not only that workplaces are safe—in this case areas within the timber harvesting safety zones—but also that those people attempting to enter those areas are also made safe by making sure that there are penalties and actions that can be taken by authorised officers and police against those that breach orders around not entering safety zones, for the very reason that they are unsafe and that people should not be in there.

This legislation is in response to an increasing number of anti-logging activists going into these safety zones and creating risks that are really not acceptable to themselves or to those people that are working in the area. Of course Labor believes that people have the right to protest, and these protesters also have the right to protest, but they need to do it not within the timber harvesting safety zones, which causes a real threat to their safety and that of the workers within them.

This is not dissimilar to, for example, the safe access zones that, again, Labor imposed to protect women accessing legal health services and also to protect the medical staff and the health workers that were also being intimidated or harassed, risking their mental health welfare, as well as the possibility of—in fact sadly there has been—aggression or assault in these situations. This is not dissimilar to that. While people can have their views and they can protest, they cannot do it at the expense of the health and safety of others, and they should not do it at the expense of even themselves, putting themselves into situations where they could be injured. As I think other speakers have said, for a working person, whether it was not their fault or otherwise, to be responsible for a serious injury or fatality is just something nobody, no worker, should have to live with. So we want to make sure through this legislation or these amendments that working people are not subjected to that sort of terrorising in the case of timber harvesting.

The end of timber harvesting has been nominated to be in 2030, but up until that time forestry and forestry industries will continue to operate—and like workers in any other legal industry, they have to have and deserve to have a safe and secure working environment. Unfortunately the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries have one of the highest fatality rates of all industries. We do not have to have protesters contributing to that when we can install these timber harvesting safety zones and ensure that there are penalties and powers that go along with that to ensure that people are not there causing risks to the safety of themselves or others. The changes in this legislation aim to deter people who engage in dangerous behaviour within the safety zones by increasing the penalties that already exist for offences that relate to accessing these timber harvesting safety zones.

We have talked a lot over recent times about mental health and mental wellbeing and what the global pandemic has done to really all of us in some way. Of course psychological harm is something that is

continuing to increase within the workplace, and there have been a number of reports that for forestry workers this psychological harm has been increasing. In one aspect it is around protesters who are entering safety zones and creating situations that cause trauma for people who are working in the industry. There have been a couple of examples recently where certain incidents have happened, creating terrible situations for those that are working there, traumatising them with what could be called near misses when it comes to fatalities or serious injury.

Between February and June 2020 protesters targeted a specific timber harvesting safety zone, where they are alleged to have caused significant psychological distress to forestry workers by first of all monitoring the radios of the workers to obtain their names and then calling their names out in the bush, shining torches from the bush to alarm workers and threatening self-harm in front of machines. Workers in this situation reported developing serious mental health issues, including feeling like they were always on edge and they just could relax or wind down.

In 2019, a contractor suffered significant psychological harm after narrowly avoiding causing serious injury or killing several protesters who leapt in front of his moving vehicle within the timber harvesting safety zone. The contractor then reported seeing images of himself on anti-logging social media posts following drone presence in the area, again taking photos, all designed to harass and intimidate those who are working in the industry—an industry that is legal and that people have a right to be working in as it transitions and finishes in 2030.

The maximum penalties for most offences related to the timber harvesting safety zones will increase, with the maximum penalties for some offences increasing to 120 penalty units—that is \$21 000 or more or 12 months in prison. Overall the measures are designed to deter protest activity in those safety zones but not protest activity in total—just within particular areas that are deemed to be extremely unsafe for both the person protesting against native timber felling and also the workers that are working in that industry.

While WorkSafe is interested in the operations of VicForests, including equipment and machinery, it has got no jurisdiction over protesters and their conduct as they are neither employees nor employers. So even though WorkSafe has attended forest protests, its attendance has only been to focus on systems of work as they relate to VicForests and its contractors. Therefore this bill is needed because there is a gap, there is a hole, when it comes to safety for workers and also those protesting the logging. While WorkSafe is unable to provide that oversight or those powers to take action, this legislation fills that gap and allows action to be taken to ensure that there is a safer workplace when it comes to the timber industry in these areas. It also protects people who have the right and are more than able to continue to protest to do it in a safe way, out of the timber harvest safety zones.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (18:00): I rise to speak on the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022, and in doing so I want to concentrate my remarks in relation to the fallen timber in the Wombat State Forest. There are 500 000 cubic metres of windfall timber that came from bad storms that hit western Victoria and went all the way through the Wombat. Almost a year ago, on 1 August 2021, I visited the Wombat with the Leader of the National Party, the member for Murray Plains, and Dale Tiley and Ray Sonnberg, who are both timber contractors in the region—Dale is my constituent from Beaufort—and they showed us the significant timber that was on the ground as a result of this storm. What they explained to me was that about three-quarters of these 500 000 cubic metres would be sawlog-quality timber. That was assuming that it could be salvaged within 12 to 18 months. After that it deteriorates and would become only useful for firewood, and it eventually would not even be useful for that—and it would cause and was already beginning to cause a significant fire risk in the Wombat. Even then they were agitating—then the member for Murray Plains and I took up the cause, and we were agitating—to get a solution to get this timber salvaged from the floor of the Wombat.

At this point I want to recognise that the Dja Dja Wurrung saw that there was a necessity to work there and get this timber harvested, and they tried to broker a deal to get that going. They thought they had

got there. They thought that it was going to go ahead, but then in a bizarre case of the left hand not doing what the right hand was doing we had the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning repeatedly trying to block VicForests' attempts to broker this deal with the Dja Dja Wurrung. In the end the deal was done, and they started cleaning this up but very late; it was right on the edge of when this timber was beginning to deteriorate.

Then we go forward from there. They started in, I think, probably only about April. It was really late—it might even have been May. They started, and then the protesters arrived. Now, this is not standing timber; this is windfall timber that has come over in a natural event in a massive storm and that will be worthless and just cause a fire risk unless it is removed. But no, the protesters then appeared and started to occupy the coupes where they were trying to get this timber. As a result, there were enormous fights about this, and it was very disruptive to the contractors. And the activists succeeded in halting this forest clean-up for some time. It turned out that in the end the Game Management Authority had to step in to try and stop the protesters, which they did, and they got it going again. This is why we need this legislation, because we are not even talking about native forests of standing timber; in this case it is fallen timber. It is of no use to anyone unless it is salvaged within a very short time frame. The government had taken so long to get going with it, and then once it did get going the protesters were stretching out that time line again to a point where this timber will not be worth anything and will just be a fire risk.

Now, at the same time as this is going on, we then got the conservation regulator ordering one of the haulage and harvest contractors, the Greenwoods, to produce hundreds of pages of documents or face a penalty of \$18 174. I mean, again, how ridiculous is this? On one side you have VicForests, a government agency, and the minister saying, 'Yes, we are going to harvest this timber; we think it is a good thing to have the—

Ms Thomas: Salvage?

Ms STALEY: Sorry, salvage—the minister has—correctly—corrected me. I have used the word 'salvage' many times, and I agree that is the real point here: it is salvage, this timber. Yet Victoria's conservation regulator wants to put in onerous, ridiculous levels of regulation that would stop the salvage going ahead. Now, that combination of activist bureaucrats and timber activists protesting could well lead to a situation where this timber, this salvage timber, will not be salvaged. This is why we need this legislation. Forestry workers, timber workers, need a safe environment. They need protection for their machinery—the machinery that they invest in—so that it will not be ruined. I think the member for Narracan explained in great detail the sorts of things that forest protesters do to forestry machinery, and I completely bow down to his knowledge on this.

The point is we have a situation where the government is bringing forward a bill which we support—there are elements of it we think that they could do a bit better on, but we support this bill—but the fact is there are still whole departments, whole agencies of this government, that are spending every waking moment trying to stop the salvage of timber in the Wombat and other places, and they are on the side of the protesters. This government needs to work out whose side it is on. On this side of the chamber we are very clear—very clear—that we do not agree that protesters should be able to go in and disrupt lawful operations, which is why we support this bill. But we also do not think that the rest of the government should be out there trying to assist some of these protesters. We think that that is an internal mechanism that the government could fix. Perhaps somebody could talk to the minister and suggest that the government is legislating to allow lawful salvage, in this case, or forestry operations more generally. As the lead speaker for this bill, the member for Murray Plains, the Leader of The Nationals, has said, we are supporting this bill, and I wish it speedy passage.

Mr EREN (Lara) (18:08): I am delighted to be speaking on this very important bill, the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022. I would like to congratulate the minister at the table, the Minister for Agriculture, for a very balanced bill that is protecting workers rights, and I thank her for it.

It is a house of cooperation. I just spoke on the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022 before, and the opposition are supporting it; we are speaking on this bill now, and they are supporting it. I have never seen such cooperation, which is fantastic to see. Obviously because we have got so many great bills that come through the house, we are getting some good cooperation.

I have got to say that this house, this chamber, this Parliament, is a battle of ideas. Every member in this house has their own passions, and every member is entitled to their own passions. I totally, totally respect the member for Narracan for his passion and commitment. Ever since I have been in this place I have known what he is passionate about—it is this stuff. Do I agree with him entirely? No, not entirely—but I would argue that he is most passionate in relation to this issue, and I respect that. Obviously from time to time we do have these battles of ideas, and we on this side of the house like to protect all workers within the legal frameworks of industry along with their legal employment. We protect workers rights. We do not pick and choose which workers we need to protect. I remember back in the 1990s the Maritime Union of Australia dispute. The whole community was very passionate about how those workers on the docks were being treated—you know, there were masked security men with dogs. I was there for three days. Some would call me an unwashed protester, but I could not have a shower. It was a very important issue and we had to make—

A member interjected.

Mr EREN: We took plenty of deodorant. But the issue is we are passionate about different things, and that is what makes this Parliament a great thing.

This bill before the house has been implemented across different jurisdictions. I think a number of other states have taken on this bill as well, because it is important. When you consider that Victoria is the place to be—we used to be the fastest growing population—I think we will retain that title for a bit longer, with that comes population boom and with that comes a need for housing and other timber products, so to speak. We are finding that the construction sector, with the amount of infrastructure work that we are doing at the moment as a state government, is enormously under pressure in terms of supply. Some of the worldwide calamities that are going on and the Ukraine war—that terrible war—are causing a lot of angst and pressure on commodities that we normally are very complacent about. We were very well resourced, and now we find that importing some products is becoming increasingly difficult. The housing sector is particularly being really disrupted. People are entitled to have a roof over their head, people are entitled to that Aussie dream of owning their own home and people are entitled to build their home.

I would argue that some of the people opposing this bill outside this place or inside this place would have timber-product furniture at home. I think that at some point it is an industry which actually provides hundreds of thousands of jobs right throughout the nation. We have got to protect that fine balance, and protecting forest and old-growth forest is our forte in relation to a sensible government protecting the environment.

As a former Minister for Tourism and Major Events, nature-based tourism is a big deal. People from all over the world come to the Great Ocean Road to see the nature-based tourism that occurs in that area. I remember when Steve Bracks was the Premier and as a government we put a policy in to actually stop some of the old-growth forest timbers being harvested in the Otways. There were a number of forestry workers that were affected by this, and we did put in an allocation of money for transition to other jobs. There were, I think, 67 workers that were affected by this change in policy at that time. My family and I have been going camping down there for over 40 years, and we love the nature-based tourism side of protecting our natural assets. Now when you look at that region there are literally tens of thousands of jobs that have been created in the tourism sector, with microbreweries and restaurants and cafes that are being opened up. So there is a fine balance.

From memory, we are allocating an amount of money for a transition according to our government's announced *Victorian Forestry Plan*, our plan to phase out native forest harvesting by 2030. We are allocating a fair bit of money towards making this transition, and rightfully so. I think it is important to have a fine balance. It is important for those workers that are currently working under those circumstances to (a) work in a safe environment and (b) not be mentally strained by thinking 'Is there somebody hiding behind those bushes?'. They are in charge of very big, heavy machinery and potentially, as has happened before, somebody can get hurt or killed as a consequence of their passion for protest. We totally get it. We get that people are passionate about certain issues. For some people it is a life-and-death struggle to protect the environment and there is a sense of—I do not know if I would call it extremism, but there are certain people that are very extreme in their views about this issue and very passionate and they may risk their own lives to make a point or make a protest. This is one thing that the harvesting workers do not deserve. They have got families at home. They are just earning a buck, and obviously they want to do it in the safest way possible. They want to do it in an environment where they do not unintentionally hurt someone else. That is why this bill is before the house.

This is not new. As I have said, other jurisdictions have taken this on, and again I go back to the point of our plan to phase out native forest harvesting by 2030. This includes an immediate ban on harvesting of old-growth forest in Victoria, protecting some 90 000 hectares of native forest and an additional 96 000 hectares of immediate protection areas. The *Victorian Forestry Plan* was designed to ensure a smooth transition out of native forestry for workers, businesses and communities that have relied on this industry for generations. We have backed this transition up with a \$200 million package. The *Victorian Forestry Plan* is supporting timber businesses to transition out of native timber, explore opportunities and diversify into different ways of working. Further, the industry has a continued supply of native timber—I do not think, I know—until 2024. Then levels will step down before ending in 2030. Competitive processes will be used to allocate timber from mid-2024 to 2030, then commercial harvesting in public native forests will end.

I just want to finish off in the minute that I have left talking about the importance of making sure that we do not have some people that take it too far in terms of some of their protesting. The bill highlights that we are serious about this. There are some very stringent guidelines that we have put in place and mechanisms to hopefully prevent people from breaching this guideline, or this law, with heavy fines—\$21 000 I think in fines—and 12 months imprisonment if people want to continue down the path of being destructive. I do not mind protests. I have been to many protests myself. You do it within the law, you abide by the rules and the law and you make your point, as we all do from time to time, but you do not go to that extent of not only causing mental angst to those workers but also potentially somebody getting killed.

This is a sensible bill before the house. We are a government that gets on with making sure this state is the best that it can be. I commend the bill to the house and wish it a speedy passage.

Dr READ (Brunswick) (18:18): In the last few years this Parliament has passed some good legislation that was based on science and evidence and balanced within Victoria's established human rights framework, so it is hugely disappointing to now be debating the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022, euphemistically named. The government claims that this bill is about improving occupational health and safety and particularly the mental health of forestry workers, which would be commendable if it were true. But believing this bill is about OH&S is the equivalent of believing that lethal whaling in the Antarctic is about scientific research. Indeed, the whaling fleet has presented more data and evidence justifying its stance than the Andrews government has to justify this bill. That is to say even the whalers have presented some exceptionally weak evidence, as opposed to none at all. What this bill is really about is politics and money at the expense of human rights and the rule of law. It is also part of the broader trend towards authoritarianism and law-and-order politics that has shamed Victoria's two old parties over the last decade, particularly in the lead-up to state elections.

The bill seeks to double or triple existing criminal penalties, including terms of imprisonment, for a number of current protest offences. It seeks to expand search and seizure powers, including the seizure of any item prescribed to be a 'prohibited thing'. And it introduces a new form of discretionary oppression on the right of free movement, called 'banning notices', that can be issued by any authorised officer based on that officer's clairvoyant-like ability to determine whether a person is likely to commit future offences in the next 28 days.

The government is claiming these draconian laws are necessary for three reasons: one, that forest protest activity has recently increased in Victoria; two, that forestry protesters have developed dangerous new protest tactics; and three, that this has resulted in a significant detrimental impact on the mental health and safety of forestry workers. Let us just unpack these. Point one is that forest protest activity has recently increased in Victoria. It is the singular claim to which the government has presented evidence, citing the fact that there have been 82 forest protests since January 2020, to which I respond: so what? Since when have we started capping the number of protests that are allowed in Victoria? At a time of climate emergency, when forestry has had a significant impact not just on raising atmospheric CO₂ but also on the destruction of ecosystem habitat for thousands of animals and species currently at the point of extinction, should we really be surprised people are protesting about this more frequently? Should we perhaps listen to them instead of locking them up? Climate strikes have also increased in the last few years, as have protests against systemic and entrenched racism. Will the government be introducing new criminal laws threatening jail terms to discourage the frequency of these protests as well?

The government's second justification is that protesters have developed and deployed dangerous new tactics at these forestry protests. For this, the government cites some examples. The first example they provide is tree-sits, perhaps the oldest and most widely used form of forestry protest, dating back to at least the 1960s. A 10-second search on Wikipedia alone provides a list of at least 28 separate examples of famous tree-sit protests that have occurred almost continually since the 1970s, many of them in Australia.

The second supposedly new tactic is protesters locking or attaching themselves to machinery. Well, this dates back at least 100 years to the suffragette movement. Famously in 1975 Zelda D'Aprano recreated this when she chained herself to the commonwealth building in Melbourne to protest about women being excluded from discussions about fair pay. The most famous environmental protest in the nation's history involved protesters chaining themselves to machinery. It was a key part of the protests that saved the Franklin River in the early 1980s and later stopped the proposed Jabiluka uranium mine in Kakadu in the late 1990s. Should we have criminalised the dangerous suffragettes? Should we have removed the protesters that blocked the uranium mine at Jabiluka? Well, no. What actually happened back then was that government leaders like Bob Hawke visited Bob Brown's Franklin River protests. He listened to the protesters, he listened to the community and the Franklin River was saved. That is a political legacy. That is real leadership. Rather than making up blatant rubbish about these being new dangerous protest methods, this government could learn from its own history. If it did so, it might observe that the best way to respond to increased protesting and rising community anguish is not to suppress protesters and their human rights but to get out there and listen to what they are saying. And if it went out and listened it would be acting to save our native forests, our carbon sinks and our native species, not attempting to further enable their destruction, as in this bill.

The final, most egregious claim of the government is that this bill is about improving occupational health and safety and particularly the mental health of forestry workers. They say all workers deserve to be safe, and the Greens strongly agree with this statement and will always support legitimately required health and safety laws. So we asked for OH&S data or indeed any kind of evidence that shows the increase in health problems caused by forestry protesters. I thank the department for their bill briefing and their frank and fearless honesty in admitting that there are currently no data or documented evidence to indicate increased protest activity has led to adverse mental health or OH&S outcomes for forestry workers. So I say shame on the government for seeking to hijack these really important issues

of workplace health and safety to use these as a smokescreen to limit the legitimate human rights of all Victorians. We might ask what would make a government sink so low. Well, to be fair, there is a lot of illegality currently going on in our forests, a lot of misconduct, but it is not coming from the protesters, it is coming from VicForests and its logging operations. We know this because protesters and citizen scientists are visiting logging sites. They are documenting evidence of these illegal practices, and they are successfully presenting this evidence to the courts to uphold the rule of law, to stop illegal logging and to protect old-growth forest and the native habitat of endangered species. This is a problem because VicForests is a for-profit, state-owned business—so it profits from illegal logging, and it also loses money when it fights complaints in court.

Logging in state forests is a broken business model, and VicForests is bleeding millions every year. For VicForests to have any chance of making money they need to carry out as much logging as they can before the industry winds up in 2030. They cannot afford to worry if what they are doing is legal or illegal logging, and they certainly cannot afford to continue to be reined in by any effective regulatory oversight, citizen oversight or judicial oversight from our courts upholding environmental protection laws, such as they remain. So the sole reason the Victorian government has introduced these repressive laws is to try and financially prop up VicForests to keep it going until 2030.

The government believes that by effectively shielding the public from seeing what is going on in our forests it will leave forestry oversight to a hopelessly weak and conflicted regulator, meaning VicForests can operate with less oversight and less compliance with environmental laws, which might finally mean it is able to make some decent money from logging. It is the same approach that worked so well for the Victorian government to prevent effective scrutiny and to enable the blatant illegality that helped sustain the bumper state revenue from Crown Casino for over 20 years, and this time they only need to shield VicForests for eight years. As for addressing climate change, conserving the remaining ecosystems and upholding human rights and the rule of law, well, the inevitable 2030 royal commission into VicForests will likely be a problem for a future government. This is an outrageous bill, which the Greens completely oppose.

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong) (18:28): I am pleased to rise to speak on the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022. I think many people in this house know that I am a very, very proud regional MP. I am also a very proud member of a century-long farming family, and those things are very clear in the house. But perhaps less known in the house is that I am also a very, very proud environmentalist. My mother has an Order of Australia for her commitment and work in the environment space, so this has been something that I have grown up with all of my life. One of the things that she has talked about is how environmental awareness has really changed—and we have watched it change over the years—but first and foremost my mother is also a Labor Party stalwart. Both she and my father have their lifelong memberships. And why I bring up those things is I think that this sense of a binary opposition between environmentalists and workers is just nonsensical. I am very glad that the opposition support us on this bill, but look, I was a bit distressed to hear from the member for Ripon, who seemed to seek to make this an absolutely adversarial bill. The idea that we have got to pit the community against the worker—that is not what we are trying to achieve here with this bill.

The Labor government and all Labor Party members have always supported peaceful protest. We always will. You know, my first protest was on my mother's hip when I was about six months old, and it was an antinuclear protest, a peaceful protest in Melbourne. So protest is in our blood, and we would never, ever seek to quell that peaceful process. I find it disingenuous of the Greens to continue to suggest that we are in some ways trying to gag any sort of protest. On that note, I would like to acknowledge one of my local constituents, who is a lovely woman by the name of Linda Zibell. Linda is a Green, and Linda wrote to me about this bill. I will say she is the only person that has contacted me regarding this bill, but nonetheless I read her email and will be replying to her in due course. She talks about herself as a 70-year-old peaceful protester and that this bill is after the likes of her, and plainly that is just not true. I think the most important thing around this bill is really to understand that

it relates to these zones, the very particular zones, and they are workspaces. The timber harvesting zones are just not suitable places for protests. They are fairly small, they are restricted areas where forestry activities are undertaken, and of course there is a lot of use of heavy machinery. So I do not think it is true to say that we are in any way stopping peaceful protest. What we are trying to do here is walk that sensible centre, which is to protect protesters but also to absolutely protect working people and also with an eye to the environment.

This government's commitment to the environment is absolutely on record, and I think many of us on this side of the chamber do still baulk a little when we get lectured to by the Greens about the environment. It certainly sticks in my mind that we are 10 years down the road, and the federal space around protecting the environment is hopefully about to change under a new Labor federal government, but certainly we have suffered 10 years of climate wars. I lay that at the feet of the Greens because they chose not to support the Gillard government when we were trying to make real change. So it does grate a little to hear them suggest that perhaps we are not protecting the environment.

In this instance the Andrews government in 2019 announced the *Victorian Forestry Plan*, and our plan is to phase out native forest harvesting by 2030. This included the immediate ban on harvesting old-growth forest in Victoria, protecting 90 000 hectares of native forest, and established an additional 96 000 hectares of immediate protection areas. We have walked this line and we are trying to protect the environment, but we are also really conscious of working people. The clue is in the name—we are, after all, the Australian Labor Party. I think many on this side joined to protect working people. I know from talking to my mother—she lives in Anglesea—for example, about when Alcoa closed down, there were lots of people that were sort of jumping up and down and saying shut it immediately. But of course they were working people. They were people whose families relied on that income. In the same way I think what this government has done has been an extraordinary effort to make sure that we are protecting the environment into the long term but also to make sure that we transition very carefully.

It is incredibly important to us that that transition is done well. I will never forget what the Liberal federal government did to the car industry in this country; it is heartbreaking. We need to transition, and that is what is so wonderful about the forestry bill in general—it is transitioning over a period so that we can take the community along with it. The transition package is a \$200 million package, and we really do need to transition. We do have to move forward, but likewise we cannot just shut it all down today.

This bill is really about protecting workers. Quite a few people have talked about the Wombat State Forest recently. The Wombat State Forest is not in my electorate, but it does border my electorate, and I believe Lerderderg and Wombat will come together as state parks. Certainly I have driven through those areas after the storms and seen the storm damage, and it makes a lot of sense that we should be clearing those logs, but the protesters there were acting in a fairly dangerous way. Mr Greenwood, who was the fellow responsible for doing the clearing, talked about people walking around after dark in grey and black clothing—you could barely see them. I mean, we all wear hi-vis jackets on building sites and so forth for a reason, and it is important that people can be seen in such a heavy machinery area. To quote him:

“It's about making sure no one gets hurt,” he said.

“If I am lifting and moving a log that weighs 10 to 12 tonnes, I cannot just stop.

“They don't realise the danger they are in. It's crazy.”

So it is about trying to protect the safety of the workers and the protesters.

With all due respect, when I get lectured from someone who lives in Brunswick about what life is like on a farm or what life is like for regional workers and people in the regions, it is pretty galling. It is something that has always struck me about the Greens. There is not much diversity of ethnicity or anything like that. They all seem to live in the inner suburbs and really, I mean, there is a reason people

refer to them as ‘teals’, because really they are wealthy people that are interested in the environment—which is lovely, but we on this side are both interested in the environment and of course very, very interested in working people. So I am very proud of this bill.

The member for Brunswick talked about checking what had gone on, and look, one of my colleagues quoted it earlier but I would like to quote Michael O’Connor, who today said:

People have a right to peacefully protest but they should not target ... workers ...

but more importantly:

The flawed logic that we should wait for a death or serious injury of a worker or protestor before we take action to better deter misconduct should hold no weight ...

And he is absolutely right. The Greens might be citing this idea that we have had no deaths, but I do not think that we should be waiting for a death to change the legislation, and indeed we are not. I would like to acknowledge the Minister for Agriculture at the desk, who is taking action. I know some contributions from the other side have talked about how this has been a long time coming. Well, let us just say that this minister at the desk has got on and done it, and we should all stand behind her and support her in this, because this is a really important piece of legislation. It protects workers. It protects protesters. It is not stopping peaceful protest. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (18:38): It is a pleasure to rise and make a contribution on the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022. I cannot believe what I was hearing coming out of the mouth of the member for Brunswick. I would doubt if he has even been on a timber harvesting coupe, but he has clearly been handed notes by someone. I was nearly going to do a point of order on him for reading. He read the whole thing, and it was full of inaccuracies. So I would encourage the member for Brunswick, who I have attempted to talk to about the timber industry in the past, to educate himself a little bit more on the basic facts around this sector.

As we have heard from previous speakers on both sides, this bill strengthens protections in timber harvesting operations, and that is something that we very, very strongly support for all the reasons that have been outlined before. But the member for Brunswick did not talk about people standing in the way of moving machinery. He did not talk about the spikes that are put into the ground in front of timber harvesting machinery and the dangerous activities that continually occur on timber harvesting coupes. What I want to talk about today is, while this legislation does provide protection for timber harvesters on coupes, there is a greater issue pending in the industry, and that is timber workers getting access to coupes at all. This is because in the short term there is litigation from environment groups that is limiting the state being able to pass on timber harvesting coupes and meet their supply commitments, and then there is the longer term issue that is hanging over the timber industry about the closure of the hardwood native timber sector.

In the short term this issue around this constant litigation has come to a head in relation to Fenning Timbers in Bairnsdale, a great local company. Leonard Fenning is a very well known and respected man in the town. They employ 50 people there. They have a great work culture. They are currently facing a critical shortfall in timber supply, and it all comes back to these coupes that are under litigation that is stopping harvest and haulage contractors getting in there. They have got a significant shortfall of winter stock. They have only got weeks remaining. They have explored all other avenues to access timber. It is a dire situation at the moment. So while we have legislation here today to protect workers when they are on the coupes, what we need from this government now is immediate action to get the harvesters on coupes that are available and meet timber demand supplies. The lack of action on this front, of being able to get harvest and haulage contractors into the forest, is jeopardising the short-term future of our timber workers. We are talking weeks here—weeks—and that mill in Bairnsdale that employs 50 will be impacted. So while we welcome this legislation here today, there is a greater issue that needs to be addressed also. The state has also advised mills that they are facing another year of undersupply of timber. They are not meeting the consumer demand for supply of native timber, and we are going to have workers out of jobs and mills closing down if action is not taken immediately.

I want to make a few more comments on the lunacy of all this. Consumer demand for hardwood is growing. Planet Ark's slogan at the moment is 'Do the world some good, build it with wood'—Planet Ark. The reason this is a sustainable industry is timber provides a renewable resource and it is a carbon-storing building material. We harvest 5 per cent of our native timber in this state—5 per cent. This is 0.04 per cent per year, because that 5 per cent is harvested on an 80-year rotation. So 0.04 per cent of our native forest is being harvested per year. The other 95 per cent is either inaccessible or in reserve. The timber industry simply cannot get to it. Those are not timber industry stats; those are the Auditor-General's stats. We generate from this 5 per cent of the bush that we harvest an industry that employs thousands of people, and we want to close it down. We are closing it down under the guise of this commentary that we are going to transition. What are we transitioning to? What are we going to transition to? I am not sure if there are members of Parliament that know the difference between softwood and hardwood—

Ms Thomas: I do.

Mr T BULL: but softwood matures quickly and hardwood takes at least 30 years at a minimum to reach the age of harvesting. Now, the minister across the table, the Minister for Agriculture, said she knows the difference between softwood and hardwood, and I believe her. The minister can maybe then tell us, if she knows the difference, if we are transitioning to plantation: where are the hardwood plantations we are transitioning to? Because they should be 20 years old now if we are going to transition to them by 2030—they should be at least 20 years old now. But you know what? They do not exist. The hardwood plantations in Victoria to transition our timber industry to do not exist.

So what are we going to do? We are going to import timber. We are going to import our hardwood, and we are going to import it quite possibly from countries with less oversight. You and I have had this chat before, Acting Speaker McGuire. What will happen is, when we are importing this timber from countries with less oversight, the member for Brunswick will be standing up here saying we have killed the orangutan or something like that. What we are going to do is close down an industry in Victoria that has great oversight—some of the best oversight in the world—and we are going to import more native timber as a replacement for that. It is just absolutely ludicrous. We harvest 5 per cent of the bush—0.04 per cent a year. Whilst we certainly do need to look at harvesting practices and how we can do things better to harvest this timber—and some of the practices in the past have not been great—the answer is not closing down this industry; it is not closing down this industry at all.

In Australia we have the third-highest amount of forest per capita of any country in the world—we have only got Russia and Canada ahead of us—and despite having that much timber per capita, we are looking at closing down the industry when we are already a net importer of timber. So per capita we are only behind Russia and Canada, and we are currently a net importer of timber. You would think we maybe should be looking at addressing why we are a net import of timber and maybe opening areas up, but we are actually looking at closing areas down and ending this industry.

When I raise this issue to the Greens and others—'If you want to transition out of native hardwood timber, where are our plantations and where is it coming from?'—the member for Brunswick and his colleagues do not have an answer: 'That's a little inconvenient thing we want to overlook while we pander to our inner-city Greens. We don't want to have to explain to you where our hardwood timber is going to come from'. I will tell you one thing: the consumer demand for hardwood timber is going up, so we have got to get it from somewhere. Is it going to come from Borneo, Indonesia or the jungles of the Amazon? Wouldn't it be better coming from our own sustainable, well-managed and well-governed native timber industry here in Victoria? I think it should, and that is why the industry should continue. We cannot transition to something that does not exist. We cannot transition hardwood timber to hardwood plantation that does not exist in this state. We will have to import that timber to meet the market demand. This policy of trying to get rid of our native timber industry is a policy in the inner city to try to outgreen the Greens, and we should not be doing that at the expense of this sustainable industry and these long-term timber worker jobs.

I want to just quickly finish off with one story that explains the lunacy of this. I had someone knock on my door a couple of years ago asking me to sign a petition to end native timber harvesting at my little unit here in Fitzroy. I walked out and said, 'Why would I want to do that? We only harvest 5 per cent of the bush. We're only going to have to import timber to meet consumer demand'. And the young girl who was asking me to sign this petition said, 'Oh, you seem to know little bit about this'. I said, 'I do know a little bit about it'. And she said, 'I didn't realise we only harvested 5 per cent of the bush'. We had a bit of a chat; that was okay. I went back inside. I went out 20 minutes later to get a cup of coffee. I walked up the street and there she was at someone else's door asking, 'Do want to protect our native animals and ban the native timber history?', 'Oh, yes, I want to protect our native animals'—and people were signing it based on misinformation and lack of knowledge. It is time we got the real story out—that our timber industry is sustainable, it employs a lot of people and it has some of the greatest oversights in the world. It is an industry we should be proud of, an industry we should be protecting and an industry that to continue to support makes good environmental sense and produces good environmental outcomes.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (18:48): I too take great pleasure in joining the debate on the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022. Just by way of background—I know a number of other members who have grown up in regional Victoria just set a little context about how they have come to this debate—I come to this debate as my ancestors, all sets of grandparents, were primary producers in grain, sheep, dairy, poultry—

Ms Britnell: Mangoes, avocados.

Ms GREEN: No, not mangoes. Dad grew a lot of things in the garden though. Particularly when Mum's father and brothers moved from north-east Victoria—the Plozza family—to the Heytesbury settlement they cleared a lot of land for farming, but what they never did was completely clear all of the land. They always left sections of forest for biodiversity, and they understood that. But even as they grew older they actually revised some of that. And then the next generation thought, 'We're going to continue farming, but we need to plant more trees'. Particularly my late uncle, Bill Ermacora, was one of the early adopters of land care, and around the Simpson area they used to call him Red Bill when in fact he was probably more Green Bill because he was just really passionate about the environment and about farmers working together to preserve the environment, to ensure that there was good use of water, to diminish erosion and to ensure that people would work collaboratively and that there would be respect for Australia's amazing biodiversity. Also, with that agricultural background that I have, my grandfather, Frank Plozza, was a shearer; he was a worker. He and his father were members of the Australian Workers Union, Australia's oldest union. So we have always had that twin interest, I suppose, about the environment, about growing food close to home and also about the rights of workers to be paid properly and to be safe.

I have had only a handful of constituents contact me about this bill. As the member for Gippsland East said, there is an awful lot of disinformation and emotion that goes on around this industry and about the work of foresters. I say to the—I think it is—three, four constituents who have written to me about this piece of legislation asking me not to vote for it: I am someone that has been to many, many protests. I see the Minister for Agriculture at the table; I think we have been at them together many times. I first met the Minister for Agriculture when she was involved with the Victorian Independent Education Union. I was involved with what was then called the State Public Services Federation, now the Community and Public Sector Union, and then I worked at Trades Hall. During those periods in the Kennett government we protested constantly, but we understood that we were not protesting against any workers, we were protesting against the government. This is something that I have said to my kids too: 'When you go on a protest, make sure it's properly organised and that it's going to be safe'. When I was at Trades Hall we always respected the police, even during the docks dispute. We respected the police as workers and said, 'We're going to protest, but we don't want you to be hurt and we don't want any of our protesters to be hurt'.

I want to say to my constituents who are really worried that this will take away their ability to protest that the proposed changes only apply to individuals and activity within timber harvesting safety zones. It is to protect the workers, and it is actually to protect the protesters. In a forest you have got a dark environment, you have got heavy machinery. As a CFA volunteer I see it from this point of view too: when you are around heavy machinery you have got to be careful. From the get-go becoming a CFA volunteer was all about safety, and it should be the same with anyone that is in our forests for whatever reason. Individuals who still want to protest will still safely be able to protest outside these timber harvesting safety zones, which are unaffected by proposed changes in the bill. It is really simple. To suggest that the bill affects all forest protesters is completely untrue. Under these amendments protesters who engage in genuinely safe activities can continue to go on with their business as before, as can citizen scientists and other people who currently use the forests within the law.

I was particularly taken with the contribution from the member for Thomastown, who is the Parliamentary Secretary for Workplace Safety, when she compared this to the safe exclusion zones outside abortion clinics. It really is the same as that—you know, just like those that are anti abortion still want to be able to protest and say their piece. They are still able to do it, they are just not able to harass women seeking that service. I suppose this is about trying to ensure that timber workers, forestry workers, are not being harassed but are also not the subject of huge safety issues. Certainly in relation to the exclusion zones around abortion clinics we actually saw the death of a security worker due to a firearm—someone wanting to take protest to an extreme level. Terribly sadly, that security guard lost his life. We do not want to get to the point where a forestry worker or a contractor loses their life.

I have spoken to a timber miller, Dale Tiley, in Beaufort. I have visited that mill in Beaufort and in the Pyrenees. They are incredibly proficient and committed to the environment, and indeed forestry waste from that mill goes into the burners to heat water for the hospital in Beaufort. That is how committed Dale Tiley—that forester, that miller—and that community are. He had been very concerned that it had taken a long time for him and others to be able to get into the Wombat forest to collect the salvage material after the terrible storms of a year or so back, and I am pretty horrified to hear about the protesters. I mean, it is salvage timber. It is salvage. It is going to go to waste rather than being made into products, whether it is furniture or whatever it is. This is going to go to waste and then pose a shocking fire risk not only to firefighters but to communities all around the Wombat forest, whether it is in the minister's electorate of Macedon or whether it is in the neighbouring electorates of Ripon, Eureka or Wendouree. I just cannot understand the lack of common sense of anyone to think that you would protest about collecting salvage timber. I have fought many fires in this century, particularly in alpine areas, and it was our foresters that helped get that salvage timber out and ensure that people could safely access the mountains into the future. That is the great work that our foresters do.

This bill is pretty simple. It is a health and safety bill. It is not precluding the right to protest—it is not the end of the world as we know it in relation to protest—and I decry the politicisation that has occurred from the Greens political party. We are a government that will always be solid for the environment but will always stand up for the safety of workers, particularly while this industry transitions to 2030.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (18:58): I rise to show my support for the forestry workers through the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022, which we have before us. It is interesting that Labor are banging on so much about safety. Workplace safety is so important, but they have been very slow to the party here—very slow—because for years and years we have had haulage and harvesting operators subjected to very worrying, very concerning and scary tactics by protesters that are certainly unsafe. I think it is about time that these practices were cracked down on. I say that these practices have been going on for years—since the late 1980s and 90s. In 2014 the then Minister for Agriculture amended the Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004 to introduce timber harvesting safety zones, but we see before us that with these safety zones there are still issues that are occurring. The workers are still subjected to illegal protesting, and these amendments go a little bit further to protect our harvest and haulage operations. They, like everybody, are entitled to a safe workplace, and illegal behaviour will not be tolerated—but it has been tolerated,

and through the courts they have not really been given a good whack for the illegal behaviour that has occurred. We have very clearly seen protesters targeting timber workers through a variety of techniques. Now, the gear that is used in harvesting is very, very heavy—

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

UNION ROAD, SURREY HILLS, LEVEL CROSSING REMOVAL

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (19:00): (6426) Tonight I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Planning, and the action I seek is for him to meet with local residents affected by the Union Road level crossing removal project and discuss their concerns. Last month I raised concerns with the Minister for Transport Infrastructure in this place regarding the design and the way in which the project has been managed by the Level Crossing Removal Project (LXRP). I have been in contact with local residents, and the energetic and very capable Liberal candidate for Box Hill, Nicole Werner, has kept me updated and informed on the project.

Serious concerns have been raised by the Victorian government's own architect, Jill Garner, about the design of the consolidated Union station, but despite the minister himself committing to make the government architect's assessments publicly available, this work has been withheld from the public. This is very concerning for local residents, who have never seen any of the detailed plans in relation to the station even though the station will be on their doorstep, 5 metres high and just 4.5 metres from their front doors. In a further demonstration of secrecy, after the LXRP provided a briefing to Whitehorse city councillors on 30 May, and despite repeated requests from the councillors, the authority has failed to provide any of those plans to council themselves. This has caused Whitehorse City Council to take the unprecedented step of writing to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure and the LXRP CEO to get this information, and now the council has passed an urgent motion to take further action regarding the failure to provide these plans.

The Victorian Ombudsman, Ms Deborah Glass, has opened a case on the matter and is investigating the withholding of plans and images that would help the community better understand the incredible impact the station will have on their lives. I say again, despite residents begging for help and information, even after I raised this matter here in Parliament last month, the member for Box Hill is refusing to meet with these desperate residents. Over 700 people have signed a petition calling for the release of these documents, and you would have thought this would elicit some response from the government, because the absolute minimum that any community should expect from their member of Parliament is that their MP listens to them, talks to them and is their representative to government. In short, the job of a member is to be in their residents' corner. But if Mr Hamer—

The SPEAKER: Order! Correct titles.

Mr R SMITH: the member for Box Hill, is insisting on staying in hiding, then perhaps this job is not the right one for him. If listening and showing concern or even a shred of empathy is beyond him, perhaps it is time for a change. My request again is for the Minister for Planning to meet with residents, and if he can be found, perhaps the member for Box Hill can go with him.

But while the Andrews Labor government remains committed to secrecy and a lack of transparency, a Liberal government, come this election, will audit this project and bring any dodgy dealings into the spotlight. Our Liberal candidate for Box Hill, Nicole Werner, if elected, will always be available for residents and be honest and up front with them, because the residents of Surrey Hills and Mont Albert deserve no less.

OVERPORT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (19:03): (6427) My adjournment question is for the fantastic Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to visit Overport Primary School in my electorate of Frankston. The Overport Primary School community is a very active and very strong community that is rightly proud of their school and their school students. Recently I was sent some amazingly written letters from the students of this school asking me to come out and see the playground, the running track and the oval, and that is what I have done. I have gone out there and had a look, and I think—well, I know—the students and the school community would love to welcome the minister and provide him with a tour of their school any time the minister can make himself available.

CAPE CONRAN COASTAL PARK

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (19:03): (6428) My adjournment is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the action that I seek is for the minister to advise the Orbost and Marlo communities why there will be less roofed accommodation when the Cape Conran Coastal Park is rebuilt after the 2019–20 fires. The minister and I were recently at Cape Conran having a look at the boat ramp, but this issue does need addressing. The minister committed to building back bigger and better at that camp park. Originally there were five wilderness retreats and there were eight roofed accommodation cabins, so there were 13 accommodation options. Post fires we are now told that there are only going to be 10. How are you building back bigger and attracting more tourists with less accommodation options?

The minister said in her media release of October 2021 that the 10 cabins that were destroyed at Banksia Bluff will add to the cabins and wilderness retreats destroyed by the fires and that works will attract more visitors than ever. How can we attract more visitors with less cabins? It makes no sense. When the fires hit, all the wilderness retreats were destroyed. Three of the eight cabins were destroyed; there were five remaining. Now, what we were told was the cabins that were destroyed would be replaced by insurance money—that was good—and 10 new cabins would be built. Now we are told there is only going to be 10 all up and the cabins that survived the fire are going to be bulldozed because they do not meet current standards. But the large lodge is being brought up to current standards. If it can be brought up to standards, why are we bulldozing the other three? Why can't we keep them as well?

It is not right that the community is told 'We're going to build back bigger and better with more accommodation' and it ends up being less. That is just not suitable. It is not a good outcome for the economy of that Orbost-Marlo area. I want the minister to come out now and clearly explain why there has been this reduction in roofed accommodation, and also while she is at it she might like to explain why these replacement cabins are built and waiting at the factory to be delivered to Cape Conran but there is a delay in actually delivering them. The community wants to know the answers to a number of questions, but my adjournment specifically is to explain to that community why there is going to be less roofed accommodation at Cape Conran post fires than there was pre fires, because that is not what my community was promised when the minister made this announcement.

SPRINGFIELD PARK, BOX HILL NORTH

Mr HAMER (Box Hill) (19:06): (6429) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Community Sport. The action that I seek is for the minister to visit the Whitehorse Colts netball club in my electorate of Box Hill to hear about the club's need for training facilities at Springfield Park in Box Hill North. There are no council-owned netball court facilities that the Colts are allowed to use in the Box Hill electorate, with reports of girls recently needing to train on the concrete paving outside the canteen. In late 2021 the club petitioned Whitehorse council to fund the feasibility, design and installation of an outdoor netball court at Springfield Park to support their 85 registered players. The club's petition attracted 1278 signatures in just a couple of weeks. I spoke about this petition earlier this year, and it was one that I was proud to support.

The council's report was tabled last month, and I was disappointed with the lack of support for the club's proposal. Council refused to support progressing this project at this time, despite installing similar facilities at other locations in the municipality. While the final council resolution called for a report into options for a multicourt facility, there is no time frame for when this report may be completed or when supported projects may be funded. I urge Whitehorse council to prioritise how it can provide local netball clubs like the Colts with the facilities that they need to train locally without having to travel several suburbs away.

Netball is a mass participation sport for women and girls. If a local kid wants to play sports like cricket and footy, which are male dominated, they can play and train on footy ovals, pitches and in cricket nets for play and practice. It would be great for the club to meet the minister to talk through its needs and hear how the Andrews Labor government is investing in the grassroots community sport facilities our women and girls need to level the playing field. The Colts would love the opportunity to meet the minister at Springfield Park. On a final note, all three of the Colts netball teams that played in the semifinals over the weekend won and are playing in grand finals this weekend. Good luck, girls.

REGIONAL PERINATAL SERVICES

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (19:08): (6430) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is for the minister to outline what recommendations from the inquiry into perinatal services the Victorian government has implemented. I was part of the Family and Community Development Committee, which conducted the perinatal inquiry, with the final report tabled in Parliament in 2018. It goes without saying that the final report was tabled almost two years before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, but I will speak to that later.

The committee heard evidence from a range of stakeholders. There were more than 100 submissions, and we heard evidence from more than 90 witnesses at the public hearings. The final report made 80 recommendations. What the inquiry found was there was already a shortage of midwives and nurses in Victoria. This was 2018, again, almost two years before COVID. The executive summary of the final report reads in part:

The perinatal workforce in Victoria is facing major challenges. This includes a shortage of midwives and nurses which needs to be immediately addressed. The Committee sees a strong midwifery workforce as essential to ensuring good perinatal health for mothers, babies, and families. The Committee is also concerned by evidence of the shortage of perinatal health practitioners across a range of professions in rural and regional Victoria. The Committee makes recommendations aimed at growing a sustainable midwifery, nursing, and rural and regional workforce.

Birthing services were suspended at Portland District Health in March. The Portland community was told the loss of services would be for three months, but it has now been extended until at least September. According to the statements by the minister the suspension was a temporary hiccup. He hoped it would be over as soon as possible. The minister has said several times that a worldwide shortage of midwives, or a global shortage of midwives, was to blame for the service's shutdown.

The loss of the service has had a huge impact on expectant mums and their families in the Portland region. They now have to travel more than an hour to deliver in either Hamilton or Warrnambool. I have even spoken to one constituent who moved to Ballarat prior to giving birth just so she had the surety of access to birthing services that she needed. We have also had one mum give birth on the side of the road between Portland and Warrnambool.

It begs a very obvious question: in light of the findings of the inquiry into perinatal services in 2018, what workforce planning steps did the Victorian government take to alleviate what was already a shortage of midwives in our state? Did the government accept and adopt the recommendations of growing a sustainable midwifery, nursing and rural and regional workforce? Because if the government had adopted those recommendations and started implementing them back in 2018, when the final report was tabled, we might not be in the position we find ourselves in today. So I ask the Minister for Health to outline exactly what recommendations have been adopted and implemented.

PANTON HILL PRE SCHOOL

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (19:11): (6431) My question is to the Minister for Early Childhood in the other place, and the action I seek is for her to do all in her power to ensure that the Panton Hill kindergarten remains open. The kindergarten is the only service based in the rural north of the Nillumbik shire, and it services families in Panton Hill, Smiths Gully, St Andrews, Strathewen and beyond. The kinder is located close by Panton Hill Primary School so is an important feeder for the school. Tragically, for the second time in two years, the kindergarten is at threat of closure due to the withdrawal of an operator contracted by Nillumbik shire.

Minister, I thank your department. Its staff and Nillumbik council have been working together to support this much-loved kinder. It is disappointing to hear that the previous management body, Sparkways, has not managed local preschools as well as it could have. I and the member for Eltham are very pleased to hear that new operators have been found for Eltham North preschool and for Hurstbridge kindergarten, which were also under threat. The families of Panton Hill and beyond are seeking this outcome for their kinder too. Indeed two of my own staff are cheering this outcome on, as they are both graduates of this great kinder. Fortunately the current mayor, Frances Eyre, is very supportive and is actively advocating for the kinder to remain open. This is in contrast to what occurred during the leadership of the previous council, the Clarke–Egan era. The then mayor stated two years ago on Facebook that if a private business withdrew the service, it was nothing to do with council. The previous mayor, Peter Clarke, also touted a number of kindergarten buildings to the Eltham Men’s Shed. He took them around to three of those council kinders and asked, ‘Which one do you want?’. I am really glad that it seems to have changed under the leadership of this new council.

This government has really nailed its colours to the mast with its three-year-old kinder initiative, which has been rolled out now across the state. We have invested in upgrading facilities so that that can occur. Then last week we had that groundbreaking announcement of free kindergarten and also the introduction of preschool. This is not the time for kindergartens to be closing; this is the time for them to be growing. Nillumbik has some of the highest participation rates for women in the workforce, and during the skill shortage we absolutely need this to continue. A lot of fire-affected families still, 13 years on, live in this community and they need this little kinder nearby.

I see that a member for Northern Victoria Region in the other place asked a question on this. She is a former minister. Better late than never, but she has now come on board. But I would really urge the minister to do all in her power to ensure that the Panton Hill kindergarten remains open.

NORTHERN VICTORIA HOSPITALS

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (19:14): (6432) My adjournment is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is that the minister direct the Department of Health to urgently provide regional hospitals in northern Victoria with the staff they need. To keep these regional hospitals functioning and able to provide the critical services required by our communities, a surge workforce needs to be provided to them immediately. In regional areas there is no capacity to access staff such as doctors and nurses from other hospitals nearby, as may be possible in metropolitan areas. Staff shortages are critical, and hospitals across northern Victoria are under enormous pressure because of this.

Just today Albury Wodonga Health has posted on its Facebook site that it is currently experiencing high demand across all services. It asked that people be aware that they may experience delays at the emergency departments. Reminders are given of other services to be accessed by the community, including GPs, Nurse-on-Call and a range of other telephone support lines. They do, however, urge those needing urgent medical assistance to present at the hospital for treatment, and they seek understanding and patience from the community.

Today Goulburn Valley Health in Shepparton has posted on its Facebook page that the emergency department is currently experiencing extremely high demand, resulting in lengthy wait times for patients with non-urgent matters. They ask that people only come to the emergency department if their

condition is urgent or life threatening. Again, options for non-urgent cases are outlined, and the post points out the staff are working as hard they can to attend to all patients as quickly as possible, prioritising life-threatening emergencies.

Northeast Health Wangaratta, Goulburn Valley Health and Albury Wodonga Health have all resorted to code yellows in recent months to deal with these situations. The burden of illness and additional beds being taken up by those with COVID, the flu and delayed treatment needed for other medical conditions is creating extraordinary pressure in these hospitals. Across our health facilities in northern Victoria it is a struggle to retain and even entice medical and nursing staff to come. This has been exacerbated by two years of closed international borders and the fact that most new graduates want and find work in metropolitan areas. The Shepparton district is a wonderful place to live, but there are serious barriers as to why new residents are not drawn there at the moment. That is because of a dire shortage of housing in rental and owner sectors, so new residents have very little choice when it comes to accommodation.

My office has spoken to health staff who are at their wits' end with the staff shortages. They are burnt out and exhausted. One nurse who said she had never been closer to quitting in her long career confirmed that we urgently need more staff. While the substantial investment in the public health system is very welcome, it is the shortage of available staff to work right now that is the critical issue in our regional hospitals, and we need help.

ELDER ABUSE

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (19:17): (6433) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence. The action I seek is that she join me in my electorate of Hawthorn to see the results of funding granted to the southern Melbourne partnership as part of the elder abuse prevention network. All of us in this chamber are familiar with the Royal Commission into Family Violence and our government's work to implement all 227 recommendations contained in the final report. Whilst I am proud of the progress made in this area, elder abuse remains an unrecognised form of family violence. As a senior member in this chamber and a resident of a retirement home, I would like to emphasise the insidious threat this abuse poses to some of the most vulnerable individuals in our society. The royal commission reported that up to one in 20 older people can experience elder abuse, with around half of that abuse potentially taking the form of financial abuse. Let me repeat that: around one in 20 older Victorians is a victim of elder abuse. This is quite unacceptable.

I have been contacted by older constituents who have been subject to this abuse and exploited due to their advanced years. These cases are truly heartbreaking, as it is often those they trust to protect them that are in fact exploiting them. That is why I am glad to support the elder abuse prevention and response initiative, part of our response to the royal commission. As part of this initiative, 10 elder abuse prevention networks, including the southern Melbourne partnership, have been established.

My electorate of Hawthorn is home to a vibrant community of senior Australians, and I would be glad to see how these networks have affected them. I have recently visited groups like my local Greek seniors group, and I am looking forward to visiting the Italian and Peppercorn groups in coming weeks. Organisations like these are essential, and I personally attend regular seniors groups when my parliamentary duties allow. They are a cornerstone of our community, and I thank them for their work in helping some of our most vulnerable Victorians.

I would also like to thank our aged care workers, who are underappreciated despite the vital work they do caring for our elderly citizens. I look forward to the minister's visit and to seeing firsthand the work of the elder abuse prevention network.

COBDEN HEALTH

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (19:20): (6434) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers. I would like to invite the minister down to the wonderful township of

Cobden to inspect Cobden Health. As a former health board person myself, I have long experience with the Cobden Health service. It is a vital little bush nursing set-up in the south-west of Victoria. It is a marvellous facility that provides good primary care, but most importantly to that community it provides a great aged care service that allows the people and the surrounding farming community to stay into their old age, into their frail years, in their community. It is a really important element of that community.

The service is not like many of the other government-owned aged care residential services around the state that are often part of larger hospitals. Cobden does not have that benefit. It will need significant support from the state to upgrade the facility to bring it into line with all the necessary aged care standards. But it is not only a matter of fulfilling the standards of the state and making sure that the best care is available. This facility is vital to that community because without it elderly people, people that have spent their lives on the land down in that community, would be forced to go to places such as Colac or even Camperdown or across to Timboon or through to Warrnambool—on the map they may not seem very far away, but for those communities the half-hour or 45 minutes or hour in the car is actually a long, long way away. It is a long way from your friends, it is a long way from your family.

Cobden is a community that does a lot by itself. It is a community that rallies together and does things well. The Cobden community through its health service did a fantastic job putting an indoor pool together, and they have had that up and successfully running for a while. They do not ask the government for a lot in Cobden. What they do want, though, is to know that the government in Spring Street, the government of Victoria, cares about that community enough to put support in behind them and make sure that the services that everyone else in Victoria gets to enjoy they also get to have.

The Cobden Health service with its minimal budget gives a lot of service to that community for not a lot of dollars from the taxpayer. It is not an unnecessary or wild ask of this government to find the resources and the support necessary to get in behind the Cobden Health service and support its volunteer local board that turns up month after month to provide the governance and the guidance in that community to try and keep the health service to a modern standard. I certainly support that and would love to take the minister down, show him around the wonderful township of Cobden and get it on the radar of the health department.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater) (19:23): (6435) I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Early Childhood. The action that I seek is that the minister join me in my community to help lead a forum on our government's recent massive overhaul of early years education in this state for local families. Childcare costs are a huge burden on families, with some spending up to 25 per cent of their daily earnings on it, meaning it is just unaffordable or out of reach for many. Thousands of parents, the majority being women, are being forced into working less to save on childcare costs. This just does not make any sense. That is why the Andrews Labor government's once-in-a-generation reform and the biggest shake-up of our kinder and childcare system is simply seismic.

Here is what you need to know. To relieve pressure on household budgets kinder will be free for three- and four-year-olds from 2023. This will save families up to \$2500 per child every year at a time when it is needed most. This has been welcome news to local families across Knox and indeed the entire state. But we also know that 90 per cent of brain development occurs in the first five years of life, so that time is critical for young people. That is why we committed to funding three-year-old kinder in 2018 and why we have rolled it out across Victoria this year. It is why we will be transitioning the current 15-hour four-year-old kinder program to a 30-hour pre-prep program and rolling it out from 2025, with universal access by 2032. That will mean every kid will be able to access 30 hours a week of free, play-based learning to not only ensure they get their best start in life but also take pressure off families' budgets. Finally, we are also establishing 50 new government-operated childcare centres across Victoria, with the first centres opening in 2025 and going into areas that need them most.

ADJOURNMENT

Tuesday, 21 June 2022

Legislative Assembly

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It is only a Labor government that ever has and ever will implement these profound policies to support Victorian families, Victorian women and Victorian children. I am incredibly proud of this reform, and I look forward to welcoming the minister to my community to discuss these reforms and hear from local families.

RESPONSES

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (19:25): The member for Warrandyte raised a matter for the Minister for Planning. The member for Frankston raised a matter for the Minister for Education. The member for Gippsland East raised a matter for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. The member for Box Hill raised a matter for the Minister for Community Sport. The member for South-West Coast and the independent member for Shepparton raised matters for the Minister for Health. The member for Yan Yean and the member for Bayswater both raised matters for the Minister for Early Childhood. The member for Hawthorn raised a matter for the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, and the member for Polwarth raised a matter for the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers. I will refer them accordingly.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 7.26 pm.