



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Tuesday 7 March 2023

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Jacinta Allan

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Ben Carroll

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

John Pesutto

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

David Southwick

Leader of the Nationals

Peter Walsh

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Mary-Anne Thomas

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury

**Members of the Legislative Assembly
60th Parliament**

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

¹ ALP until 5 August 2023

² Resigned 27 September 2023

³ Resigned 7 July 2023

⁴ Elected 3 October 2023

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

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Tuesday 7 March 2023

The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 12:03 pm, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.

Bills

Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

Introduction and first reading

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (12:04): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Building Act 1993, the Architects Act 1991, 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.

David HODGETT (Croydon) (12:05): I seek a brief explanation of the bill.

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (12:05): This is a bill to amend the Building Act 1993 and to improve consumer protections for domestic consumers in the building industry.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2023

Introduction and first reading

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples) (12:06): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 in relation to the medically supervised injecting centre and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (12:06): I ask the minister for a brief explanation of the bill, including an explanation as to why the injecting room will continue to be located next to a primary school.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples) (12:07): I am happy to provide a brief explanation of the bill and leave debates for another time. The bill establishes a North Richmond medically supervised injecting room as a permanent service at its current location, removes limitations to the MSIR models of care and improves service delivery, efficiency, responsiveness, governance and continuity. The bill also amends the act to allow the reissuing of an MSIR licence to a new person and will allow the service licence to be extended to support service continuity during a recommissioning process.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Local Government (Moira Shire Council) Bill 2023*Introduction and first reading*

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (12:08): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to dismiss the Moira Shire Council, to provide for a second general election for the Moira Shire Council, to make consequential amendments to the Local Government Act 2020 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.**Read first time.**

Melissa HORNE: Under standing order 61(3)(b) I advise the house that other parties have been provided with a copy of the bill and a briefing in accordance with the standing order, and I therefore move:

That this bill be read a second time immediately.

Motion agreed to.*Statement of compatibility*

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (12:10): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Local Government (Moira Shire Council) Bill 2023.

Opening paragraphs

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, (the Charter), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Local Government (Moira Shire Council) Bill 2023.

In my opinion, the Local Government (Moira Shire Council) Bill 2023 as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with human rights as set out in the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview

The proposed Local Government (Moira Shire Council) Bill 2023 (Bill) will dismiss the Moira Shire Council (council) and provide for the appointment of an Administrator or Panel of Administrators for the council.

This follows the report of the Commission of Inquiry into Moira Shire Council which was provide to me on 26 February 2023. The report describes significant governance failures by the council and its administration and finds that governance of council has deteriorated to the point where it can no longer effectively carry out its responsibilities in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020. The report recommended the dismissal of the council until October 2028.

As such, I seek the dismissal of elected councillors at the council for at least 5 years to ensure the restoration of good governance at the council in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020.

The proposed Bill dismisses the council until October 2028.

Human Rights Issues**Human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to the Bill****Taking part in public life**

Section 18 of the Charter establishes a right for an individual to, without discrimination, participate in the conduct of public affairs, to vote and be elected at State and municipal elections, and to have access to the Victorian public service and public office.

The right to participate in the conduct of public affairs broadly relates to the exercise of governmental power by all levels of government, including local government. The right to be elected ensures that eligible voters have a free choice of candidates in an election and, much like the right to vote, is not conferred on all Victorians, but is limited to eligible persons who meet certain criteria. The processes for the appointment, promotion, suspension and dismissal of candidates and councillors are objective, reasonable and non-discriminatory.

Clause 5 (in dismissing the Moira Shire Council) and amendments to the Local Government Act (providing the next general election for the Moira Shire Council will not occur until October 2028), clearly engages the right to take part in public life under section 18 of the Charter.

In this case, the purpose of the limitation is to enable the restoration of good government at the council. Given the significant issues with the Moira Shire Council and the work that is to occur so that it may operate adequately, the limitation is reasonable and justified in a free and democratic society under section 7(2) of the Charter Act.

In April 2022, Ms Marg Allan was appointed as a municipal monitor to the council to review and oversee governance processes and practices on the basis of concerns that had been raised by the council Mayor, Chief Executive Officer and other parties.

On 7 October 2022, Ms Allan identified serious concerns that the leaders of Moira Shire Council were not performing in their roles as is expected or required of them. Further, that there were numerous governance issues and alarming reports in relation to staff safety. This report recommended further intervention was warranted to establish a culture of good governance.

As a result, a Commission of Inquiry comprised of Ms Frances O'Brien KC (Chair) and Mr John Tanner AM was appointed on 28 October 2022, to conduct an inquiry into the council and the Commission provided its final report on 26 February 2023.

In summary, the Commission's report finds that the governance of Moira Shire Council has deteriorated such that the council can no longer effectively carry out its responsibilities in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The report describes significant governance failures by the council and its administration, including in relation to its management of the performance of its Chief Executive Officer, in ensuring the health and safety of its employees and in giving effect to the financial management principles and community engagement principles under the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The report further identifies instances of how the council's failures and neglect have adversely affected members of council staff and the Shire community. This includes the council's and the administration's actions in transferring asbestos contaminated waste to unlicensed waste stations constituted serious misconduct, putting staff and residents at potential risk of exposure to asbestos; and the delayed implementation of already approved flood mitigation measures, leaving the township of Numurkah and its residents at serious risk.

The report also describes how the council Chief Executive Officer failed in several of her duties including to comply with the council's Employee Code of Conduct and mandatory notification of suspected corrupt conduct to IBAC, and to exercise responsible oversight of human resource management practices in breach of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*.

The Commission recommended the council be dismissed until 2028. This can only be achieved through legislation.

The serious nature of the Commission's findings justifies the dismissal of the elected councillors. In addition, the Commission recommends an extended period of administration to October 2028 to ensure there is sufficient time to address the issues raised in its report and provide for the restoration of good governance at the council in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*. This action therefore ensures and recognises the right of electors to be represented with probity, integrity and accountability, and in the interests of the community.

Removal of an elected council is always a matter of last resort and undertaken only in the most serious of circumstances. While it is regrettable that this is necessary, the Government has a responsibility to protect communities from governance failings by their local representatives.

The *Local Government Act 2020* provides a less restrictive and more immediate measure, namely suspension pursuant to section 230(1). However, section 230 is not appropriate in this case because it provides for suspension for a maximum period of 12 months, indicating the provision is intended for circumstances in which a short interruption to elected representation will be sufficient to overcome the failures identified.

However, as the Commission's report demonstrates, the circumstances require the removal of democratic representatives for at least five years.

Privacy and Reputation

Section 13 of the Charter provides that a person has the right not to have his or her privacy, unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with, and not to have his or her reputation unlawfully attacked.

Clause 5 of the Bill provides for the dismissal of the elected councillors, and therefore purports to restrict the right under section 13 of the Charter.

Any interference with a person's privacy and reputation is lawful and not arbitrary in this case. The decision to remove the councillors from office follows the appointment of a municipal monitor to the Council and is pursuant to the recommendations of a Commission of Inquiry.

The serious nature of the issues identified at the Council by the Commission, as identified above, clearly warrant the immediate removal of the councillors.

MELISSA HORNE MP

Minister for Local Government

Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation

Minister for Ports and Freight

Minister for Roads and Road Safety

Second reading

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (12:10): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill will dismiss the Moira Shire Council and provide for the appointment of an administrator or panel of administrators in response to the recommendations of the report from the independent Commission of Inquiry into Moira Shire Council.

A municipal monitor, Marg Allan, was appointed in April 2022 under section 179 of the Local Government Act 2020 to monitor, advise and support the governance processes and practices of the council. This appointment was to assist the council in addressing a number of significant governance issues raised by the council mayor and chief executive officer and other parties.

On 7 October last year the monitor provided her confidential report to me. The report found that the councillors of Moira Shire Council were 'not performing in their roles as expected or required of them'. Further, neither the mayor nor the CEO were 'performing their role as required or expected' and 'the councillors are unable to properly manage the CEO'.

The monitor further reported that Moira Shire Council had numerous governance issues, a poor organisation culture, with alarming reports of staff safety and culture, and poor community engagement practices and financial management of capital works. The monitor concluded that any improvements were likely to be lost once the monitor's term expired. The monitor noted that she had referred a number of matters to the Local Government Inspectorate; however, they would take time for their investigation to be complete.

Finally, the monitor concluded that 'due to the significance and extent of the issues at Moira shire', she had 'formed the view that further intervention beyond the appointment of a monitor is warranted, to establish a culture of good governance'.

The municipal monitor was initially appointed until 31 January 2023; however, following such an alarming report I appointed a commission of inquiry under section 200 of the Local Government Act 2020. The commission was established on 28 October 2022 to conduct an inquiry into the affairs of the Moira Shire Council, and the monitor's appointment ceased.

The terms of reference saw the commissioners focus on the advice provided by the municipal monitor and the Australian Services Union, as well as on matters affecting councillors' and the administration's performance of their roles. This was to include the efficiency and effectiveness of governance arrangements in delivering services to its constituents, including financial management and community engagement practices.

The commissioners were required to report back to me by 28 February 2023 and provided their final report to me on 26 February 2023. I have tabled the commissioners' report, which attaches as appendices the monitor's final report and the Australian Services Union's letter.

The commissioners' report finds that governance of council has deteriorated such that it can no longer effectively carry out its responsibilities in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020.

The report also finds that the chief executive officer failed in her duties, including to comply with the council's employee code of conduct and to exercise responsible oversight of human resource management practices in breach of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004. The council in turn failed to manage the performance of the chief executive officer.

The report further finds that the council and its administration failed to take necessary action to ensure the health and safety of employees; managed the transfer of asbestos-contaminated waste in a manner that constituted serious misconduct and risked the health of staff and residents; delayed implementation of already approved flood mitigation measures, leaving the township of Numurkah and its residents at serious risk; failed to act in accordance with the financial management principles contained in the Local Government Act through the mismanagement of two major capital projects; and failed to provide adequate community representation and to apply the community engagement principles of the Local Government Act 2020 on a shire-wide basis.

The issues identified in the report, which have not been resolved, raise serious concerns about the effectiveness of the council to govern the municipality. The commissioners concluded that the proper functioning of the council needs to be restored and that there needs to be a break in democratically elected representation at the council for at least five years.

The bill will dismiss the council and appoint administrators to perform the powers, functions and duties of the council until a new council is elected.

The bill provides for the next general election for the Moira Shire Council to be held in October 2028, ensuring there is sufficient time to address the issues raised in the commissioners' report while balancing the strong community interest in having democratically elected representatives.

Dismissing a council by Parliament is the most extreme intervention by the state and is only undertaken in the most serious cases of governance failure. This government is taking the conduct of councils seriously by intervening early to prevent serious governance failures but acting decisively when councils fail their communities.

The issues identified in the commissioners' report, including the council's abject failure to make decisions and take appropriate action that ensured the health and safety of employees and residents, failure to provide adequate community representation and major procurement breaches and mismanagement of key capital works, demonstrate extremely serious governance failures warranting the dismissal of the council.

Without this bill, there is a risk of further deterioration of the governance at the council and the probity, integrity and accountability expected of local government.

The community and Parliament expect the highest standards of governance, probity and representation from their councillors and council staff. This bill will ensure good governance in Moira is restored to provide the community the leadership they deserve.

I commend the bill to the house.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (12:17): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Business of the house**Notices of motion**

Notice given.

Committees**Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee*****Alert Digest No. 1***

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (12:18): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 1 of 2023, on the following act and bills:

Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Act 2022

Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition, Aboriginal Self-determination and Other Matters) Bill 2023

Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Raise the Age) Bill 2022

Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2023

Heritage Amendment Bill 2023

Human Source Management Bill 2023

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment (Facilitation of Timely Reporting) Bill 2022

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment (Restoration of Examination Powers) Bill 2022

Parliamentary Committees Amendment (Preventing Government Dominated Investigatory Committees) Bill 2022

Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022

Road Safety Amendment (Medicinal Cannabis) Bill 2023

Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022

together with appendices and extracts from proceedings.

Ordered to be published.

Documents**Parliamentary Budget Office*****Report of Operations for the Victorian 2022 General Election******Annual Report 2021–22***

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (12:19): I have the honour to present to the house a report of Parliamentary Budget Office operations for the 2022 Victorian general election from the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the Parliamentary Budget Office report 2021–22 under sections 27 and 28 of the Parliamentary Budget Officer Act 2017.

Tabled.

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

Local Government Act 2020 – Commission of Inquiry into Moira Shire Council – Ordered to be published

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

Frankston – C140

Greater Geelong – C431

Melbourne – C413

Stonnington – C329

Victorian Planning Provision – VC215

Yarra – C313

Safe Drinking Water Act 2003 – Drinking Water Quality in Victoria – Report 2021–22

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Port Management Act 1995 – SR 13

Residential Tenancies Act 1997 – SR 10

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 – SR 12

Water Industry Act 1994 – SR 11

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rule 12.

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER STANDING ORDERS – The Clerk tabled:

Government response to the Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee's Report on the Inquiry into support for older Victorians from migrant and refugee backgrounds – released on 27 February 2023.

Bills**Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022**

Council's agreement

The SPEAKER (12:21): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022 without amendment.

Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022**Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022**

Royal assent

The SPEAKER (12:21): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 and the Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022.

Motions**Parliamentary integrity**

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:21): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house requests the Honourable Robert Redlich AM KC to circulate to the Manager of Opposition Business on behalf of the opposition correspondence sent to the Speaker in December 2022 regarding recommendations to enhance integrity through parliamentary processes in Victoria.

Leave refused.

James NEWBURY: I request that the notice be placed on the notice paper.

The SPEAKER: The request will be placed on the notice paper.

Business of the house

Program

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (12:22): I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5 pm on 9 March 2023:

Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition, Aboriginal Self-Determination and Other Matters) Bill 2023

Heritage Amendment Bill 2023.

Once again we find ourselves with a busy program of important reform led by the Andrews Labor government, and we are delighted to be here as members of that government to make contributions to these important bills this week. But before I talk a little bit more about those bills, as we have heard, this is also a significant week, with International Women’s Day falling tomorrow. As a notice of motion has already outlined, this year we acknowledge 100 years since some women were able to stand for Parliament, and it is important that I make that point about ‘some women’ because, as always, we need to recognise that First Nations women were left behind in these reforms. When we focus on the history of this place, it is very significant and important that we all take the time to acknowledge that some of those gains that were made by women were for some women only and that Aboriginal women were excluded. We will be looking forward to debating that motion tomorrow. I might point out that if my accounting is correct, we will have some 30 women here to make contributions on that motion, and we look forward to the women of the Liberal Party and National Party also contributing, in somewhat smaller numbers – it is just a fact.

The Heritage Amendment Bill will deliver a more efficient, practical and effective heritage system for Victoria, and I want to congratulate the Minister for Planning for the work that she has done on bringing this bill to the house. It includes provisions to allow for heritage documents and hearings to move online. That is progress, and we are always for progress. It will allow for agencies to identify heritage significance early on in their project phases, lowering the risk of disruptions down the track. For a government such as ours, which is known for getting on and delivering, which is known for its signature Big Build program and which is known for creating jobs and opportunities for all Victorians no matter where they live, it is very important that legislation such as this is brought before the house. It will assist ultimately to deliver projects that Victorians voted for sooner and with more robust protections for our important heritage features. And of course, I suppose, it is important to reflect that the Andrews Labor government did receive the endorsement of the people of Victoria to get on with our job-creating agenda.

We will also be debating the children and health legislation amendment. This bill acts on the government’s commitment to Aboriginal self-determination. Our commitment to First Peoples and the work that this government has done – nation-leading work, I might say – on treaties with our First Nations people, on working to ensure that self-determination, truth, justice and treaties are at the heart of our work for and with our Aboriginal brothers and sisters, is very important to us. We know that the single biggest factor in improving health and social outcomes for Aboriginal people is achieved through Aboriginal self-determination. This is a principle that we hold exceedingly dear, and we look forward to that debate as well. This bill provides significant reform opportunities to achieve self-determination and self-management for Aboriginal people and to strengthen provisions that uphold the importance of culture for the safety of Aboriginal children.

Finally, there are two final inaugural speeches from this side of the house. We look forward to hearing from the member for Preston and the member for Broadmeadows, which will round out all of the inaugurals on this side of the house. We are so proud of the Labor members that were elected at the 2022 election. Their speeches so far have clearly demonstrated that they have so much to give to public

life, and we look forward to hearing those last two inaugurals of those members later. I commend the government business program to the house.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:27): It was a great shock when we received the government business program this week, when it was sent out to the opposition and crossbench parties on Thursday afternoon, as is the normal way. In addition to the bills described by the minister – and I will speak to them shortly – there was also a note on the program that the government intended to speak to and put motions listed on the notice paper. There was no detail as to what any of those motions would be, the substance of what would be debated, which I think runs contrary to the concept of the government business program in and of itself. And just before we started the debate on the government business program, the government moved a motion which I am sure many members of this place will want to speak to, and that is to acknowledge and support International Women’s Day this week. I am sure there are a number of speakers who will want to speak to that motion, on all sides of the chamber, and it was, frankly, disappointing to hear about the motion 1 minute before the government business program debate commenced. I would have thought that a government who intended to be apolitical in the way that the Parliament proceeds – putting our best foot forward in terms of speaking to issues of importance for our state – would at least have a conversation about what the government intends to do.

Although this motion is one that of course we wholeheartedly support and will speak to with gusto, there are other motions on the notice paper that have been put forward by the Leader of the House which are not in the same vein. I note that there is one particular motion on the notice paper that I internally call the Leader of the House’s sledge motion, which is frankly a grievance debate or matter of public importance –

A member: Irrelevant.

James NEWBURY: entirely relevant – which is just a sledge on the opposition. So when the government put forward what they intended to do this week, it would not have surprised anybody, I would have thought, that the opposition was concerned that there were not the details provided on what the government intended to do. Just simply saying ‘We will debate stuff’ is not good enough, especially when we know what the government is hiding on the notice paper. And though I know that the leader moved a motion just a moment ago in good faith – and we appreciate the substance of that motion – it was moved without any notice, any discussion.

When the Leader of the House spoke to the busyness of this Parliament, I note that the Parliament has been so busy and the government has such a strong schedule of what it intends to do that last week when we debated a particular amendment to a motion a number of the ministers were wandering around the chamber cock-a-hoop saying they did not have enough to do so they were really happy to be having the debate – so I am not sure that that argument stands them in good stead. There are instances where we would seek to put bills into the consideration-in-detail stage and the government has not provided us with that opportunity, especially bills that are particularly detailed.

In terms of the substance of the week, I certainly want to mention the Heritage Amendment Bill 2023, and I am sure the chamber will have a debate on that bill. The issue of heritage is one that I think many members of this place have been touched by and have had constituents raise with them over very important issues and failures in the system, for want of a better term, in terms of protecting the properties and protecting the sites that we need to protect and that the current rules and regulations do not to the extent that they should.

There are a number of inaugural speeches that will be completed today, one of which will be by the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon. I feel very confident that the whole Parliament will look forward to hearing that contribution from someone who has just achieved enormous things by coming back into this place and who is now the Leader of the Opposition.

On the basis of the lack of detail, we will not be supporting the government business program for the reasons set out both in principle and also in substance. I would hope that in the future the government

when they set out their government business program actually list on that program what they intend to do.

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (12:32): It is my pleasure for the first time in the 60th Parliament to be making a contribution on the government business program, and it is of course terrific to be doing that from the government side of the house. I want to pick up a couple of the matters that the Manager of Opposition Business raised, the first of those being the somewhat curious attribution of the member for Hawthorn's address-in-reply as being an inaugural speech. I am not quite sure how that holds. If I recall correctly, he was in fact a member of the 58th Parliament, so it might be a re-inaugural at best – but I certainly would not characterise it as an inaugural speech. I would similarly take issue with the Manager of Opposition Business's characterisation of the member for Hawthorn's contribution in the last few months as being substantial. It is early days, and I think it is fair to say the jury is still out on those matters.

There will be further addresses-in-reply to the Governor's speech and they will include the genuine inaugural speeches of the members for Broadmeadows and Preston. I look forward very much to hearing those contributions. The contributions from those on this side of the chamber right throughout that particular debate, the first contributions, have been absolutely outstanding. I want to congratulate all those members who have given their inaugural contributions right across the chamber, but in particular those members on this side, all of whom have made terrific contributions over the course of the first few sitting weeks of this, the 60th Parliament.

I read a document once which was '20 objections to any proposal', and right at the top of that list of things you can object to about any proposal is process. Have a big book about process and you can object to just about anything, and that is exactly what we had from the Manager of Opposition Business in his dissertation on the inclusion of a motion about International Women's Day. I do not think it is a particularly complicated motion. I do not think it is particularly controversial and I just do not know that the objection around process necessarily holds. That motion references 100 years since women won the right to stand for election in the Victorian Parliament and says that for many years First Nations women did not have the same political rights as other Victorians. They are entirely appropriate matters for this Parliament to have an opportunity to reflect on, and I know that the very sizeable women's caucus within the government parties –

Members interjecting.

Will FOWLES: There are four, and we have got like 30, but nonetheless the very sizeable – both proportionally and in number – women's caucus of the Australian Labor Party members of this Parliament will, I am sure, make terrific contributions around International Women's Day. If you want to talk about how many women you have in the caucus, probably the first thing you could do is not have a book about the debate around the motion itself. But there is a great opportunity for the member for Gippsland South to perhaps differentiate the Nationals' position on that motion from that of his Liberal colleagues.

The Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition, Aboriginal Self-determination and Other Matters) Bill 2023 is again an opportunity for the government to demonstrate all that has been done in this space, and it comes at a time when there are political leaders federally who are seeking to undermine one of the three processes that came out of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*. They were around voice, truth and treaty. In Victoria we are delivering on all three already: for Voice to Parliament, we have got the First Peoples' Assembly; for truth, we have established the truth and justice commission; and treaty is underway. And as much as other political parties in other jurisdictions might seek to undermine the opportunity for a voice to the federal Parliament, what we say here in the Victorian Parliament is that those three things matter, that the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* matters and provides an excellent pathway for jurisdictions right across the nation, state or federal, to engage properly with the many extraordinary difficulties that have faced First Nations people since the time of European settlement.

The Heritage Amendment Bill 2023 is also up for debate this week. It is another example of the government getting on and making sure that we deliver a planning system that is fair, that is balanced, that is reasonable and that reflects the modern planning environment here in the great state of Victoria. I am very pleased to support the government's motion, and I look forward to contributions from members following also in support.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (12:37): Let me just say with regard to the motion regarding International Women's Day, which is tomorrow: the Nationals women outnumber men now in the party room, so all of the women on this side will be making contributions. And that is without quotas. What a surprise. How did we do that? It must be the quality of female candidates, and we will acknowledge each other in a respectful and appropriate way tomorrow.

The member for Ringwood said that the way to debate any proposal was to have a sook about process. I have said it before, and I will say it again: to not go into the consideration-in-detail stage with bills – any bill – and to not be able to consider each clause in detail is problematic. We are elected to do a job, and that is to represent our communities. We cannot do that with the inability to go through every clause and have our say on every clause. As the Manager of Opposition Business pointed out, we get the business program and it says we may tend to bills. That does not allow us time to prepare. We cannot just debate some stuff and some things. Surely in our work as the opposition in keeping the government accountable we can be gifted the knowledge of what will occur in this place. There is just not enough time to read and digest all of those things moving forward. Considering each bill in detail is obviously our job, and we will go back, read through it and consider it all overnight.

As for the ones that are being debated today, such as the Heritage Amendment Bill 2023, as the Manager of Opposition Business did say, heritage has touched a lot of our communities before – mine in particular many, many times – and even though Heritage Victoria do wonderful work, at times it can be problematic. I look forward to the contributions of my colleagues in debating that bill. Many of our members will be debating and contributing in other ways to the child health legislation. Again, something that I am looking forward to is hearing the contributions from my colleagues with respect to self-determination for First Nations people. It is a very important bill, and I look forward to listening to all of the contributions from my colleagues this week.

Back to International Women's Day, it has been 100 years since women were afforded the vote, and now, like I said in the party room, we outnumber the men in the Nationals. The member for Gippsland South smiles but shakes his head. It has only taken 100 years. So I hope on International Women's Day that there will be a sense of empowering other women rather than tearing one another down, really encouraging and wrapping your arms around your women colleagues regardless of side and celebrating all that women have contributed over the last 100 years and further back than that, and also what we will contribute into the future.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (12:41): I am certainly looking forward to seeing the motion on International Women's Day debated tomorrow amongst the many other matters in the government business program, and I certainly hope non-government members will seek the opportunity as well. I know that this date has been known for some time; it is not an extraordinary surprise for the chamber. I think we are certainly up for it; I hope they will be as well. It seems like there is enthusiasm over there. I cannot really see the problem. I am sure they would not want to be antagonistic on such an important topic on the one hand celebrating extraordinary achievements by women, many before us, who led to us being in the chamber here at this moment in time. I feel a great sense of gratitude for that incredible work but also acknowledge there were some terrible injustices along the way, originally of course with women not being able to vote and then the delay for our First Peoples women in being able to vote, which now seems extraordinary when you think about it – it is galling. But it is important as part of the celebration to be really candid and honest about those things that were simply inappropriate and that were wrong but at the same time about all that has been achieved. I am extraordinarily proud of all the great work that has been done and continues to be done as part of our government, because we know we did not just rock up here today with these rights. They were hard

fought for in order to achieve the level of equality that we have thus far. But there is much more to be done in this space, and we certainly welcome the challenge.

I did want to pick up the note on quotas, because I think that this can be used as a way of putting down those perhaps from the point of view of a woman being selected per a quota. It can be used as a put-down, where the presumption is that there would not be enough good women when you are using a quota to be selected for a particular activity – whether it is representation in government – when in fact the contrary is true. There are so many great women in Victoria who are aptly qualified to be members of Parliament and to be in all professions, can we say, across Victoria, and hence quotas have enabled the acceleration of representation of women along the way. So I would take care personally – just reflecting here – in putting down quotas, because you can see by the representation in our government what a magnificent outcome they have facilitated along the way. That is just a personal reflection, but certainly I think one should take care in putting down such methods which actually have driven some really important outcomes for the community, not only for current women in Parliament, but which also will lead to so many more women of future generations being able to run for Parliament, knowing it can happen, it is achievable, it is possible and it is thanks to all the good work that continues to be undertaken.

It has been mentioned also that we have a very important legislative program this week. We have the Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition, Aboriginal Self-determination and Other Matters) Bill 2023. I can sense goodwill and determination to see this very important bill passed through the house, with particular emphasis on Aboriginal self-determination in health and child protection systems. Just a little shout-out to the member for Preston and the member for Broadmeadows: we are very much looking forward to your inaugurals tonight. I have enjoyed each and every one – and I do not think I am alone in that – from the government members who have delighted us with their inaugurals, and we certainly look forward to those this evening.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (12:46): At the outset may I reiterate my colleague the member for Brighton's remarks that we will be opposing the government business program today. It is only the third sitting week in this parliamentary term, and already we are experiencing from the Andrews Labor government a complete culture of a lack of transparency and a lack of accountability. Insofar as talking about the motion on International Women's Day I will get to that in a moment, but there has been just a lack of accountability and decency to extend a level of courtesy to the opposition and to the Parliament that this would be coming on.

Of course I have no hesitation in supporting wholeheartedly a motion relating to women and women's involvement in the democratic processes and in Parliament, and I will be celebrating International Women's Day as I believe we all will in this Parliament. I remind the house that it was hard to get women the right to vote, but I also remind everyone in the house that the first female to become a member of the Victorian Parliament was in fact from this side of politics. Lady Millie Peacock was not Labor; she was from this side of politics. She was the first female to be elected to this place, to the Victorian Parliament, and it is something we should absolutely celebrate.

So really what we are concerned about is the lack of accountability and transparency from the government in relation to the government business program and the lack of courtesy that they extend to this side and to non-government members of Parliament in relation to what is on the government business program. An example is debating motions on the notice paper really without a level of information, and also the mere fact that the bills being debated in the last sitting week and in this sitting week are really recycled bills from the last Parliament, from the 59th Parliament. They are recycled bills that the Andrews Labor government failed to be able to negotiate through the 59th Parliament, and they are being recycled again to have another shot at them.

Something we are also concerned about is the mere fact that this government is so unaccountable and lacking in transparency that they dare not allow the opposition or non-government members to go into consideration in detail on bills. It is particularly –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members, there is too much audible conversation in the chamber.

Bridget VALLENCE: It is particularly important – thank you, Speaker – when there are many complex matters within bills. In the bills that are before the Parliament this week are complex matters, but the reality is that this government fails to allow non-government members to go into consideration in detail on these bills, which would be particularly important to shed light on particular aspects of bills, particular clauses within bills, to enable opportunities to ask questions and perhaps, dare I say, even improve bills so that they best serve the people of Victoria.

But in terms of motions as well is the mere fact that this government say that they want to talk about motions, but only their motions. For example, a motion that I believe should be in the government business program this week is the member for Gippsland South's motion to re-establish the joint standing committee on roads, road trauma and road safety. Now, in my community in Yarra Valley, on roads in Wandin, we have just had three deaths in the space of five weeks, which is terribly traumatic for my community in the Yarra Valley, but it just goes to show how dangerous roads are, how impactful road trauma is and precisely why it would be so important for us to debate the motion to re-establish the joint standing committee on roads, road trauma and road safety, something that I note the Andrews Labor government canned when it came to government. It just makes absolutely no sense to me why the Andrews Labor government would want to stop a committee investigating the important matter of road safety and minimising, to the best extent possible, road trauma.

Of course this week we also have the address-in-reply. Probably the only good part about the government business program this week is the address-in-reply. I very much look forward to the Leader of the Opposition the member for Hawthorn's address-in-reply contribution. I also look forward to the member for Broadmeadows' contribution. I have a longstanding association with the Broadmeadows community, where I spent a lot of my career before being an MP.

We oppose the government business program.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (54): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Daniel Andrews, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

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

Motion agreed to.

*Members statements***Patricia Brown-Cheung**

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (12:56): I rise to remember the life of Patricia Brown-Cheung, who passed away in January after a short illness. Pat was the executive assistant to John Brumby for more than 20 years. Pat had worked with Bill Scales at the Industries Assistance Commission, and it was at Bill's suggestion that JB recruited Pat. It was a wonderful association. Pat was loyal, discreet, hardworking, professional, elegant, caring and protective, but she was also tough and formidable. She was fearsome but always fair. She was respected by all and revered by many. In describing Pat's work in the Premier's diary committee meetings, Yorick Piper described how with a roll of the eyes, a withering look or a sigh of 'honestly' Pat could rein the most enthusiastic or bloviated staff in and steer the topic and the meeting towards a sensible and productive outcome. She was a force of nature in John's office over the years. She left an indelible mark and will be greatly missed. Patricia Brown-Cheung stood in the best traditions of the public service. Quite simply, things happened just because of the support that she provided to JB, and as a consequence of this she served our state with distinction. As Tim Holding said, the great things we are able to accomplish in public life so often involve us standing on the shoulders of the incredible people who work with us. Pat was highly regarded by all who worked with her inside and outside of the government and by all sides of politics. Pat lived a life of public service. She left this place better than she found it, and at the end of the day that is a true marker of success. Vale, Patricia Brown-Cheung.

Malvern electorate crime

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (12:58): I bring to the attention of Parliament and in particular the Minister for Police the concerns of my Malvern community regarding an increase in local crime. In particular there has been a jump in reports of burglaries, including aggravated burglaries, in my community. Families who experience criminals breaking into their homes while they are home, often while they are sleeping, experience massive distress. The effect on neighbours is also significant, as people wonder if they will be targeted next. We have had report after report of serious break-ins in Malvern, Malvern East, Armadale, Toorak and Glen Iris in recent weeks. Crime Statistics Agency data shows that while the crime rate in Victoria fell last year, the crime rate in Stonnington jumped. Malvern East alone has seen an 11.9 per cent increase. The officers at Malvern police station do a wonderful job, but I say to the minister they simply need more resources to keep us safe. My community wants to see more police units patrolling the streets, deterring crime and arresting those who are undermining the security of my community. It is vital that the Andrews Labor government act now.

Malvern Valley Primary School

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (12:59): Congratulations to the committee, parents and staff who put together the Malvern Valley Primary School twilight fair last Saturday. Thousands of locals, including me, enjoyed the sunny day together with the rides, stalls and entertainment at Malvern Valley in support of a wonderful local school. It was a great event and a tribute to the really strong school community we have in Malvern East, so well done to Malvern Valley.

Amy Duncan

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Creative Industries) (12:59): I rise to honour a great friend, mentor and the most amazing human being you could meet, Amy Duncan, a warrior for social justice. Amy was a nurse, teacher, mother and grandmother. Born in South Africa, Amy had a lifelong commitment to her family and her patients, so too for the betterment of society, for equality and for social justice. If there was a cause worth fighting for, if there was an injustice, Amy was front and centre – apartheid, equality, women's rights, racism, refugees, war and euthanasia, and that is just the start.

She was a long-term member of the Labor Party and secretary of the Clayton South branch, but much more. There was the Union of Australian Women, the Australia-Cuba Friendship Society, the Unitarian church and many others. Amy was a force to be reckoned with. She was never shy about speaking to power. From prime ministers to premiers and all the way down, she put her case forcefully but with tact and decency, but she knew the way to change things was to make power listen – and they did. If you supported the cause that Amy supported and joined her in the struggle, she would love you for a lifetime. If you did not, she would respect that, but you had better stay out of her way.

To me and to so many Amy was family. She nurtured, she encouraged; she was our rock, our moral compass. Her energy was without peer, and nobody was ever left behind. We will miss her more than we can put into words, but we are also so much better off for her strength, her tenacity and her ability to fight for us all, to never give up in the struggle for social justice and to make our society a place without prejudice and injustice. I loved Amy. She was one of my closest friends. My love to Amy's children Sheryl and Karl and her grandchildren Marcus, Patrick, Rebekah, Xanthe and Daniel. You are in our hearts now and always. Vale, Amy Duncan.

Water policy

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (13:01): I would like to place on record my disappointment at the federal government's decision to not take irrigation buybacks off the table. The recent ministerial council meeting was a missed opportunity to put the issue of additional buybacks to bed. Tanya Plibersek has left Victorians wondering again where the extra 450 gigalitres of environmental water will come from. Northern Victorian communities cannot be the whipping boy for the federal Labor government's single-minded view. Postponing the decision about where the water will come from only makes me more suspicious that the federal Labor government is up to its old tricks. Our northern regional communities need assurances, not smoke and mirrors.

Dederang Picnic Races

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (13:01): The annual Dederang Picnic Races were held on Saturday 25 February, and despite the horses not running, it was a great day and a great success. Well done to the committee and the Dederang community for putting on yet another great day.

Wangaratta Turf Club

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (13:02): While we are talking racing, the Wangaratta Cup was held on the weekend. Once again, the community was out in force supporting the excellent work that Sean Barrett and everyone at the turf club does. Turf club president Bill Carlile was awarded life membership, an award that was well deserved. Wangaratta Turf Club has grown from strength to strength under Bill's leadership. Congratulations, Bill.

Ovens Valley electorate schools

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (13:02): Well done to the new school leadership teams for 2023. Whilst there are too many for me to name individually, I would like to congratulate each and every student who is stepping up. Leadership is an important quality to display. They are the future of our local communities, and I am excited to see what the future holds. I look forward to meeting each and every one of these school leaders throughout the year.

Charlie Desira and Bozena Iwanowski

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (13:02): I would like to congratulate local St Albans residents who were recognised in the Australia Day honours list for 2023. In particular, huge congratulations to Charlie Desira. Charlie received a Medal of the Order of Australia for his incredible service to the community. Charlie, a Maltese migrant, is the driving force behind Holy Eucharist Loaves & Fishes Foodbank, which has been running for over 30 years. Every week, each day Charlie delivers food parcels for those who are in most need and never shies away from working hard.

Congratulations also to Bozena Iwanowski for receiving a Medal of the Order of Australia for her volunteer work as well. Bozena migrated from Poland in 1989 and works tirelessly for Polish Community Care Services. The Polish community's contribution to the west and across Victoria has been invaluable. A good friend, Bozena works not only for Polish Community Care Services but also volunteers on a number of other platforms, whether it is women's services or the Polish Community Council of Victoria, and continues to work incredibly hard for her local community. Thank you, Charlie and Bozena, for your generous hard work and dedication to service and of course your commitment to our community.

Brighton Cricket Club

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (13:04): The Brighton Cricket Club, one of Australia's oldest cricket clubs, has celebrated their 180th birthday, the November anniversary marking their first match against Melbourne Cricket Club in 1842, a time when Brighton only had 300 residents. In 1887 the club moved to Brighton Beach Oval, which has been their home since. There is no doubt that our club the Tonners have touched the lives of tens of thousands of people in the broader Victorian community. It is a much-loved community club that is embedded in the fabric of Brighton. Given their role in the community, Bayside council should bring forward their long overdue plans to redevelop the club's decades-old change rooms. Thank you to Bernie Mutimer, club president, and the generations of club members for their special commitment to cricket and Brighton.

St Leonard's Uniting Church, Brighton

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (13:04): On Sunday St Leonard's Uniting Church in Brighton met to celebrate the culmination of their annual Coffee Cup Challenge, an initiative that raises funds for the homeless. Over five years the local congregation has raised \$65,000. This year the church expects to raise an additional \$20,000. Congratulations to Minister Kim Cain and Barry Schofield on the big-hearted initiative that has now been rolled out statewide by the Uniting Church.

3186BeachPatrol

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (13:05): The Brighton community is big-hearted. Last year local mother Sarah and her 12-year-old daughter Milla formed the 3186BeachPatrol. The patrol meets each month to clean Brighton Beach. On Sunday I joined a small army of volunteers and helped collect 30 kilograms of rubbish from our iconic beach. Thank you to Sarah and Milla for your environmental leadership.

Ashburton Community Festival

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (13:05): It has been a very busy couple of weeks down in Ashwood, and I kicked it off by going down to the Ashburton festival on High Street with my federal colleague the member for Higgins Dr Michelle Ananda-Rajah. It was good to see our local government colleagues Cr Gary Thompson and Cr Di Gillies also in attendance, and it was great to see what the Ashburton traders had put on with assistance from the council. We caught up with local traders; Ashburton United Soccer Club; the Ashy Redbacks; the CWA, who do great work in our community; the Alamein neighbourhood house; the Pied Piper Toy Library, who I have got a bucketload of Duplo to give to now that I know they will take it; and the Ashburton Bendigo Bank, always good in our community.

Boroondara citizenship ceremony

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (13:06): Then on Monday last week I joined with Cr Felicity Sinfield, the mayor of Boroondara; Cr Lisa Hollingsworth, the deputy mayor; and Cr Susan Biggar as well as Michelle Ananda-Rajah again, the member for Higgins, at the Boroondara citizenship ceremony – and in the spirit of bipartisanship, also with the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Hawthorn. It is fantastic to welcome all of our newest Australians into our community. That was a great night, and we do not miss those whenever we can get there.

Pipe reserve trail pedestrian crossing, Glen Waverley

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (13:06): Last Wednesday I had the great pleasure of being invited by the new member for Glen Waverley to a fantastic little pedestrian crossing that is underway that he and I worked on over the last couple of years. Thank you to the minister for coming down – and, Vincent, well done.

Gippsland United basketball

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (13:07): I attended the launch on Sunday of the Gippsland United basketball season. This is an elite basketball program for Gippslanders, allowing our homegrown talent from across the region and beyond to play against the best the state has to offer. For the separate basketball associations to come together and join forces under the banner of Gippsland United and make a pathway for the future of elite basketball in Gippsland has taken the vision and relentless hard work of the board to bring to life. To be able to provide top-level programs, coaches and facilities for the players, both senior and junior – it certainly is going to be very exciting times ahead. Men's coach Scott McKenzie is again at the helm this year and is excited by the improvement already of the squad. They won the division 2 grand final last year and are heading to the division 1 season ready for all the challenges that lie ahead. Female coach this year is Brad Roof, and he is keen to guide the elite talent at his disposal as they aim for a successful year ahead in division 2. Brad joins the coaching staff for the first time and brings a wealth of experience with him both on and off the court. I thank Brad Charles for the opportunity to chat with the coaches, players and staff and look forward to watching and cheering on elite basketball through our very own Gippsland United team.

Live music venues

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (13:08): I note with some sadness that live music venue the Tote in Collingwood is up for sale. Some of us will remember of course the Save Live Australia's Music rallies, the SLAM rallies, in 2010, when the Tote was last up for sale and thousands rallied out the front of this great Parliament House in the city to support live music, me included. Subsequently the new owners kept the Tote alive and did a great job over the next decade supporting local acts new and old. Having venues like the Tote is just so important for young artists who cut their teeth in the music industry, but it also gives communities a place to gather, socialise and enjoy a cracking night out. I would like to thank the current owners Jon Perring and Sam Crupi for their hard work keeping the Tote going over the years. It is a very difficult task to do that. The Labor government here in Victoria is doing its part though. We are delivering on our \$34 million election pledge to support Victorian live music and iconic live music venues into the next four years. We are also developing a new planning overlay that will protect the use of live music venues for a specific cultural purpose. I look forward to the state government continuing to work with venues and music bodies on the future of live music in the state, and I hope that the Tote will continue to be a live music venue in its next incarnation, giving young artists and performers opportunities – (*Time expired*)

Rowville electorate schools funding

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (13:10): The local schools in Rowville are in desperate need of investment due to a lack of commitment by the Andrews Labor government. It is my hope that the Aston by-election finally draws some attention to the local schools in the Rowville electorate. At the last state election, the Liberal–Nationals committed \$15 million to Rowville Secondary, \$13.7 million to Scoresby Secondary and a further \$2 million to Scoresby Primary School. Combined, Rowville and Scoresby secondary colleges provide a quality education to over 2000 students, yet they have consistently been ignored for funding that would improve basic infrastructure, such as not-fit-for-purpose classrooms. In addition to funding being required for the two secondary schools, no state primary school in the electorate of Rowville has received any funding for the last two terms of the Andrews Labor government. With the Aston by-election on 1 April, will we finally see the Andrews government making long overdue commitments to fixing Rowville schools?

FunFlight

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (13:11): Back in 2007 two friends came up with an idea to fly a small group of five to 10 kids with a disability around Port Phillip Bay in Melbourne. It was a great idea, so great that within six weeks it grew into a miniature air show at Tyabb airport, and a total of 130 kids and family members went flying that day. Thus FunFlight was born. From that first event at Tyabb airport it has grown into a national event, with airports all around Australia participating in FunFlight, taking local kids with various disabilities and health issues, including kids from Make-A-Wish Foundation, up in an aeroplane. On Saturday 11 February I had the great pleasure to attend the 15th anniversary of FunFlight at Tyabb airport, and it was a great day. Of course there was great coffee and a sausage sizzle serving great local snags in bread with the onion on the top. The CFA were there letting the kids and a fair few adults sit in the truck and activate the sirens and lights, and there were clowns, bubble machines, motorcycle rides and lots of planes and pilots. Over the course of the day the FunFlight pilots took over 70 kids for the flight of their life in perfect weather. However, the highlight of the day was when Lloyd went for his flight, because he was the 15,000th kid to go up in an aeroplane. That is right, 15,000 kids in 15 years – absolutely remarkable. I congratulate the Peninsula Aero Club, the pilots, the volunteers and FunFlight on the amazing and important work they do.

Brunswick electorate public transport

Tim READ (Brunswick) (13:12): The removal of eight level crossings from the Brunswick electorate highlights a great opportunity to improve public transport in our community. In particular, former transport planner Peter Parker, who writes the *Melbourne on Transit* blog, has made an excellent case for increasing services on the east–west bus lines that intersect the Upfield train line. By running these important buses more frequently and extending their operating hours the government could build a more efficient integrated transport network in the inner north that better connects people using the Upfield line with bus routes to take them where they need to go. To start with I would like to see the 506 and 503 both increased to a seven-day service, reflecting the dense and growing populations that they serve. Next, the 508 bus should be improved with better frequency and longer hours, and the 504 bus should come every 20 minutes every day. These changes would benefit not only the people living in and travelling through Brunswick but our neighbours in Essendon and Northcote as well. So I urge the Minister for Public Transport to take the timely opportunity presented by the level crossing removals to make these relatively low-cost changes to help bring about a world-class integrated public transport network in our inner city.

Footscray electorate development sites

Katie HALL (Footscray) (13:14): This week I wrote to Maribyrnong council about an issue of importance to the people of Footscray. The practice of land banking, which is allowing development sites to become derelict eyesores in Footscray's CBD, has gotten to the point of crisis. The old Forges site and the Little Saigon market were once proud institutions and attractions for Footscray. Today they stand as bombsites in central Footscray. Once developers have been granted permits, they have sat on them and done nothing. They have done nothing to develop these sites, and over time they have deteriorated and become derelict. Ultimately, these sites will need to be demolished for the permits to proceed, and today I am calling on these landowners to complete the basic but important work to improve safety and urban design in the centre of Footscray. If the sites were cleared, it would allow council to activate them in a way that would be beneficial to the community, such as by creating a pocket park, a temporary marketplace or creative spaces. The community is entitled to a public realm that is clean, safe and well lit at a minimum. If the owners of these sites are going to sit on permits for years, they should be required to clean up the sites and work with council on providing a public realm improvement in the interim. Residents have been waiting for years for these sites to be cleaned up. Surely, if the developers will not do the right thing, these permits should not be renewed. We all know that poor planning decisions have lasting impacts, and in Footscray we have the lasting impact of former planning minister Matthew Guy shamefully allowing developers free rein.

Education funding

Ryan SMITH (Warrandyte) (13:15): Today I would like to raise a matter which is causing a lot of angst amongst parents and school communities. Because of the new conditions in the recent teachers enterprise bargaining agreement whereby teachers who attend any out-of-school-hours activities are entitled to time off in lieu, schools are having to reconsider having class excursions and camps. Teachers should be and deserve to be valued for the work that they do; that is not the issue. The issue is that this government, which agreed to these reforms, is now refusing to increase school budgets to factor in these increased costs to schools. Already dealing with budgets that are not fit for purpose, many schools are being forced to cancel these activities. This cruel decision by the government has the potential to rob children of these unique and character-building experiences with their classmates. School camps are often a highlight of the school year, and with many children already having missed camps due to government lockdowns, these opportunities are more important than ever. These experiences are often a child's first time staying away from home and help to build confidence, independence, social skills and the formation of stronger bonds with classmates. I have had a number of parents pass on their concern that their child's camps have been cancelled, frustrated that their school is continually underfunded by this government. With the government refusing to increase school maintenance budgets in line with inflation, this latest impost on staffing budgets is just another reason why principals are reportedly questioning their long-term commitment to the role. I urge the government to allocate the funding needed to compensate for these changed work conditions so that our students can continue to enjoy the memorable experiences of school camps.

Victorian Bangladeshi Community Foundation

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (13:17): I recently had the pleasure of attending Wyndham's International Mother Language Day, organised by the Victorian Bangladeshi Community Foundation. I would like to thank the VBCF, Mamun Al Badruddoza Polash, Kazi Iqbal Hossain, Morshed Kamal, Nusrat Islam Barsha, Yousuf Ali and all the community members, including my friend Mita Chaudhary. With a parade, art exhibitions, cultural performances and a smoking ceremony, I was extremely proud to celebrate the Bangladeshi people's efforts to maintain their language as well as celebrate multiculturalism and linguistic diversity. This event comes from a really difficult history, but it has been a real gift to the world. We were joined by the High Commissioner for Bangladesh, Mr Siddiki, as well as federal and state representatives.

South Sudanese-Australian Academic Society

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (13:17): I would also like to thank the South Sudanese-Australian Academic Society for inviting me to their Reconnect Breakfast in Werribee South. I would like to recognise the efforts of Andrew Gai, Richard Deng, Bol Mancha and Maker Maek. The work of the South Sudanese-Australian Academic Society, as a group of older and young professionals alike, fosters a positive environment and spirit of togetherness to help the South Sudanese community and to help their youth overcome the challenges they face when entering the workforce not just within our community but across the state. It was their first face-to-face meeting since COVID and the pandemic hitting Victoria.

Wyndham citizenship ceremony

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (13:18): I also had the honour of attending a citizenship ceremony in Wyndham with my staff member Jay Shah, his wife Tejal Jay Shah and daughter Anaya Jay Shah.

Second Chance Animal Rescue

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (13:18): I want to acknowledge the extraordinary work undertaken by the team at Second Chance Animal Rescue in my electorate of Greenvale and the army of volunteers who support them. I recently visited Marisa and her team at the SCAR shelter in Craigieburn and saw the incredible breadth of their care, including an animal hospital, crisis shelter,

foster home and food bank that has now delivered over half a million meals to vulnerable pets. I also want to highlight SCAR's safe house for pets program, providing free care for at-risk animals whose owners are facing enormous challenges as victim-survivors of domestic violence. I commend their passion to ensure the safety of not only beloved pets but also the clients themselves.

Bethal Primary School

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (13:19): Bethal Primary School in Meadow Heights is characterised by its deep care for each child and its palpable commitment to their academic and personal growth. I thank the school's principal, teachers and support staff for cultivating such a positive learning environment and for building strong links with other community services that support families and enable children to thrive. I recently joined the first assembly of 2023, and I was so impressed by the student leaders who conducted it. I want to congratulate all the 2023 student leaders, including school captains Hifsa Ghulam and Ayyan Haydar; Kingfisher House captains Zack Bucchorn and Assil Yamak; Thornbill House captains Lily-Rose Sale and Tepora Etuale; and Rosella House captains Jake Tran and Jahzaelle Hickling Tipuia; and all the student leaders at Bethal Primary School. Congratulations. Have a great year.

Victorian Mosque Open Day

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (13:20): This Sunday just gone marked a fantastic and incredibly important event in Victoria, the Victorian Mosque Open Day. I was thrilled to attend the three amazing mosques in my electorate of Tarneit: the Golden Wattle Masjid, the Melbourne Grand Mosque and the Virgin Mary Mosque in Hoppers Crossing. What a fantastic and vibrant Islamic community we have in my electorate of Tarneit. It was great to see Victorians learning more about Islam and who Muslims are, demystifying mosques, breaking down stereotypes surrounding Muslims and revealing the rich diversity we have within my community of Tarneit. It was a chance to overcome the negative and invective rhetoric that we may hear and build dialogue, understanding and respect in the community. I applaud all of those who took the opportunity to attend.

Breaking down Islamophobia is not just a moral imperative, it is also crucial for building a more just, peaceful and equitable world. Let us all commit to taking action and making a difference by supporting policies that promote equity and inclusion and working toward a society that values diversity and celebrates our differences. Let us all remember that peace is at the heart of the Muslim faith. Salaam.

Australian Vietnamese Women's Association

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (13:21): The Australian Vietnamese Women's Association turned 40 years young, as they like to say, and is thriving. I had the great pleasure of attending the celebratory dinner as well as the opening of the impressive exhibition at the Immigration Museum. The AVWA is extremely valued and well respected, with a reputation for its professionalism and the quality of its services while it continues to fulfil its mantra to care and empower.

We heard the inspiring story of humble beginnings that started with 18 young women and mothers coming together one evening in 1983 determined to establish an organisation to provide for the needs of the Vietnamese migrants and refugees that now call Australia home. This group of women volunteered countless hours and made many sacrifices to establish the organisation for the benefit of others. From these humble beginnings the AVWA has grown to an organisation that now provides its important welfare, home care, training, disability and family services across Melbourne. With a workforce of over 300, three offices and an income of over \$25 million, they are leaders in the not-for-profit sector.

We celebrate International Women's Day tomorrow, and I want to give special mention and celebrate the contributions of brave, inspiring women such as Cam Nguyen, president and former CEO of AVWA, new CEO Ngoc 'Nicky' Chung, the 17 women who met to start the journey and those who have worked with and for AVWA along the way.

Lift the Lid

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (13:23): Congratulations to the Rotary Club of Mont Albert and Surrey Hills for organising another successful Lift the Lid walk for mental health on Sunday 26 February at Gardiners Creek Reserve in Burwood. Events such as these are a great way to spread awareness of the one in five Australians who are suffering from mental illness. That is why 100 per cent of the money raised from this event will contribute to a 3½ year scholarship for a mental health researcher at a Victorian university.

Residents donned the colour purple to complete the walk and take part in the various activities on offer, with the support of the St Kilda Football Club as well as many of our local community clubs, including Surrey Park Football Club, Box Hill Athletic Club, Mont Albert Cricket Club, Bennettswood Bowling Club, Melbourne Baseball Club, Surrey Hills Cricket Club, Canterbury Cricket Club, Riversdale Soccer Club, Box Hill Hawks and the Box Hill North Football Club. Congratulations again to the organisers and every single member of our local community who took part in this very worthwhile cause.

Surrey Hills Primary School

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (13:24): Saturday 4 March saw the return of the Surrey Hills Primary School fete after a four-year absence, with hundreds of families joining in the festivities. Events such as school fetes are not possible without the enormous dedication of parents and generous support from local businesses. I would like to thank all those who volunteered their time or donated goods to make this fete a success. I arrived in the afternoon, which unfortunately meant that my go-to treat at all school fetes, the handmade rocky road at the cake stall, had well and truly sold out. I did, however, manage to pick up the last bottle of gin from Surrey Hills' very own JBC Distillery.

Amy Duncan

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (13:24): Like the member for Oakleigh, I pay tribute to Amy Duncan, who passed away this week at the age of 89. Amy was a remarkable woman. She was a nurse, a midwife, an ALP member and a lifelong social justice advocate. Amy fought apartheid in South Africa before fleeing to the United Kingdom, where she kept fighting for people who needed her to fight for them. She would often tell the story of demonstrating on the streets of London after then education minister Margaret Thatcher cut free milk for children in schools. Amy and other parents took to the streets with the catchcry 'Thatcher, Thatcher, milk snatcher'. Amy loved a demo. In fact she took me to my first demo, which was a massive one staged against the Howard government's industrial relations reforms.

I joined the Labor Party 20 years ago this month, and Amy was the first person to greet me when I attended my first branch meeting. Amy was secretary of the branch, and she ran the branch like clockwork. She was passionate about so many causes and issues. A founding member of Labor for Refugees, she was also passionate about the safety of women and children. In 2014, when the Premier, who was then opposition leader, announced a royal commission into family violence at the ALP state conference, Amy, who was sitting next to me at the time, was in tears because she was in her 80s by then and she finally saw something being done about this in a serious way. Amy will be missed by all who knew her and loved her, especially her family, and I send them my sincere condolences.

Botanic Ridge Primary School

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (13:26): I am delighted to congratulate Botanic Ridge Primary School on the work they are doing. I was able to visit recently and see how extraordinary the educators and teachers are, working so hard with the school captains and the whole community. It is wonderful to be in amongst such clever and passionate educators. It is particularly heartwarming to watch the children grow and learn in a brand new school, a school that was built by the Andrews Labor government. To watch the way that this has been done and to watch the work of the community, it is a credit to our whole community, it is a credit to our educators and I commend them all.

Business of the house**Notices of motion**

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (13:27): I advise that the government does not wish to proceed with notice of motion 1 today and ask that it remain on the notice paper.

Bills**Local Government (Moirá Shire Council) Bill 2023***Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Melissa Horne:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (13:27): I rise to speak on the Local Government (Moirá Shire Council) Bill 2023. This bill was introduced by the minister earlier today to dismiss the Moirá Shire Council, to provide for the appointment of an administrator or a panel of administrators for Moirá Shire Council and to provide for the expiry of the order in council and a second general election for the Moirá council in 5½ years time.

In speaking on this bill, I do not think anyone goes into local government to be a councillor to do the wrong thing. I think the overwhelming majority of councillors right across Victoria stand for council and go into council to do the best for their community as they see it and as their community talks to them about what they need to do. In anything I say today I am not casting any aspersions on any of the individual councillors in this particular report. It is a very detailed report. The opposition has had it for a couple of hours, and we have had a chance to look through it. I will leave the report to stand for itself. But as I said, the overwhelming majority of people go into council to do a good job for their community, and we need to bear that in mind in the context of what is in this report.

Two families have been severely impacted by a tragic fatality, which is part of this report, and our condolences go out to both those families for the devastation that this issue has caused them as it has unfolded. It is something that, on reading the report, has been in the making for a number of years with a number of different iterations of management and council and councillors, so, as I said, I do not think any one person is necessarily to blame for the issues that have led to this bill. Around some of the governance issues, one of the challenges we have is what, as I observed, was faced in Moirá shire, which is that with the unfortunate death of one of their councillors early in this term and with a number of other councillors resigning and the countback scheme there have been five new councillors come in since the general council election, and that has led to a significant change in the dynamics of the council and not necessarily the best working relationship in that council. A series of events have led to where we are.

There are some underlying issues that I want to raise in talking about this particular bill. There is the issue of divided versus undivided councils, and I will put on the record that I am a very firm believer in divided councils. I think ratepayer residents need to know who their local councillor is. It makes for a lot better accountability of the councillors if people know there is a specific councillor that is their ward's representative – whereas Moirá was an undivided council. Particularly with the number of councillors leaving in this term and the new councillors being appointed on the countback scheme – the majority of councillors came from one particular part of the municipality – if you had actually had wards, that situation would not have arisen.

One of the things in the report is about making a recommendation to the Victorian Electoral Commission to have a look at the structure of wards in the Moirá shire with the potential of bringing wards back into the shire to make sure you have that representation from across the whole shire area. This is particularly an issue for large country councils because there can be 50 or 100 kilometres

between municipalities, and that can lead to some perverse outcomes if they are not divided councils over that time.

The other issue is the issue of countbacks versus by-elections. Again it is probably an issue of expediency. My assumption is that when the bill was done it was easier to have a countback so that the next person on the list actually gets put into council if there is a resignation or the passing of a councillor during the term of that particular council. The issue there is that the community actually do not get any say. If a councillor leaves, quite often that might inspire someone else to put their hand up if there is a by-election for that council position. So I think there is a good argument to have a situation where in the first two or three years of a four-year term if a councillor leaves you might have a by-election, but in the last 12 months or something you might think how you might manage that slightly differently. Underlying the issues that were raised that have led to this bill, we need a serious look at divided versus undivided councils and also how effective the countback scheme has been in getting those replacement councillors there.

The duration of the termination of the Moira shire for literally 5½ years is, in my view, probably excessive. That means that the communities that make up the Moira shire will have no elected representatives for 5½ years. I listened to the logic that was in the report and in the briefing that we had on this that that is effectively two election cycles and it gives time for the administrators to have a change of culture in the workplace and to change how the staffing and management of the Moira council work. But 5½ years is a long time. As we all know, Brimbank council was out for eight years, but if you look at the more recent one with the South Gippsland shire, they were effectively without councillors for two years and at the next election cycle there was an election for that particular council. So I just put on the record that 5½ years is a long time for the Moira communities to be without elected councillors – not that we are going to challenge that amount of time – but the minister could have looked at having an out-of-cycle election so that it was only three years or something like that rather than the five years that are there.

That is all I really want to say on this bill, but to go back to where I started, I do not think any of the councillors involved in this sacking went into council to do the wrong thing. I think they actually went into council with the best intentions for their community. It is unfortunate in a whole range of ways that we have ended up where we are with this bill before the house, because I do not think anyone on either side of the chamber necessarily feels comfortable when we get to the situation we have got to with this. But we have. The minister has put this bill before us, and we will not be opposing it.

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (13:34): I am pleased to follow the Leader of the Nationals in relation to a contribution on the bill following the Commission of Inquiry into Moira Shire Council. Clause 1 of course goes directly to the Local Government (Moira Shire Council) Bill 2023: to dismiss the Moira Shire Council; to provide for the appointment of an administrator or a panel of administrators for the Moira Shire Council; to provide for the expiry of the order in Council; to provide for a second general election for the Moira Shire Council; and to make consequential amendments to the Local Government Act 2020.

As the Leader of the Nationals said, it is a serious matter – a grave matter – to dismiss a council. I would just like to add that it is something that comes about when the community and the safety of that community and the council staff are at risk and when there is no other course of action open to the minister and to the government, particularly on the basis of the recommendations arising from the commission of inquiry. I will keep my remarks relatively short because I know there are other members, particularly members local to the Moira community, who would also like to make contributions before we conclude the debate on these matters. I do want to put on the record some of the other elements from the commission's report and to commend successive local government ministers for their action that has led us to this point – both the former minister, now President in the other place, who appointed a municipal monitor for Moira shire, and the current minister the member for Williamstown, who acted, on receiving the monitor's report, to put in place a commission of inquiry, which uncovered a number of shocking events. Having received that commission's report,

the minister tabled the report on the first possible date and introduced the bill that we are debating now to make sure the community of Moira are protected from further harm.

The government are also very serious about transparency in relation to those matters, which is why we are seeking to act swiftly with the cooperation of the house today. The community have the right to expect integrity from their councils and their elected officials, and I would agree with the Leader of the Nationals in relation to what drives people to serve their communities in local government, as it does in this place. It is to serve their community, to make it a better place, to lead and to get great outcomes for local communities where you live. That is what drives everybody, but there have clearly been some serious outcomes that the commission of inquiry found that need further investigation.

Probably the key things to put on the record in relation to the report on the council and its administration are the findings that there was a failure to ensure the health and safety of its employees at council depots and other outdoor locations, which may have even led to the preventable death of a facilities manager. The council put staff, contractors and residents at risk of exposure to asbestos by decisions to transfer asbestos-contaminated waste. It left Numurkah residents and the town at serious risk in the event of a major flooding incident by delaying the implementation of approved flood mitigation measures, mismanaged two major capital works projects in breach of its obligations under the Local Government Act and failed to provide adequate community representation and meet its obligations under the Local Government Act to apply community engagement principles. There are other serious matters, and I will let other speakers go to those in relation to the chief executive and management.

Clearly the next step is not only to pass this bill, hopefully with the support of the house, but for the appointment of an administrator for three to six months. I want to commend the work of the ASU, the Australian Services Union, for the support they are providing on the ground to the workforce in Moira shire. Often in local communities the further you get from town, health services and particularly our local government services are big employers in regional communities. To provide that support to workers and their families is critically important, and I want to commend the ongoing support of the ASU in relation to those matters. Over a six-month period there is the opportunity to appoint a panel of administrators to the council, and over 12 months there will be a council community-led leadership and civic participation program to pick up on the matters that the Leader of the Nationals raised in relation to those concerns about the Victorian Electoral Commission potentially conducting a local government representation review of Moira Shire Council to return to local elections in 2028.

As someone who served in local government as a ward councillor, I would agree with the Leader of the Nationals in relation to the accountability in relation to ward structures as opposed to broader and less accountable structures. Ward councillors provide an accountability in that the community understands who represents them, who they voted for and what their responsibilities are in the context of their broader council role – their direct responsibilities to specific communities. Those matters are well worth further consideration with the work that will continue with the local representation review. That is certainly something that continues to require work.

I commend the recommendations and the bill to the house, and I will conclude my remarks there. They are very serious matters. I want to thank the commission of inquiry for its work and the Minister for Local Government for her action. I hope for the continued cooperation of this house so that we can restore confidence, safety and support to the Moira community, both to staff and to the ratepayers. I commend the bill to the house.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (13:40): I also rise to make a brief contribution on the Local Government (Moira Shire Council) Bill 2023, and I do so with mixed emotions. The Moira shire is a wonderful place to live, to raise a family and to do business in. It is a strong farming community backed up by a tourism sector that is extremely important to the economic development of the region. As a former deputy mayor, some 13 years ago, I have got a strong sense of commitment and passion towards this council and its councillors and the people who reside within the Moira shire.

Dismissing a democratically elected body is never a decision that should be taken lightly or done without the express interests of the constituents – in this case the ratepayers, councillors and management and staff of the organisation. But as always the people within the Moira shire, the people within the employment of the Moira shire and those that are elected to govern need to be protected and safe. I have only just seen the report. I was given a briefing of about 30 minutes earlier today which touched on some of the issues but was without any depth on the issues. So I am really flying a bit blind at the moment as to what is in the report, and no doubt in the fullness of time I will get to completely understand how we got to this point.

What I do know is that things have not always been right in the Moira shire. The Moira Shire Council has been in and out of the headlines for the best part of eight to 10 years with just little issues – there have been financial concerns, governance concerns and councillor concerns – but that is no different to any other council of the 79 councils in Victoria, and although the Moira Shire Council has had various issues over time, on the whole it has been able to function adequately. Although many ratepayers would say Moira has not been a functioning council, it is fair to say that local government authorities are all tarred with the same brush, and councils are a very easy target. Again, I will read the report and fully understand all of the issues, and I can only speak about what I have seen and what I have heard firsthand. Councillors on the whole I do not believe have been the primary root of the problem. Certainly there has been tension between councillors, but, again, that happens in every other council. Conflict between councillors and staff has also been present. Again, that is not a problem that rests on just the Moira shire's shoulders alone.

One of the biggest factors that I have seen, as someone who sees from a short distance away, is the change in councillor representation over time. When the current Moira Shire Council was elected some three years ago there was a good spread of representation across the council, and that appeared on face value to represent the geography and the people of the Moira shire very well. And there has been a changing of the guard, one would say. There have been five councillors who have passed away or for other reasons resigned, which has significantly changed the dynamic of the current group of councillors. I do not have concerns with where the newly elected councillors reside but rather with how they function as a group. That is the concern. My personal view is that the current mayor does not deserve to be in this position. In light of this there appear to be circumstances outside of his control that have brought us to these current circumstances. And again, from my understanding over the years, former mayors have also guided the council in a firm but fair manner during their time as mayor. The report will go into more detail, and I am sure it will be detail that we the public have no insight into now as I speak but will become clearer over time.

Regarding the recommendation to appoint administrators for a period of five years, I agree with the member for Murray Plains, the Leader of the Nationals, who spoke earlier, that five years does appear to be excessive. This means it will be 2028 before democratically elected councillors will be returned to the Moira shire. I believe that there should be ample time in the next couple of years, even before the next election of councillors late next year, to rectify any systematic problems that exist, but as I say, with basically no knowledge of what is in the report, I still believe the Moira shire should have been given the right to govern itself after next year's council elections. Again, we will not be challenging that, but certainly it is a concern I have.

I will close where I began. The Moira shire is an exceptional place to live. I have lived there for 35 years, and this is a speed hump along the way. We must get to the bottom of any concerns that have been raised and allow those who have had allegations made against them of any wrongdoing to have their say. I encourage people to allow this process to take place in a respectful manner.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (13:45): I rise to speak on the Local Government (Moira Shire Council) Bill 2023. In doing so, I rise in my capacity as the state Labor member for Pascoe Vale in this place and as a member of the Victorian Labor government. However, I also rise to speak on this bill in the context of my former and widespread experience, having worked across all three levels of government, which included extensive experience through senior and junior roles across our state's

local government sector. And it is in that context that I am particularly shocked and saddened, as a former council officer, to be rising to speak on this bill, the substance of which I will turn to in a moment.

From my perspective, I very much had a wonderful experience overall as well as some extremely challenging times during my time in the local government sector as an officer. Following on from the 2018 state election, I made the very tough decision to finish up working as an adviser to the Victorian state Labor government, my last minister being John Eren at the end of the 2018 election period. I then commenced my first local government role as a senior strategic advocacy and engagement adviser with the City of Brimbank. This was a highly enjoyable role, where I had the opportunity to help the council and the community successfully advocate for a range of record outcomes, including around securing and solidifying the Melbourne Airport rail link as well as eventual commitments to upgrade Albion station so we can begin to realise the potential of the Sunshine precinct, as championed by the member for St Albans and the member for Laverton.

After around 2½ years I was pleased to work for CPR Communications, where I had the privilege to work with a range of local government clients from across the state to develop their respective advocacy strategies. Having worked with local councils, including Wyndham, Hobsons Bay, Hume and Merri-bek as well as with the Regional Cities Victoria coalition – the member for Shepparton of course is here in that respect – I thoroughly enjoyed the chance to help shape the advocacy and be a voice to influence outcomes across so many communities of this wonderful state.

From the end of 2021 up until I was very rapidly preselected as the new Labor candidate for Pascoe Vale, I took on a senior role with Darebin City Council. I developed the council's extensive advocacy strategy, much of which I am so proud and delighted to see has been supported and responded to in various ways thanks to the championing of the member for Northcote, including through the new commitment for a mental health hub in that municipality as well as a perinatal parenting centre in the Darebin municipality. Whilst much of my time in councils was highly enjoyable, I did also experience various challenges, frustrations and concerns at an officer level, which I continue to have an ongoing appreciation of and respect for, and I acknowledge the ongoing good work of the Australian Services Union in advocating around these various issues.

While there are so many council officers that love their respective communities and love their jobs, I would really like to give a special mention to one particular group of council officers, our maternal health officers. And given this week it is International Women's Day, I think it is particularly poignant to point out the important work they literally do at the coalface of each of our communities to keep our communities healthy and safe. Caring for mothers and young parents as well as newborns at their tender and vulnerable stages of life, maternal health workers really do a lot of the heavy lifting across our communities, which I believe deserves a lot more recognition. A workforce which is by and large made up of women, they are more often than not the first to offer a helping hand to new mums as well as very often the first from an official government services perspective to get the sense of a parent's and a child's wellbeing and their home environment, and more often than not they are some of the first to sense or detect instances of family violence or mental ill health in households and relationships. The thing about working in council buildings is that not only do you usually work in beautiful local suburban or regional town halls as an officer, but you also literally wind up sitting next to some of the most random other parts of council. And for me at Brimbank I spent a lot of time sitting next to and amongst the maternal health team, which is where I get this respect and appreciation from.

As a former council officer, with that experience and context, I rise to speak on this bill. It is a bill that seeks to address the serious governance failures highlighted in the report of the Commission of Inquiry into Moira Shire Council provided to the Minister for Local Government in February 2023. This report raises clear evidence of deep-seated, pervasive and continuing governance failures at the council. The bill is consistent with the Local Government Act 2020 conduct framework, and it contributes to strengthening integrity and good governance by improving the council's governance. The state government takes the conduct of councils seriously by intervening early to prevent serious governance

failures. It also acts decisively when councils fail their communities to ensure communities can get the best leadership that they deserve. The bill reflects the government's commitment to ensuring strong and accountable local governments and the importance of our regions in contributing to the state's local economic productivity. The bill will, as previously touched on, dismiss the Moira council, provide for the appointment of an administrator or a panel of administrators for the Moira shire, provide for a second general election in the Moira shire in years to come and make consequential amendments to the Local Government Act.

A municipal monitor Marg Allan was appointed in April 2022 under section 179 of the Local Government Act 2020 to monitor, advise and support the governance processes and practices of the council. This appointment was to assist the council in addressing a number of significant governance issues raised by the council mayor, chief executive officer and other parties. On 7 October 2022 the monitor provided the confidential report to the minister. The report found that councillors of the Moira Shire Council were not performing in their roles as expected or required of them; further, neither the mayor nor the CEO were performing their roles as required or expected and the councillors were unable to properly manage the CEO. The monitor further reported that Moira shire had numerous governance issues, a poor organisational culture with alarming reports of staff safety and culture, and poor community engagement practices and financial management of capital works. The monitor concluded that any improvements were likely to be lost once the monitor's term had expired. The monitor noted that she had referred a number of matters to the local government inspectorate; however, they would take time to investigate or to be complete. Finally, the monitor concluded that due to the significance and extent of the issues at Moira shire, she had formed the view that further intervention beyond the appointment of a monitor was warranted to establish a culture of good governance.

The municipal monitor was initially appointed until January 2023; however, following such an alarming report, the minister appointed a commission of inquiry under section 200 of the Local Government Act 2020. The commission was established on 28 October 2022 to conduct the inquiry into the affairs of the Moira Shire Council, and the monitor's appointment then ceased. The terms of reference saw the commissioners focus on the advice provided by the municipal monitor and the Australian Services Union as well as on matters affecting councillors and the administration's performance of their roles. This was to include the effectiveness of governance arrangements in delivering services to constituents, including financial management and community engagement practices. The commissioners were required to report back to the minister by 28 February 2023, and they provided their final report on 26 February 2023. The commission's report states that:

Governance of... Council has deteriorated such that the Council can no longer effectively carry out its responsibilities in accordance with the Local Government Act.

The report also finds that the CEO failed in her duties, including:

to comply with the Council's Employee Code of Conduct ...

and

to exercise responsible oversight of human resource management practices in breach of the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

It finds that, in turn:

The Council failed to manage the performance of the Chief Executive Officer.

The report finds that council and its administration failed to take necessary action to ensure the health and safety of employees, managed the transfer of asbestos-contaminated waste in a manner that constituted serious misconduct and risked the health of staff and residents, delayed the implementation of already approved flood mitigation measures, failed to act in accordance with the financial management principles contained in the Local Government Act through the mismanagement of two major capital projects and failed to provide adequate community representation and apply the community engagement principles of the Local Government Act 2020 on a wide basis.

The issues identified in the commission's report include the council's abject failure to make decisions and take appropriate action that ensured the health and safety of employees and residents and its failure to provide adequate community representation. They also include major procurement breaches and mismanagement of key capital works. These all demonstrate extremely serious governance failures that warranted the dismissal of the council. Without this bill there is a risk of further deterioration of the governance at the council and the probity, integrity and accountability expected of local government. The community and Parliament expect the highest standards of governance, probity and representation from their councillors and council staff. The bill will ensure good governance in Moira is restored to provide the community with the leadership they deserve.

My thoughts during this period really are first and foremost with the staff and the community of Moira, as acknowledged of course by respective local members from that area, from Ovens Valley, and the Deputy Leader of the Nationals, who have already contributed. I would like to acknowledge the staff and community from the shire who have come forward, even at great personal cost, to shed light on this disgraceful situation. It is a very grave matter to sack a council, but when the safety of community and staff is at risk, there is no other course of action. I would like to commend successive local government ministers for their swift and decisive action – the current minister, Minister Horne, as well as the previous minister, Minister Leane – in this regard.

My thoughts and sympathies are with the staff and the community during this period. Moira of course is a wonderful community. I have had the privilege of visiting Moira in a personal capacity over many years with family and friends, including Cobram and Yarrowonga, and it is a community I have also had the pleasure of visiting with former minister John Eren. It is a tourism-rich visitor destination as well which has so much more potential as part of ongoing recovery and stimulus efforts. Just some of the destinations I want to mention include the Melbourne to the Murray silo art road trip, the Murray Farm Gate Trail, the Sun Country on the Murray Nature Escape and much more.

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (13:55): I also rise to make a brief contribution on the Local Government (Moira Shire Council) Bill 2023. I note the Minister for Local Government is in the house, and I thank her for her work, which was no doubt very serious and difficult decision-making. I also should note at this time President Leane in the other place, the former minister, for his considerable work. As others have said, it is a very grave matter to terminate a council. It is the most serious intervention available to us here in this house. It would have to be an extreme case of failures and systematic failures for this process to occur, and, as the house has noted, we are rectifying that efficiently and very quickly. But when the safety of our community is at risk, there is really no other course of action. I would like to note something the Leader of the Nationals said. Members of our communities who put their hands up for local council do so with the best intentions and they should be commended for doing that, but obviously the reports from the monitor and the commission of inquiry are such that drastic action needs to be taken.

To protect the shire staff and broader community from further harm the minister has tabled this report with great urgency on the first possible date and introduced this bill. The bill provides for the dismissal of the Moira Shire Council under the Local Government Act 2020, in turn giving effect to a recommendation from the commission of inquiry for the Minister for Local Government. Further to that is a path of longevity, which will include appointing an administrator or panel of administrators for the Moira Shire Council and putting in place extensive assistance programs for support staff which have been adopted in consultation with the Australian Services Union, and I thank them for their work in protecting employees' rights. It goes to this government's ongoing work in regard to criminalising wage theft, industrial manslaughter and the intention to protect people at their place of employment at all times. Failures that are indicated by reports of this nature are very serious indeed, and I commend this bill to the house.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time; by leave, proceeded to third reading.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The SPEAKER: The bill will now be sent to the Legislative Council and their agreement requested.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

North Richmond medically supervised injecting facility

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:01): My question is to the Minister for Education. Yesterday the minister stated in response to questions about the permanent location of the North Richmond injecting room next to Richmond West Primary School that:

No-one has overdosed and died since it's opened.

Does the minister stand by her statement that no-one has died within the proximity of the injecting room?

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (14:01): The location and operation of the safe injecting facility in North Richmond is actually a matter for the Minister for Mental Health in her capacity. I can stand by my comments yesterday around how well the school has been operating and excelling in its NAPLAN result and its engagement of kids and in being able to deliver a really safe environment for the kids there.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:02): Thank you very much. Dead bodies and all, huh, minister?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lowan is out of order! The Deputy Premier will come to order.

Members interjecting.

Emma KEALY: I am not. I am taking very seriously the matter, absolutely.

The SPEAKER: The member for Lowan will come to order!

Emma KEALY: Enrolments at Richmond West Primary School are down and a resident –

Daniel Andrews interjected.

Emma KEALY: In International Women's Day week I would have thought the comments from the Premier were completely out of order.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The house will come to order.

Emma KEALY: Enrolments at Richmond West Primary School are down, and a resident told the review that drug use remains highly visible, stating:

I walk my daughter to school, witness fights, brazen drug deals, drug use, drug-affected people ...

How can the minister's statement yesterday that the school has thrived be correct?

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (14:03): I am very proud to be defending a state school like Richmond West, which is delivering one of the most outstanding Mandarin programs that I have seen at any school. They are delivering a bilingual program from grade 3 that no other school in this state is doing. They are also delivering Vietnamese at that school and they are excelling in their NAPLAN results.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I ask you to bring the minister back to the point that within the Ryan report that was released today that local residents are concerned about their own students walking past drug use, drug dealing and dead bodies. I ask you to bring her back to that specific element.

The SPEAKER: The point of order was in relation to the statement and whether it was correct. The minister will come back to the question.

Natalie HUTCHINS: The Department of Education continues to work with the broader Richmond community, including the health facility there, including Vic Police, including neighbours –

Daniel Andrews: Which all predates the injecting facility.

Natalie HUTCHINS: Yes, to deliver the safest options that we can for any school. Now, this school is not unique. There are problems in communities all over the state that schools have to continue to operate with, and I am really proud that our department has stepped up additional resources for this school and additional security.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier and the member for Lowan will cease interjecting across the table.

Ministers statements: Maryborough District Health Service

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:05): I am delighted to update the house on activities at Maryborough District Health Service. I was very, very pleased to be there with the Labor member for Ripon on Friday. It was one of my most memorable visits to Maryborough, and I have visited that proud community many times, but for some reason this visit was special, to be there with the newly elected member for Ripon to officially declare open the student accommodation attached to Maryborough District Health Service, which means literally thousands of clinical placement days will be able to be undertaken at that amazing health service, one that not only supports Maryborough but the broader district as well. So many smaller communities look to Maryborough for the health services that they need.

All health services are fundamentally questions of workforce – have you got the right staff in the right place with the right skills – and central to that of course is educating the next generation of clinical staff. We met with a number of nurses, allied health professionals and one particular medical student, a Deakin student who had been an engineer and is now becoming a doctor. He is spending the next full 12 months bonded to Maryborough District Health Service, and instead of taking up a private rental that might not be fit for purpose in town, he has got dedicated accommodation. What we know is that if you train in regional Victoria, you are much more likely to work in regional Victoria. So this is fully open – 20 rooms, an outstanding outcome – and to the builders and architects, to the tradespeople and to the management and staff at Maryborough District Health Service, congratulations, well done, a great effort. It is not the only project underway at that great health service. The \$100 million redevelopment of the hospital is coming along quite nicely and will be coming out of the ground very soon. Only Labor invests in regional health care. We do not close hospitals, we rebuild them.

Members interjecting.

Daniel ANDREWS: We do not close hospitals, we rebuild them. Unlike others – very loud now, not so loud when you are around the cabinet table.

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

North Richmond medically supervised injecting facility

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:07): My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. Why was the suitability of the location of the North Richmond injecting room, which is next door to Richmond West Primary School, deliberately excluded from the scope of the Ryan review?

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples) (14:08): Let us remember what drove calls for this medically supervised injecting room from the outset. We had it explained very articulately this morning by Judy Ryan, a long-term resident of that area, who spelt out the community’s observations around drug use, and deaths, and ongoing sirens and lights, and the disruption that that caused that local community, and dead bodies in alleys, and people fleeing as she described and hiding in what she described as hidey-holes without access or being connected to services that they needed. This is what led to community calls for this service. The Ryan review has done, I have got to say, as the Hamilton review did before it as well – these are two reviews that have been now completed by experts who have consulted widely, deeply, broadly to tease out the value of this facility. And in assessing –

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this question goes specifically to why the location of the injecting room, being next to a primary school, was specifically excluded from the scope of the Ryan review.

The SPEAKER: Order! A point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question. The minister was being relevant to the question.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: In assessing the achievements of the service in meeting the objectives under the act, the Ryan review has found clearly that the service has met the core objective of saving lives. Saving lives: 6000 overdoses were safely managed through that facility and there was not one death in the overdoses that were managed through that facility. On modelling that, that would mean some 63 lives saved. I would like to see the member for Lowan speak to, say 63, families who have lost a loved one through overdose and tell them that –

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister now has had nearly 2 minutes to mention the school. She has not referred to the location of the injecting room once. I ask you to bring her back to the specific question I asked: why wasn’t it included in the scope of inquiry for the Ryan review?

The SPEAKER: The minister was being relevant to the question in that it referred to the Ryan review.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:10): Will the minister attend a community meeting to explain to the residents of North Richmond why the suitability of the location of the drug injecting room was left out of the scope of the Ryan review?

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples) (14:11): Let me be clear, for some no site is an appropriate site for a facility like this, and that includes those opposite. In determining the best locations for facilities like these, we are and experts are, of course, guided by where drug use actually happens. That again draws me to why there were calls for a facility like this in the first place and I outlined in great detail before the kind of environment that existed and the very issues that many residents in that area themselves brought to us back then, which led to the –

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, again my question was quite specific: will the minister meet with the local community? I ask you to bring her back to that point: yes or no.

Members interjecting.

Emma Kealy: On relevance, I said – relevance.

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

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: Thank you, Speaker. Look, again, for some people no site is going to be an appropriate site, and while we appreciate that there are a range of views on this, we cannot lose sight of the fact, as confirmed by the Ryan review, that this site is meeting its core objective of saving lives.

Ministers statements: recreational boating and fishing

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (14:12): I rise to update the house on the important commitments our government is delivering for regional Victoria in the thriving areas of fishing and boating. For more than eight years the Andrews Labor government has worked hard to deliver better boating and fishing facilities at waterways right across the state. Our investment has been unprecedented: more than \$130 million in boating improvements, with \$66 million dedicated specifically for boating-related projects in Victoria’s regions. We have proudly funded upgrades at Cowes Jetty, Cape Conran, Lake Bullen Merri, Waranga Basin and Warrnambool, just to name a few, and it has been my pleasure to celebrate our investments with so many in this Parliament.

I joined the member for Bellarine at the Ocean Grove and the St Leonards boat ramps to officially launch the recreational boating grants programs. I joined the member for Hastings to inspect the new all-abilities pontoon installed as part of a \$3.6 million upgrade at Hastings. The member for Cranbourne and I joined Women in Recreational Fishing and Boating at Casey Fields to celebrate their fifth anniversary. Since being established on International Women’s Day in 2018, they have grown to include more than 4000 members and recently won an award at the 10th world recreational fishing conference in Melbourne. In even more exciting news, the network is growing to formally include recreational boating, to be known as WIRFAB, and fabulous they are. Over in the other place, a member for Eastern Victoria Tom McIntosh and I helped to release some beautiful brown trout into Devilbend Reservoir, adding to our stocking effort of over 10 million fish in over 220 lakes and rivers, setting a new nationwide record and delivering on our election commitment. The Andrews Labor government will continue to back Victorian fishers, boaters, aquaculture businesses and tourism operations, especially those based in the regions.

Member conduct

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:14): My question is to the Minister for Government Services. The minister was briefed on changes to the Victorian telecommunications services state purchase contract whilst an active shareholder of Telstra. Did the minister at any time provide any comment, consent, approval or agreement related to changes to this state purchase contract?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:15): I have always behaved appropriately. I have always declared my interests. This was an independent process run by the Department of Treasury and Finance, and it was overseen by an independent probity auditor.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:15): Last month the minister apologised for an error of judgement in overseeing the awarding of a state banking contract to the Commonwealth Bank, which he is an active shareholder in. He has now also overseen the awarding of a telecommunications contract to a telco he is a shareholder in. How many more government contracts have been awarded under the minister’s areas of ministerial responsibility to companies in which he is a shareholder?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:16): Again, I have always behaved appropriately, I have always disclosed my interests, and I refer the Leader of the Opposition to my previous answer.

Ministers statements: rural and regional roads

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (14:16): I rise to update the house on the Andrews Labor government’s investment in our regional roads and repair of the network after last year’s massive floods. We have wasted no time in getting regional Victoria moving again, with a \$165 million emergency road repair blitz which has seen more than 1100 flood-affected roads reopen to date.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Eildon is warned.

Melissa HORNE: Right across our state our crews have completed more than 937 kilometres of flood recovery works. Since coming to government we have invested more than \$35 billion in the road network, and I commend the previous minister for his tireless work in the last term. But we are investing in the long-term sustainability of the network.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for South-West Coast is warned.

Melissa HORNE: In the last budget alone we invested \$780 million in roads across the regions. We have rebuilt, repaired and resurfaced over 10,000 kilometres of regional roads, with another 1500 kilometres soon to be completed. I recently joined with the member for Lara to visit where we are upgrading the intersection of Bacchus Marsh and Purnell roads thanks to a \$27 million investment. I know the members for Ripon, Eureka and Wendouree are passionate about the \$60 million investment which is keeping Ballarat moving.

Those opposite know that no matter how many times they change lanes, no matter how many turns they take, whether it is to Bulleen, to Malvern –

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, it is well known to members of the house that ministers statements are not an opportunity to attack the opposition. As much as we are enthralled by the minister’s statement, she should stick to her portfolio.

The SPEAKER: The minister will come back to her statement.

Melissa HORNE: And I will, because they know they are on a road to nowhere. So while they are focused on that, we will get on with connecting regional communities. We are getting people back up and moving and we are getting freight on our roads, and that is what we are focusing on doing.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the Leader of the Opposition, I ask the house to come to order.

WorkSafe Victoria

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:19): My question is to the Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC. Can the minister guarantee that there will be no cuts to services or entitlements for injured Victorian workers following the government’s mismanagement of the WorkCover scheme?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would ask those at the table to cease interjecting across the table.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:19): On this side of the house, the

Andrews Labor government will always stand up for workers to ensure they are safe at work and to provide the supports they need if injured. We are incredibly proud of our workers compensation –

A member interjected.

Danny PEARSON: You are quite right.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition! Order!

Danny PEARSON: We are incredibly proud of the workers compensation scheme, but the reality is that this scheme was built in the 1980s and it is not fit for purpose in 2023. Now, if you look at the comments today –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, you asked your question. I expect that you want to hear the answer, as do I.

Danny PEARSON: As Paul Guerra from the Victorian chamber has indicated today, the scheme currently is not sustainable, and we must ensure the scheme is viable. Mr Guerra also recognised that there have been no premium increases for a number of years now.

Brad Rowswell interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Sandringham is warned.

Danny PEARSON: I also note that Mr Hilakari, the secretary of Trades Hall, indicated that there are clever ways to intervene early to get injured workers back to work.

Now, the scheme needs work. It is not fit for purpose, and that is why we are doing this work to try and identify a pathway forward. It is simply not sustainable. It is not sustainable to keep putting billions of dollars into this scheme. That is why we need to do the work to find a way forward. But we will not be taking lectures from those opposite, who all of a sudden have developed an interest in WorkSafe. Those opposite abolished a common-law right for seriously injured workers.

Peter Walsh: On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance, the question was very specific about the minister giving a guarantee that there would be no cuts to services or entitlements with the mismanagement of WorkCover by the Andrews government. I would ask you to bring him back to answering that question, please.

The SPEAKER: The minister was being relevant to the question as it related to changes to WorkSafe and the TAC.

Danny PEARSON: As I have indicated, the Victorian chamber recognises this scheme is not viable the way it is currently constituted. Trades Hall recognises that more work can be done to support seriously injured workers. We on this side of the house recognise you cannot keep putting in \$1 billion a year each and every year to support this scheme. So we need to do the work. We recognise the fact that the premium charged here in Victoria is at 1.27 per cent, which is lower than what it was 20 years ago.

John Pesutto interjected.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition!

Danny PEARSON: So work needs to be done. The conversation has started. That work will be ongoing, because having a viable workers compensation scheme in the state of Victoria is a hallmark of a civilised society. Again, we are not going to be taking lectures from those opposite. When they were in previously, they abolished common-law rights for seriously injured workers. That is what they did.

Members interjecting.

James Newbury: Speaker, the member needs to calm down.

The SPEAKER: Manager of Opposition Business, what is your point of order?

James NEWBURY: On a point of order, Speaker, on standing order 110, twice now the minister has strayed into irrelevant material. You have asked him to return to the question, and I would ask you to ask him to return to the question.

Daniel Andrews: On the point of order, Speaker, the question related to benefits and entitlements for injured workers, and the minister is speaking directly to cuts made by a previous Liberal government. They are the history of this state. As uncomfortable as they are for those who presided over those shameful changes to the WorkCover scheme, they are the history of this state and directly relevant.

John Pesutto interjected.

Daniel Andrews: Despite the shouting of the member for Hawthorn, they are relevant. They can shout as much as they want, but we do not forget their record and we never will.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier will come to order. I ask members who are making points of order to be succinct. The minister to continue; he is being relevant to the question.

Danny PEARSON: Thank you, Speaker. The government's priority is to ensure that the scheme continues to be contemporary and fit for purpose for the workers and the needs of workers. The reality is that the premiums now are the lowest in the country, apart from Queensland, and the reality is that the workers compensation scheme challenges that are faced here in Victoria are happening right across the nation. But the reality is that we are working with unions, with employers and with advocates to make sure that the scheme continues to provide good outcomes for employers and workers, a reliable scheme now and into the future. Our priority will always be making sure that workers have a safe work environment and that in the event that they are injured they get the support that they need to be able to recover.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:25): Will the minister guarantee Victorian businesses that the average premium rate will not rise as a result of the government's mismanagement of the WorkCover scheme?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:25): What I would say is that 20 years ago the premium rate was at 2 per cent of payroll. It currently is 1.27 per cent of payroll. Claims have trebled in cost since 2010, and I would just refer the member back to the comments of the Victorian chamber that there have been no premium increases for a number of years now.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: I again ask those at the table to cease interjecting across the table. It is very distracting.

Ministers statements: community sport funding

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Suburban Development) (14:26): Today I rise to update the house about the Andrews Labor government's investment in community sport across regional Victoria. Last month I was thrilled to open the latest round of the popular country football and netball program, with grants of up to \$250,000 available to support regional club facilities. Since coming to government we have invested over \$16.2 million in this program, supporting 157 projects. This is just one part of our investment of well over \$300 million in community sport infrastructure across our regions, and we are not stopping there. At the last election we committed to bigger and better community sport facilities across regional Victoria, including up to \$20 million for a world-class aquatic centre in the Bellarine

electorate, up to \$8.4 million in upgrades at Marty Busch Reserve in the Wendouree electorate, up to \$3 million to upgrade Wangaratta Netball Association's netball courts in the Ovens Valley electorate and up to \$15 million for a better Benalla indoor recreation centre in the Euroa electorate.

But it is not just about infrastructure. We are also supporting kids across the state to get involved in sport through the Get Active Kids voucher program, introduced by this government in 2020, with vouchers of up to \$200 for families who need the most help. We have already provided almost 80,000 vouchers in the first five rounds of the program, and in the first two weeks of round 6 more than 18,000 families have applied, with regional Victorians benefiting most, particularly in communities across Geelong, Mildura, Ballarat, Latrobe Valley and Bendigo. Community sport is at the heart of so many of our communities, and the Andrews Labor government is delivering the infrastructure and the programs that regional Victoria deserves.

WorkSafe Victoria

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:28): My question is to the Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC. Over recent years the WorkCover scheme has had \$1.3 billion in government bailouts and is now broken and unviable. Why has the Andrews government failed injured Victorian workers so badly that they now risk having their entitlements cut?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:28): Well, I cannot –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I have asked you not to call members by their names but by their correct titles.

Danny PEARSON: We stand behind injured workers and this scheme, which is why we put \$1.3 billion into the scheme. That is the simple fact of the matter, and we will continue to provide the support that it needs. We have made essential investments in terms of encouraging workers back to work. We have done an enormous amount of work in relation to that piece around prevention, and we will continue to support workers every step of the way. The reality is that it is not sustainable, and it is not just the government saying this. The Victorian chamber is saying this. Trades Hall is saying this. They all recognise that this is not a sustainable position to find ourselves in. That is why we are doing the work to get the things done to make sure that the scheme can be financially sustainable now and into the future.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:29): Since 2018 staffing at WorkSafe has increased almost 50 per cent, with 500 additional staff employed within the organisation. Can the minister rule out significant job cuts being made within WorkSafe in order to save this broken scheme?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:30): Well, you know, here is the great shop steward, caring about workers. I mean, how many workers did you sack when you were last in power? That is what you have done. You have prevented –

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the minister to address his answer through the Chair.

Danny PEARSON: We recognise that work needs to be done. We are working with the Victorian chamber, with unions and with relevant stakeholders to make sure that we can get the scheme financially sustainable, make it viable and make sure it is fit for purpose for the 21st century. That is work that is currently underway and will be done. We are committed to that because we support injured workers and we support Victorian workers. We want to make sure they work in a safe environment, and that is why we are making the necessary investments to do the right thing.

John Pesutto interjected.

Danny PEARSON: Well, good. Keep going, mate. I am going nowhere. You might be going somewhere. I am going nowhere.

Ministers statements: Commonwealth Games

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:31): I am delighted to update the house on the tremendous strides the Andrews Labor government is making in having regional Victoria ready for the 2026 Commonwealth Games and in particular how just today we have announced that we have gone out to market looking for local civil construction firms to partner with us to help us build the four athlete villages that will be home during the period of the games to 7000 athletes and officials. Expressions of interest are open right now, inviting businesses to apply for work that will be happening across Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Morwell. Certainly we see this as a tremendous opportunity not just for regional businesses to be part of the games –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for Polwarth, you can leave the chamber for 1 hour.

Member for Polwarth withdrew from chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN: but also to broaden out the opportunities within the supply chain that will support more jobs right across regional Victoria. I am pleased to say we are not wasting a day in getting this important work underway, because there are only 1109 days until the Commonwealth Games get underway. We have got site investigations already underway at the athletes villages, with major construction work to start later this year. And can I say thank you to those local councils who are working with us constructively and well, partnering with us because of those opportunities that they see to deliver a fantastic games.

Speaker, you know in Bendigo that the athletes village there will be home to the world's best track cyclists, basketballers and netballers at the site in Flora Hill. I know the member for Wendouree and I had a walk around the site – oh, I think she is otherwise occupied, thanks to the Speaker – in Wendouree that will be home to a new community next to Victoria Park. The member for South Barwon is all over the site at Waurn Ponds next to the train station, and that will have a valuable housing legacy to come. In Morwell too geotech work has already started, and it will be home to the athletes for the five sports there.

Constituency questions

Caulfield electorate

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:34): (50) My question is to the Minister for Women. With International Women's Day tomorrow, it is important to recognise the challenges that new mums face. It is not an easy road for many new mums. Many need emotional support before and after giving birth. One organisation which is doing outstanding work in my electorate is the National Council for Jewish Women Australia Victoria's Caring Mums program. Located in my electorate, it is a free service that matches 80 trained volunteers to mums with infants and pregnant women needing emotional support across Victoria. It empowers women by offering both proactive and reactive care. Last year I announced an election commitment of \$171,000 for Caring Mums to assist them with the important work that they do within their programs. My question is to the Minister for Women: when will the minister look at providing funding support for Caring Mums so they can continue to provide important support to new mums?

Footscray electorate

Katie HALL (Footscray) (14:35): (51) My constituency question is for the Minister for Environment in the other place. I ask the minister to please provide me with information on how the new container deposit scheme will assist residents in my electorate of Footscray to recycle their bottles

and cans from 2023. When the Andrews Labor announced that it would develop and implement a world-class container deposit scheme it generated a lot of excitement in my community. Here is a scheme that will help keep the streets of Footscray clean and allow residents to recycle their used bottles and cans. The scheme builds on this government's significant reforms of our state's recycling system and will help make the Footscray electorate a better place to live.

Gippsland South electorate

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:36): (52) My question is to the Minister for Energy and Resources, and I ask on behalf of my constituents why the minister will not consider up-front undergrounding of transmission lines as the government considers its renewable energy zones around the state. I am very aware of the additional costs that will likely apply to underground versus overhead transmission lines, but the government has recently gone through its Victorian transmission investment framework preliminary design with a whole lot of consultation in which the vast majority of constituents – people involved with prospective overhead transmission lines – asked the question about undergrounding. The minister needs to come out and explain and give information about the potential costs and benefits of overhead versus underground. We certainly welcome the notion that the government will provide additional payments to those residents who host transmission lines – I am not sure that what is being proposed is enough – but there does need to be better explanation about whether underground is relevant and affordable for these new transmission lines.

Ringwood electorate

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (14:37): (53) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. Minister, how will the level crossing removal authority support local traders, residents and commuters as the Andrews Labor government removes Ringwood's last dangerous and congested level crossings? It is certainly a worrying time to be a level crossing in Melbourne's east. Come May the entire stretch of railway between Ringwood and the city will be level crossing free. It is a huge win for the community and local commuters and is only possible thanks to the Andrews Labor government. But there is more to do, and the congested Dublin Road, Ringwood East, and Bedford Road, Ringwood, crossings are next on the list. In the process we will be building a new Ringwood East station, extending the Heathmont rail trail to Bedford Park and creating new open community space. While there will be some short-term disruption, the Level Crossing Removal Project is upping their game on every new project they undertake. I look forward to hearing how we will be supporting traders, residents and commuters as we make Ringwood level crossing free.

Polwarth electorate

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (14:38): (54) My question is to the Treasurer, and the question that I have for the Treasurer today is will he commit to Victorians, and particularly landlords in the Polwarth electorate, a review of the current land tax system? The land tax bills that were issued to constituents in the past couple of months and are due in August this year will see many, many small self-funded retiree landlords and many property owners who may only have one or two properties at the most in their portfolio subject to massive, massive land tax increases on top of rates and insurance and other costs. The huge impact that this will have in an electorate like Polwarth is that landlords will be forced to sell their properties or up their rents. This will have a catastrophic effect on housing affordability for those along the coast and in our coastal communities and increasingly small businesses that have done it really hard for the last two years will see landlords forced to put the rent up in order to make ends meet, to make the return on buildings.

Hastings electorate

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (14:39): (55) The Somerville Recreation Reserve is the jewel in the crown of the township of Somerville. Last year it held the Mornington Peninsula Junior Football League grand final, which brought thousands of people into the township. However, the facilities are showing their age. I am so proud that the Andrews Labor government has provided \$250,000 to plan

for better facilities. My question to the Minister for Community Sport is: could the minister provide an outline of the process regarding the \$250,000 awarded to the Somerville rec reserve for a master plan and an upgrade to the cricket nets? The reserve is home to the Somerville Football Netball Club, Somerville Cricket Club, Somerville Junior Football Club and Somerville junior netball club. Around 50 different teams use the reserve every week, and with the amazing growth in female participation in sports, usage will absolutely grow into the future. The rec reserve is the heartbeat of the Somerville community, and I know the local community are excited to hear any updates on its progress.

Shepparton electorate

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (14:40): (56) I ask the Minister for Roads and Road Safety: when will increased funding be provided for adequate repairs and maintenance to our roads before more lives are lost? Adrian Leocata from Leocata's Transport has grave concerns for the safety of his workers and the broader community. The impact from the appalling condition of our roads is also costing his trucking company \$10,000 a month in repairs. The Murchison-Tatura Road, which is a major truck route, is dangerously narrow, causing trucks to try and navigate passing each other whilst avoiding potholes. This is one of many unsafe roads in our region. The current works being done are appalling and still leaving roads unsafe. I find it astounding that the minister boasted today about the great works being done – not in my electorate.

Albert Park electorate

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (14:40): (57) My question is to the Minister for Education, and I ask about our \$8.8 million commitment to Middle Park Primary School and what this important investment will mean for current and future students in my electorate. Education is a big issue in the seat of Albert Park, as it is across Victoria, and I am proud to be part of a government that has a strong track record of investing in quality local schools. Indeed the Andrews Labor government has invested more than \$12.8 billion in building and upgrading schools in every corner of the state. Pertinent to these investments is the support they give to our amazing local teachers and families. Over the last weekend I had the pleasure of attending the Middle Park Primary School fete, where I witnessed firsthand the devoted group of teachers and parents, particularly principal Tim Newton and the school council president Mary Barry, who ensure that local families have access to a great local school. In fact it was Mary who said that Middle Park Primary is the heart of its community. I am excited to hear how this investment will ensure it beats even stronger.

Warrandyte electorate

Ryan SMITH (Warrandyte) (14:41): (58) My question is to the Minister for Education. Many members in this chamber would be well aware of the teacher shortage that is currently causing stress within our education system across the state. My own son, like many other students, has had classes cancelled as the school was unable to cover them with emergency relief teachers. Having any class cancelled due to a teacher shortage is a huge concern to any parent and student, more so should it be for the education minister. One of my principals has personally written to the Premier and minister outlining her request for the state's principals to be more broadly consulted and included when dealing with the issues facing schools today. Principals and teachers have firsthand experience, with many having productive ideas and solutions to the various issues schools face. I would ask that the minister please meet with my local principals to hear of their experiences and challenges within the education system and adapt a broader consultation network rather than just listening to Labor-appointed bureaucrats.

Pascoe Vale electorate

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (14:42): (59) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education. Can the minister please provide my community with an update on the \$14.2 million invested by the Andrews Labor government towards the delivery of new and upgraded facilities at Pascoe Vale Girls College, including the educational benefits these facilities will provide to women

and girls in my electorate? As we celebrate International Women's Day for 2023 I would like to acknowledge the contribution that Pascoe Vale Girls College has continued to make for almost 70 years in educating and preparing young women and girls for their careers and livelihoods. First opened in 1956 with an enrolment of just 115 girls, the school has continued to grow over many decades. With an enrolment of 885 students as of last year, it is excellent to see the school thriving with strong learning outcomes. Consistent with this year's theme of International Women's Day being about embracing equality for women and girls, I welcome Labor's education plan for Merri-bek North, which has embraced choice, certainty and equality for young women across the north. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge former principal Helen Jackson as well as current principal Kay Peddle, teachers, support staff and all students and families.

Address to Parliament

Governor's speech

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed on motion of Martha Haylett:

That the following address, in reply to the speech of the Governor to both houses of Parliament, be agreed to by this house.

Governor:

We, the Legislative Assembly of Victoria assembled in Parliament, wish to express our loyalty to our Sovereign and to thank you for the speech which you have made to the Parliament.

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (14:44): I continue on to thank the constituents of St Albans – a place that I was born, raised and live in – for their support and the great honour to serve St Albans.

Earlier in my contribution I was talking about our commitments and what we have delivered since being elected in 2014. The first thing that we did in 2014, the minute we were elected, was to remove the deadly and dangerous level crossing at Main Road and Furlong Road in St Albans, and we have seen a community that has connected and a local economy that really has continued to grow, but most importantly we have saved lives.

Another thing that I have been proud of is our commitment to and delivery of education. All of our state schools, as well as St Paul's Primary School in Kealba and Sacred Heart primary school in St Albans, have received significant investment by the Andrews Labor government. I know that major works are underway to upgrade University Park Primary School, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the principal and the school community for all their hard work, because we know that having good facilities complemented by good teaching is the way forward in a child's journey. I am also proud to report significant funding for Jackson special school. Close to \$10 million has been invested, and we will see a whole rebuild for the students and families at that particular school. There is St Albans Heights Primary School, and Furlong Park School for Deaf Children – a first when it comes to investing into our schools for children who are deaf and of course for those who need extra support. There is no doubt that the Andrews Labor government is making sure that every school, regardless of your postcode, has the first-class facilities to match first-class teaching. Just on Monday – yesterday – I was at St Albans Secondary College, which has been rated in the top 20 this year, and I am very proud to report that and the excellence in teaching. Principal Kerrie has done an outstanding job when it comes to making sure that education and the delivery of education have been absolutely superb. This is not only for St Albans Secondary College but Keilor Downs secondary college and Victoria University Secondary College, and for many more primary schools, because we know that making sure that our children get the best start as early as possible is the way forward.

So of course when we come to looking at kinder and making sure our littlest learners start kinder for the first time, they will be able to receive their brand new bags from the Andrews Labor government. Most importantly we have started, this year, free kinder, which means a lot to my community in

St Albans and to families. That means any family with a three- or four-year-old will pay nothing, and that is really important. Not only is it encouraging participation but it is assisting families with the budgetary expectations as well. We also know that the first 2000 days are critical to a child's life and their learning, and what better way is there for our government to be able to not only provide free kinder and invest in this particular service but transform early childhood education across St Albans and of course the state. We know that kinder is an exciting time for local families, but it also can be a time of anxiety for families, so we want to make sure that childcare fees are minimal. That is why we are introducing free kinder for working families. So what does that mean in dollar value – \$2500 per child, per year. That is a great saving for families in St Albans.

It also gives me great joy to talk about the brand new kinder that will be built at the same site as St Albans Meadows Primary School. We know the value of having a one-stop shop, as I will call it – having kinder and primary school on one site makes it convenient for families and parents who are dropping off one child to kinder and one child to primary. So that is really exciting. I know that we were able to deliver this in the last term for Ardeer Primary School. They now have a one-stop education precinct – a kinder and primary school – and it really has assisted and connected families and the school community together. Providing those best foundations for our kids right through to adulthood is absolutely critical and integral. Regardless of where you live, we must make sure that the best foundations are developed and all opportunities are available for kids. Free TAFE for younger adults and young people to have that free TAFE pathway for skilled, secure and well-paid jobs is another opportunity that we have provided.

Most importantly, I am really honoured and humbled to receive the support of the St Albans community. As a lifelong local it gives me great joy to see so many investments and opportunities created by the Andrews Labor government. We have not wasted a single moment when it comes to building the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital, improving and building on Sunshine Hospital – a brand new emergency department at Sunshine Hospital – and in the coming weeks I will be attending the official opening of Sunshine Private Hospital, which makes it a triangular health precinct in the heart of St Albans, and I am extremely proud of that.

There is so much happening in St Albans, from education, free TAFE and free kinder to better health and wellbeing opportunities. St Albans is transitioning and, as I said, as a lifelong local I have been seeing these improvements in the last eight years. I know my community have made it very clear with their support in November for me and for the Andrews Labor government. We will continue to deliver to the electorate of St Albans. There is a lot more work that needs to be done. We have got great objectives and pathways. Whether it is building on our schools or making sure that our projects and our election commitments come to fruition, we will make sure we get on with the job and deliver just like we did when we first were elected. We removed that dangerous level crossing at Main Road and Furlong Road. Many people said it would not happen, but it did under our government.

Members applauded.

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (14:52): I am delighted to rise today to make an address-in-reply to the Governor's speech. Firstly, thank you to the voters of Clarinda. I am extremely humbled and proud to be re-elected as the member for Clarinda. Together we have achieved a lot over the past four years, and I will talk about that in my speech. I am very excited and grateful for the opportunity to continue delivering for our community, delivering a strong and positive government agenda. Thank you to everyone that came out to participate in the democratic process – voting, campaigning, observing and otherwise. I also would like to take this short opportunity to speak about the conviction and imprisonment of the opposition leader in my country of birth just last week.

Coming out of the election there are some really exciting new commitments for our district, and I am very eager to start working on these initiatives. A \$12.45 million upgrade to Clayton South Primary School will see a rebuild for the main classroom wing and a new playground. This builds on the almost \$400,000 invested in Clayton South Primary School over the last four years. Clayton South principal

Dean Napier is a fantastic advocate for his school and his community, and this is a very well-deserved commitment and one that will make sure that local families have access to the best school facilities, supporting kids to do the best in the classroom. I was delighted to meet with Dean together with my good friend the member for Mordialloc to make the exciting announcement, and I look forward to working together to deliver the world-class classrooms that the kids of Clarinda deserve.

Clarinda is also a very proud sporting district. Leading up to the election I was delighted to announce the Andrews Labor government will invest \$1 million toward a master plan for a sporting precinct in Kingston known as Kingston Fields, delivering a new sport and recreation facility that the whole community can be proud of.

Sport is the lifeblood of so many people in Clarinda, bringing families together, neighbourhoods together and, most importantly, for our youngsters. Our local clubs work hard to fundraise for better spaces and better facilities. In fact I was on sausage sizzle duty on Sunday for the Kingston basketball club. These clubs and their members and volunteers, like Nicole Flynn at the KBC, work very hard to fundraise, and it is important that they have a government that backs them in. I am extremely proud of our record of investment in our local clubs, delivering better sportsgrounds and facilities. We have delivered better courts and grounds, new scoreboards, lighting upgrades and change facilities for clubs across the district. I am very much looking forward once again to working with the community to help deliver the vision of Kingston Fields in Clarinda.

There are also some really exciting commitments around our community spaces. Clarinda is a wonderfully diverse and multicultural electorate, with more than half of our community born overseas or with parents born overseas. This includes our Vietnamese community, a strong and proud community that has made an enormous contribution to our state. I was delighted to announce \$250,000 towards delivering upgrades for the Hoa Nghiem Buddhist Temple for Victoria's Vietnamese community in Melbourne's south-east.

For so many Victorians from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds community groups offer important connections to culture and heritage. These groups deserve the best possible community spaces to celebrate and share their culture and traditions. That is why we are delivering these upgrades as part of a \$50 million investment to build, upgrade and renovate new community infrastructure for multicultural and multifaith communities. This is a fantastic investment, backing Victoria's multicultural communities not just with words but with action.

We are also investing in the South Eastern Melbourne Vietnamese Associations Council, SEMVAC, so they can keep supporting community members across the south-east in many of the issues that we are facing. For years SEMVAC has supported thousands of members of the Vietnamese community across the south-eastern suburbs, providing assistance with housing, employment, health and much more, including mental health. They are a vital resource for our community, and by continuing to invest in what matters we will secure the future of this important community group.

Another very important community group is the Hellenic Community of the City of Moorabbin Ltd, and we have committed \$100,000 to help renovate the existing facility there. This is another great outcome for the community. And I had the honour with our colleague from the other place to make that announcement during the election campaign.

It does not matter where you come from, what you look like, what you believe or what language you speak, in Victoria we are proud of our cultural diversity. We welcome diversity and we also celebrate it. So I am extremely proud of our investments celebrating that diversity; \$400,000 for the Springvale Lunar New Year festival to celebrate the food, music, dance, art and culture of Victoria's Indochinese community is another example. For the past 20 years, the Springvale Lunar New Year festival has delighted and entertained, with thousands of people coming together to enjoy the entertainment and attractions, and we will continue to support this wonderful celebration of culture and tradition.

There is so much more. There is more support for the Keysborough Learning Centre, another fantastic local organisation that provides a wide variety of community programs, including emergency food relief, a men's shed, community outreach and social inclusion programs to improve the lives of those in need and their families. It is another well-deserved commitment and one that I am really happy to support. Finally, there is further investment into the Alex Wilkie and Alex Nelson reserves: an investment of up to \$220,000 towards the upgrade of the wetlands feature to deliver a better public space that Springvale South in Clarinda and the whole community can be proud of and enjoy.

My community will also reap huge benefits from the strong and positive agenda of the Andrews Labor government statewide, with positive investments in education, jobs, roads, public transport and health. In fact on health alone there are massive upgrades planned for both our hospitals in the south-east. Our south-eastern suburbs are booming, so the local hospitals need to grow as well. We are delivering upgrades at Dandenong Hospital and Monash Medical Centre, making sure locals get quality care closer to home. An investment of up to \$295 million will upgrade Dandenong Hospital, including an expanded emergency department expected to treat an extra 12,000 patients every year, a new intensive care unit and a new outpatient clinic. This brings our investment up to \$982 million, delivering better care closer to home for locals in Clarinda. We will also deliver a bigger and better Monash Medical Centre to provide world-class care for families, with a massive upgrade valued at up to \$560 million to build new operating theatres, create a new intensive care unit and deliver extra beds. To make sure we have not only the infrastructure but also the staff Victorians need we are training and recruiting an extra 24,000 healthcare workers into our workforce. We have also invested more than \$8 billion in our ambulance service and hired almost 2200 paramedics.

Education – from kinder to a great local school and all the way to TAFE and uni – changes lives. That is why we are making kinder free, so our kids get the very best start in life. That is why we have created free TAFE, to ensure Victorians can get the skills they need for the jobs they want. That is why we are building and upgrading schools, so you can count on having a great local school. That is why we are upgrading specialist schools all across Victoria and transforming support for their students, parents and, most importantly, carers. These are the strong and positive investments that our state needs, and they are what we will deliver.

As I mentioned, the Clarinda electorate is extremely diverse – we come from countries all over the world. I would like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the many candidates in Clarinda who put their hand up to run at the last election. Although we may have different ways of doing things, finally the local community made up their mind. However, unfortunately, for many of us pluralist democracy, basic fundamental freedoms and basic human rights are not guaranteed in our countries of origin.

In my country of origin, Cambodia, just this week the Cambodian opposition leader His Excellency Kem Sokha was found guilty of treason and sentenced to 27 years imprisonment. The court indefinitely suspended his political right to vote and to stand for election. As context, Kem Sokha is a former president of the dissolved main opposition party, the Cambodia National Rescue Party, known as CNRP. Since his arrest in 2017 Kem Sokha has been subject to arbitrary detention, mistreatment in custody and a ban on participating in any political activity. His party, which was the main opposition party, was dissolved and 55 elected members of Parliament and more than 5000 elected councillors were banned. All of this has taken place in the lead-up to Cambodia's national election in July. Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch, came out last week and stated:

It was obvious from the start that the charges against Kem Sokha were nothing but a politically motivated ploy by Prime Minister Hun Sen to sideline Cambodia's major opposition leader and eliminate the country's democratic system ... Sending Kem Sokha to prison isn't just about destroying his political party, but about squashing any hope that there can be a genuine general election in July.

I echo this sentiment and condemn the arrest of Kem Sokha in the strongest possible terms, and I call upon the Australian government and our international community to do more in this space.

In my remaining time, as we know, elections require the whole village, from campaigning and doorknocking to letterboxing to handing out on election day and also celebrating on the night. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my campaign team Peter, Joel and Declan; Sony, Tree Keo, Sethy You, Kong Meng, Sokhen Sam, Bunlay, Kosal, Chanda, Salazar and Sophie Tan; Nara Lam, Maline Chea, Dara Teng and the many volunteers; Nara Mao; many of my community from the Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodian, Filipino, Burmese and Myanmar communities; friends of India, Pakistan and communities, like Dr Sibas Chundri and Siddharth Matric; and Nancy, Natan, Orson, Angus, Ajdin, Ivan, Matt, Justin, Cameron, Sawwin, Kyaw and many of the local councillors that assisted in my campaign. I am sure there are so many more that I have missed, and I thank every one of you for your time and hard work to see the Labor government and also me getting elected. To my colleagues here in this place as well as the Clarinda local branch, thank you very much.

Lastly, thanks again to my family – my wife Manette and my three children Lawson, Mason and Sofia – for supporting me to be elected a second time. Once again, thank you to everyone that came out to participate in the democratic process – voting, campaigning, observing and otherwise. We are so lucky to live in a healthy, thriving democracy such as Australia and here in Victoria. I will continue to work hard to serve our community and deliver the support and services that we need for the electorate of Clarinda. I am very humbled, and thank you.

Members applauded.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (15:07): I am delighted to have the opportunity this afternoon to contribute and respond to the Governor's speech by way of the address-in-reply. I do so, as the fantastic previous member did, with a profound sense of gratitude and a profound understanding of the precious opportunity that is afforded to me as the local member and to members of this side of the house to be elected for a third term as part of the Andrews Labor government. I have a profound sense and understanding of the commitment of people of this great state for their support for three elections now to elect members on this side of the house to do what matters, to get things done and to work hard each and every day to make sure that we are a government that continues to invest in health, that continues to invest in education, in transport, in the environment and in all of the things that we know contribute to making this state a terrific state. There is no greater honour than to be on this side of the house in government. We will continue to work hard, as I said, to make sure that we do not let the people of this great state down.

I want to start by thanking the people within my local community, within the electorate of Sunbury, for backing me in for a third term and choosing hope over hate and optimism over fear, for choosing a real plan, a positive plan and a government of action. Whether people within my community voted for me or whether they did not, I will continue to be a member that represents our entire community, all of the electorate, and will continue to be a strong, positive, proactive voice within this chamber and in all of those responsibilities that we fulfil as local members.

We come to this place as individuals, and we have great honour in doing so, but we know of course that behind each and every member is an army of people who help us to be here and deliver for our local community. So first and foremost can I acknowledge and thank my outstanding wife Jas for her unwavering love, advice, support and commitment. These roles are not easy – they come with a large workload – and for all of her care and support and love I say thank you. I also want to thank and acknowledge our beautiful daughter Cleo, who is nearly four – going on 14, I should say. She is a wonderful little girl: kind, caring, fun, funny – certainly not like me – and happy. She is a wonderful, wonderful daughter. I do want to acknowledge both Cleo and Jas.

I am incredibly fortunate, as I am sure many members within this chamber are, to have a vast array of family and friends that have always been a huge part of the local Labor team within my community. I want to extend of course a thankyou to all of the members of my family, but in particular I want to acknowledge Mum and Dad and thank them for all the support and love and commitment that they have provided to me. Mum, thank you for your efforts, particularly on pre-poll. Dad, thank you for

driving at least 5 million kilometres around the electorate towing the magical trailer sign and generally being acknowledged as the signage extraordinaire. To my sister Kirst, brother Dave, extended family, aunts, uncles and cousins, thank you for all of your support; it means so much.

We know, Acting Speaker Hamer – and I am sure you know it within your local community – campaigns are run by volunteers, and it is always a team effort. So can I acknowledge the countless volunteers, of which there are many. I will attempt to name them, but I am sure, as with previous members, there will be some that will not be acknowledged, so I do apologise. But I want to particularly thank Brad, Shalini, Dom, Tiny, Brad Y, Chantelle, Bob, Jean, Lyn, Ann, Cheryl, Kylie, Cameron, Glen, Ryan, Barbara, Rhonda, Peter, Cheryl, Lindsay, Dawn, Shammy, Beth, Sammy, Bec, Juan, Carlos, Paul, Jarrod, Will, Michael, Greg, Peter, Cameron, Gill, Darren, Steve, Ross, Doug, Peter, Craig, Ryan, Jeff, Cole, Rhys, Brick, Dallas, Tim, Dylan, Brian, Connie, Clint, Lauren, Phil, Liam, Maureen, Joan and many, many more. I am honoured to have such a passionate, supportive group of volunteers around me, and I do say thank you. This was a stunning victory, and I want to put on record my thanks for the hard work throughout the campaign. It was a tough fight, but every single one of you rose to the challenge. I also want to acknowledge the terrific field organiser Liam, a star who really brought the team together and fought hard until the very end. Thank you for all the work that you have done as well.

I do also want to take the opportunity to acknowledge my terrific staff. So thank you to Jana, Adam, Almendra, Josh, Sharon, Jesse and the outstanding team at ALP head office, the Parliamentary Budget Office and ministerial staff for their incredible work over four years in getting things done through an incredibly difficult period, through COVID, but also in delivering on our key portfolio responsibilities. We also should of course acknowledge the work done by the commission and all of the people that have made the election result possible.

As I said from the outset, this government, the Andrews Labor government, got elected because we get things done and we continue to do what matters. I am delighted to serve as the Parliamentary Secretary for Level Crossing Removals and Parliamentary Secretary for Transport. Both of these portfolio areas, as you would know, Acting Speaker, were spoken about extensively in the Governor's speech.

Our Big Build program of course is supporting thousands of jobs – more than 18,000 people working directly on our projects. We are investing more than \$90 billion – 165 major rail and road projects in every corner of our state. More than \$9 billion in fact is being invested in road and rail projects across regional Victoria, creating more than 5800 jobs; \$27 billion in Melbourne's west and north; \$20 billion in the north-east; more than \$14 billion in Melbourne's east; and \$25 billion in the south-east. We are removing dangerous and congested level crossings, building the Metro Tunnel, delivering the rail line to Melbourne Airport, expanding our train network and making unmatched investment in rolling stock.

We know, when it comes to roads, about the commitment around North East Link, a significant, important project that will absolutely provide that missing link for Melbourne's major road network – a really important project. In the west the alternative to the West Gate Bridge, the West Gate Tunnel, removing thousands of trucks from local streets, is another significant investment only made possible by this government and our commitment to getting things done.

We know we are removing level crossings, and as Parliamentary Secretary for Level Crossing Removals I am really proud to be able say we are getting on and delivering our removal of 110 level crossings by 2030. We are also building, as I mentioned, the Melbourne Airport rail, the Metro Tunnel, the North East Link, Regional Rail Revival, the Suburban Rail Loop and the West Gate Tunnel. Since 2015 we have removed 67 level crossings, built 32 new and upgraded stations, delivered 50 kilometres of bike paths and unlocked around 20 MCGs worth of open space for local communities, but we know there is much more to be done. There is a huge pipeline of work within the Big Build, and we know that it is important that we continue to work with local communities to deliver these projects and we

continue to provide the jobs, the skills and the opportunity to be able to deliver these historic projects for our state.

One of the other important projects I need to mention within the Big Build space is the Suburban Rail Loop, the biggest infrastructure project in Victoria's history. It is yet another project – as you will very much be aware, Acting Speaker Hamer – that was voted for again by the people of Victoria, making sure that the radial train line will slash travel times to and from key destinations and providing better connections to universities, to hospitals and to key employment centres; 8000 construction jobs; and the opportunity to support another 24,000 jobs across our economy. It is an incredible project, transformative in its nature and visionary in many, many ways. We know that that forms part of a huge pipeline of works. I have pages and pages of notes, but time will not allow me to get through those. I did just want to take the opportunity to thank every single worker that is involved with our Big Build and every single worker that is involved with our public transport and transport space right across the state. These are people that do incredible work, and we know that the support and the commitment to making sure that our public transport is supported each and every day is something that this government takes incredibly seriously and is very important. I am very pleased and very proud to be Parliamentary Secretary for Level Crossing Removals and Parliamentary Secretary for Transport, and I will continue to work with local members and will continue to work right across the state to ensure that we are supporting every single Victorian to get where they need to go as safely and as smoothly as possible.

It is only this government that has been able to invest in record terms within my local community, and that is why I am incredibly proud that since coming to office we have got on and removed the Sunbury level crossing, a transformative project and something that I know people within my local community have benefited from each and every day. We have also signalised the Gap Road and Horne Street intersection, and we have signalised the Melrose Drive and Mickleham Road intersection. We have upgraded over 12 local schools, some of those being Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School, Gladstone Views Primary School, Sunbury College, Sunbury Downs, Salesian College, Sunbury Primary School, Sunbury West Primary School, Sunbury Heights Primary School, Tullamarine Primary School and many, many more – a significant investment to make sure that we are providing great facilities for first-class learning.

To be able to support students within our local community is something that as the local member is very important to me, but in terms of the Education State it is something that this government takes seriously. We will continue to invest in our local schools at every opportunity. We have made record investment in the Education State, as I mentioned, but we have also made sure that we have got on and we have upgraded sporting precincts within the electorate, some of those being John McMahon Reserve, Eric Boardman Memorial Reserve, Leo Dineen Reserve, Diggers Rest Recreation Reserve, which is currently under construction, and many, many more. Ensuring that we are investing within local sport and local community precincts is also something that this government takes very seriously. It is incredibly important to work with local councils, to work with local sporting groups and to make sure we are investing in growth corridors. Like many members within this house, my community is growing, and ensuring that we are providing significant investment within the growth corridor is something that we take incredibly seriously. So we are making sure that we are providing those facilities. We know there is a significant increase, a great uptake, in female participation within sport, and this government will continue to invest through that fund and many other funds, the Growing Suburbs Fund being another. Within that space we will continue to make sure that we are providing local clubs and local people an opportunity to be their very best on the sporting field.

I did want to turn to health. One of the key projects within my local community is the upgrade of the Sunbury Day Hospital to the Sunbury community hospital. Members will be aware of that commitment, and this is an opportunity to provide great local health care to our local community. It is something that I know the community are very excited about. The project is under construction and I want to thank each and every worker that is involved with the project. It is a partnership with Western Health and it will make a huge difference to our community once it is delivered. There is also the

\$3 million commitment to upgrade Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health. They work very closely with Western Health and with what will be the new Sunbury community hospital. Making sure that we are investing in local health services in a growing community is of course something that we are committed to and something that residents within my local community are very excited about.

There is a whole range of other projects, and this is often one of the challenges within the time that is permitted to us – that we do not have the opportunity to speak about all of those. I did just want to briefly touch on our commitment to build a new multideck car park next to the Sunbury station. Within the Sunbury community it will be over 600 spaces. It will be an outstanding partnership with council and the Department of Transport and Planning, making sure that there is an opportunity for additional commuter parking but also shopper and trader parking, something that I know the community are very excited about. It ties in very nicely with both the level crossing removal and our upgrade to the Sunbury bus terminal, which will provide a better bus terminal locally as we get on and open, not too far away, the Melbourne Metro Tunnel, that direct connection to the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines and the Sunbury line – more trains, more often – an outstanding project. There will be five new stations, and to be able to connect and move more people around more often is something that is incredibly exciting to me as a local member and I am sure all members.

Whether it is investment in renewables, whether it is building world-class public transport, building the Education State, bringing back the SEC, creating free TAFE, creating free kinder – this is an Andrews Labor government that gets things done. This is an Andrews Labor government that does what matters. Big Build, positive reform – that is what this government is all about.

Members applauded.

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (15:23): I am happy to be here and happy to be making an address-in-reply here today. Gee, it is good to be back in this house. It is good to be re-elected and representing my beautiful, wonderful community of Wendouree in the 60th Parliament. I am so grateful to the electors of Wendouree for the confidence they have shown in me and the Andrews Labor government's agenda to make Victoria fairer, safer and better. Thank you to the Ballarat community for your strong support, and I promise to work hard every day to make Ballarat an even better place to live and work.

Over the last four years I have been supported by the most incredible and dedicated team in the office: Kallista Kaval, Matt Burns, Caroline – she has got this double-barrelled name, she has worked for me for four years and she will laugh if I get it wrong – Vanderklift-Stobart, Hayley Murphy and Issie Freeman. I have been just blessed with this incredible team in my electorate office. I am so fortunate to have worked with them. They are competent, they are clever and most importantly they are committed. My name may be on the door, but Kallista, Matt and Caroline have been the heart and soul of Team Wendouree. I am so grateful for their support and hard work and I welcome so much their advice and wise counsel. Caroline and Kallista are off to do other exciting things. But we have had a great four years, and they will be very much missed. I had to get that in in case I ran out of time at the end.

My wonderful electorate of Wendouree is located on the lands of the Wathaurong people, and I pay my respects to Wathaurong elders past, present and emerging and thank them for caring for and nurturing the land and waterways of Ballarat for tens of thousands of years. Our city's name comes from two Wathaurong words: 'balla', meaning elbow or reclining on elbow, and 'arat', meaning meeting place. So Ballarat means a lovely place to rest on one's elbow or recline on one's elbow, and that is what it is. It is a beautiful place. And Wathaurong means 'the water tribe', and at the heart of my electorate is beautiful Lake Wendouree. Wendouree too is a Wathaurong term or comes from the Wathaurong language. It means 'go away' or 'get nicked'. It was said to colonisers at Lake Wendouree when they first came to Ballarat. As we know, colonisation has had a devastating impact on our First Nations people in my community, in our state and in our nation. I wish to acknowledge the Ballarat Aboriginal community, many of whom were forcibly removed from country all over Victoria and interstate during the stolen generations decades and were brought to Ballarat, the place of a number of orphanages and

children's homes. Many of them have chosen to stay and make Ballarat their home. As a member of the Andrews Labor government I am proud of Victoria's truth and justice process that is recognising and addressing historic and ongoing injustices, and it forms a key part of our treaty process.

My electorate of Wendouree comprises the suburbs Alfredton, where I grew up, where my mum still lives; Ballarat Central, where I currently live; Ballarat North; Black Hill; Bonshaw; Delacombe; Invermay Park; Lake Gardens; Nerrina; Newington; Redan; Soldiers Hill; Sebastopol; of course Wendouree; and Winter Valley. Following the Victorian Electoral Commission 2021 boundary redistribution Wendouree gained the suburb of Sebastopol. The Sebas community has previously been in the electorate of Ballarat West but for eight years was in Buninyong. I am so pleased to be able to represent this strong, established community that is an integral part of Ballarat. But I am also disappointed that as a result of the redistribution I no longer represent residents in Bakery Hill, Brown Hill, Ballarat East, Invermay and Mount Rowan. However, I know these constituents will be well represented by my Labor MP neighbours the member for Eureka and the member for Ripon. We are a proud and progressive community who are inclusive and accepting. We are an aspiring community who want Ballarat to be an even better place to work, live and study, a growing city that people from across the state, across the nation and across the world proudly call home.

Ballarat is the place where I am from, where I was raised and where I call home. Importantly it is the place where Mike and I choose to live and raise our daughters Johanna and Sophia. There is no place I would rather do this, and likewise I would be very disappointed if I finished this, with so much to talk about in my wonderful electorate, without acknowledging Mike, Johanna and Sophia – just the best. They are the best. They do everything at home when I am here. They support me in every way. These girls are little crusaders. Every time someone says something about the Premier they feel it is their job to defend him. I have told them that is not the case. But they are just absolutely beautiful girls with hearts full of social justice, and I look forward to them joining Young Labor Left in the very near future. I am only here because of my family. I know most people will say that as well, but particularly being a regional MP, being here 15 weeks a year is an additional burden on family, so I really do want to acknowledge them today for the incredible job they do without me and the way that they support me.

I wish to congratulate my dear friend the newly elected member for Ripon for her hard-fought campaign. I look forward to working with her closely, as well as with the re-elected member but first member for the district of Eureka, so congratulations to both of them. We are also very excited in western region to have Jacinta Ermacora in the other place, a fantastic woman from Warrnambool who will be a really, really strong voice for the western region, and of course Gayle Tierney in the other place re-elected – such a strong representative of our region, and she will now be able to continue her outstanding work as a minister in this government.

Wendouree – or Ballarat West, as it was previously known – is an important seat for Labor. It has been won by Labor at every election since 1999, first by local champion Karen Overington with a more than 5 per cent swing, a win that contributed to the end of the Kennett era and the formation of the Bracks Labor government. It is a seat that has been held by Labor ever since, with Sharon Knight holding onto the seat in 2010 despite the election loss of our government and winning again after a challenging redistribution in 2014. Because of the hard work of Labor Party members and supporters, we won Wendouree in 2018, and with a strong grassroots campaign and hard work by so many volunteers, we did it again with an increased majority in 2022.

Ballarat has enjoyed a period of unrivalled success and investment under successive Labor governments. We have welcomed unprecedented investment across our city and across our community. We have built the iconic infrastructure at our GovHub and Selkirk Stadium. We are redeveloping Ballarat Base Hospital, and we have completed the \$500 million Ballarat line upgrade. On top of that, we have increased train services to and from Melbourne and upgraded Wendouree train station. We are keeping Ballarat moving, with \$60 million being spent on our congested roads and on our busiest intersections; providing record funding for local schools; upgrading sporting facilities; and supporting the Ballarat International Foto Biennale, with the establishment of the National Centre for

Photography. We are also building trains at Alstom, making the Ballarat railway station accessible and bringing the 2026 Commonwealth Games to Ballarat. Only a re-elected Labor government will put people first and deliver on our promises, and that is what we will do.

The people of Victoria have endorsed our bold social, economic and environmental agenda, including taking strong action on climate and investing in renewables, transformative mental health reform and record investment to address the scourge of family violence. We are moving towards treaty, legislating for gender equality, introducing free kinder, supporting multiculturalism and ensuring that every Victorian can be who they are, because equality is not negotiable. We are also doing what matters for Victorians, delivering positive change that is transforming our state, and in doing so changing opportunities, outcomes and ultimately lives.

Locally the Andrews Labor government is doing amazing things in Wendouree. Sport is such a big part of our community. It is in the city, but it is particularly in the regions. It is why we have invested in significant upgrades and improvements across the Wendouree electorate. We have delivered funding for world-class sporting facilities at the Wendouree West rec reserve, at Mars Stadium, at the Alfredton rec reserve, at Selkirk Stadium and at basketball stadiums at Delacombe Primary School and Phoenix community college, but there is more to do. That is why I was delighted to pledge that a re-elected Andrews Labor government would deliver a major upgrade of up to \$8.4 million to the Marty Busch Reserve in Sebastopol. This is excellent news for Sebastopol Football Netball Club; Napoleons Sebastopol Cricket Club; Ballarat Sebastopol Cycling Club – road and track and BMX; Sebastopol fire brigade – CFA; Ballarat Ultimate Incorporated; St James Parish School; and local Sebas residents. This redevelopment is a great example of how the Andrews Labor government is investing in sports, making them more accessible, welcoming and inclusive, particularly for the growing number of women and girls playing sport.

Another election promise that I am very proud of is Labor's funding commitment to the first Australian memorial to acknowledge all survivors of sexual abuse. A re-elected Andrews Labor government will contribute \$500,000 to support the establishment of the Continuous Voices survivors memorial in Ballarat. The public art project will be built near a lake adjacent to Plane Avenue in Victoria Park, Ballarat. This place will be designed to recognise the pain and the trauma caused by all forms of sexual abuse and support healing and hope. I want to support and thank the 50 survivors and supporters who worked with the Continuous Voices community reference group and artists to contribute creative research that will inform the memorial design. Thank you to Blake, Ember, Trevor, Maureen and Sarah-Jane for joining me for the election announcement at Victoria Park.

A re-elected Andrews Labor government will provide \$900,000 for the Ballarat Hindu Temple & Cultural Centre to help build and upgrade community space in Ross Creek. It was very special to join with the Deputy Premier, the member for Ripon and many, many friends from the Ballarat Indian community to hear that a re-elected Andrews Labor government will support the building of a temple and prayer room, a kitchen, a community garden and a playground. Ballarat's growing Indian community deserve the best possible community spaces to celebrate and share their culture and their traditions. This project has been six years in the making, and I am delighted that a re-elected Andrews Labor government will make it happen.

The re-elected Andrews Labor government will also support the Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre in Sebastopol with an \$80,000 grant, ensuring the hardworking and dedicated staff and volunteers can continue to provide the services that our community needs. This commitment shows our support for the Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre, which is a brilliant place that offers opportunities for education, training and community connection, along with a range of support services, in a comfortable, friendly and accessible environment.

One of the many highlights of the election campaign was to welcome the Minister for Women to Ballarat to announce that a re-elected Andrews Labor government will invest \$79 million in women's health, including \$5 million to support the creation of a women's health research institute to find new

ways to identify and treat diseases such as endometriosis; \$64.8 million to double the number of surgeries for endometriosis and associated conditions – that is about 10,800 extra laparoscopies over the next four years; \$3 million to establish an inquiry into women’s pain management to examine the systemic issues and find solutions; and \$4 million for research support services so lessons learned at our new women’s health clinics can be fed into the inquiry and used to improve patient care.

These are really, really great announcements for my community, and I am so proud of them, but we can only deliver them because of the incredible volunteers that I had by my side: first and foremost my incredible mum Trudy Dickenson, Andrew Boatman, Craig Fletcher, Pauline Burke and Donald Murtagh, Russell Burns, Roland and Loretta Kaval, Heather and Kevin Roche, Geoff Peck, Sue and John Hines, Terry Grange and Wendy Symons, Pennie and Michelle Roberts, Don Henderson, Mary Hollick, Dulcie Corbett, Leo Rennie, Dawn Glen, Bill and Heather Horrocks, Clinton Young, Peter Dwyer, Dave Brownlee, Kat Petrucco and Chris Harvey, Penny Murphy, Christy Bell, Ray Ferguson, Barry Harris, Patrick Porter, Stu Harridge and so many other people.

It is the greatest honour in my life to represent the community that I grew up in. I am so proud to be able to stand here and be a member of this government. I take the full weight of responsibility for the role, and it means that I will work really, really hard to make sure everything that we have committed to is delivered to the people of Ballarat and to the state of Victoria, because that is what this government does. We do what we say and we say what we do, and I could not be prouder to be a member of the Andrews Labor government.

Members applauded.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (15:38): I listened intently as Her Excellency the Governor so succinctly outlined the return of the most progressive and efficient government that this state has seen in a long time, if not ever before. Another term of the Andrews Labor government is great for all Victorians. We have worked very hard to be at the crest of the global progressive wave. We have an ambitious agenda and the future of Victoria is looking very good. Certainly I am thrilled to outline exactly how much of that is happening in my electorate of Melton.

But firstly, I am sure you will allow me to express the distinct pleasure I have to be here in this place and to deliver an address-in-reply to the Governor’s speech. An incredible team helped me – it is a long list, and I will not read out all the individual names – but firstly I would like to acknowledge our local branch members of the Australian Labor Party at Bacchus Marsh and Melton for their tireless efforts during the campaign, during pre-poll with the terrible weather and on election day and for all their support between the elections. It has been fantastic. All the phone calls that were made, the doorknocking, the pre-poll and all the tasks that they did – it is a thankless job, but I appreciate all of their work. I would like to acknowledge our fantastic field team and all the volunteers that assisted with the field team, in particular Jack, who came down from Queensland, and others that travelled from interstate to support us. To all the ministerial staffers that took personal leave to help out during the campaign – I could not thank them enough, and they gave us an added boost when they joined the campaign in and around Melton. Their efforts squeezed every little vote in my direction, given that it was supposed to be a knife-edge election campaign in Melton, the way the press were writing it up. It felt very good on the ground, and I know that everyone that assisted me made it that way.

Of course, the mighty trade union movement – the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, the AMWU, the Victorian Ambulance Union, the Health and Community Services Union, the United Workers Union – were simply invaluable, and I cannot thank the mighty trade union movement enough. Victorian Trades Hall and all their supporters and volunteers – again, thank you for all of your support. I am honoured that they assisted in my campaign. Finally, the volunteers that came from the Premier’s office and took personal time out to assist, again, added another boost to the campaign at the right time, and I really appreciate that. All the ministers that came out to my electorate to assist, it was fantastic to see you out there.

Finally, my wife Janet and my family are the forgotten souls in all of this, in the jobs that we do. It is taken for granted that they just continue to do what they do back at home and in their jobs and things like that, but it is appreciated, all the support that they give. I particularly want to thank Janet for all the support that she has given me and all the nonsense that she has had to put up with from me over the years. Anyway, there are some stories there.

It is 100 years since women were able to stand for the Victorian Parliament. It was five years after the United Kingdom but almost 30 years behind South Australia. How often do we have to say that? It was mentioned earlier today in regard to International Women's Day, and I would like to echo the comments from other members and in particular the Leader of the House. The rights won for women were only for some women and not all, and the rights of Indigenous women both to stand for election and to vote came, shamefully, much later. I want to make mention of Emily's List, and I do hope you will continue to provide me this indulgence to acknowledge the work of Emily's List. They are an incredible support network for progressive Labor women in Australian politics, and they provide candidate, political and financial collective action and unashamedly agitate for change on the issues that affect women.

This government, the Andrews Labor government, takes women's health seriously, and it is not a niche issue. Women make up more than 50 per cent of the Victorian population. This returned Labor government shows that Victorians take women's health very seriously. We are creating the women's health research institute, modelled on the highly successful Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. It brings together education, research and treatment and helps us to find new ways to identify and treat diseases, and it will help address the gender gap in medical research, where conditions unique to women do not get enough funding and women are not meaningfully included in clinical trials.

Three-quarters of people diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in Australia are women. Women are three times more likely to develop rheumatoid arthritis than men and four times more likely to develop osteoporosis. Two-thirds of people affected by Alzheimer's disease are women, and women are more likely to die of cardiovascular disease than men simply because the treatment protocols for cardiovascular disease are based on men. Acknowledging the health issues women face and providing the best care possible close to home are priorities for this government, and women in Victoria will have better access to sexual and reproductive health care through this government's efforts in establishing women's clinics and reproductive health hubs across Victoria, changing the way the health of women is treated. Under our government, women are not ignored. An issue such as endometriosis is no longer dismissed and is treated with the concern and importance that it commands, and an inquiry into women's pain management and how treatment is accessed by those who need it will be held.

I am a major supporter of WomenCan and Team Teal, who campaign for funds and awareness for women with ovarian and other gynaecological cancers to assist the pioneering of gynaecological cancer research and prevention and education programs through the Australia New Zealand Gynaecological Oncology Group. They are a fantastic organisation that raises money for that research and prevention of these types of cancers. There are five gynaecological cancers that affect women, and the success rate is only at 49 per cent up to five years, unfortunately. It is something that we need to concentrate on and put a lot more effort into, these terrible cancers that affect women.

We are making fertility services more accessible across this state, and that is really important for those that are choosing to have a child and use those services. This government is also partnering with Victoria University, which is a great institution out in the western suburbs, and they have got a great innovation for the next generation of paramedics. It is my understanding that Victoria University will set up a centre of excellence for paramedicine with the capacity to train up to 1500 students per annum, which is more than the intake that we took in last year; I think it was about 700 paramedics that came into Ambulance Victoria last year. But we have already boosted the number of paramedics in this state by 2200 paramedics since coming to government. That is nearly a 30 per cent increase. I think now

the ambulance service has got just over 6000 paramedics, so to increase the number by 2200 just in a short term is quite significant.

What we are also going to do is create a new role called a paramedic practitioner. This role – we will call it a world first but it is probably a first in Australia – and these paramedic practitioners will have advanced training and be able to make the clinical decisions and take pressure directly off the hospitals. They will be able to respond to people within their homes and be able to provide treatments that they cannot currently provide, which will mean that those patients will not need to be transported to hospitals. They could be treated at home by these practitioners. It is also possible that these paramedic practitioners will be able to prescribe some medicines, to suture wounds if need be, and there will be a range or a scope of practice that will be broader than what paramedics do right now. But again it is to ease the burden on the hospitals at the moment where some of these patients would go into hospital when there is probably not a need for them to go to hospital, but it is the only location where they can be treated; we will get these paramedic practitioners to them. These new positions will be on road by 2026 in both regional and rural areas and probably will also be delivered within metropolitan Melbourne in the longer term.

We are clearly delivering more paramedics, MICA paramedics in particular, who treat patients at the higher end of patient care, and of course we are spreading those additional paramedics out across the state. They can perform advanced airway management, manage more complex head injuries, administer intraosseous drug injection – that is into the bone, if people do not know what intraosseous is – and certainly treat paediatric patients with a greater range of treatments.

We are doing a review of the non-emergency patient transport. That was a part of the industry and ambulance service that was privatised by the Kennett government 30 years ago. There is a second ambulance station that has just been completed and will be opening this week, I believe in Melton West. It will be a fantastic asset for Melton and the surrounding community. That is the second ambulance station that we will have in Melton. I know there is a third one to come down in Melton South, but it will be fantastic for the local community to have additional ambulance resources out of the Melton West site.

The Andrews Labor government is continuing to deliver for Melton. The brand new Melton hospital will support our diverse communities of Caroline Springs, Rockbank, Melton, Bacchus Marsh and the surrounding district. It will ensure the people of Melton West get the care they need closer to home, which is important, but if people are hospitalised it means that their relatives are closer to them. It will be a fantastic asset with a 24-hour emergency department. It will have at least 274 beds. It will have an intensive care unit, a maternity unit, neonatal services, mental health beds, radiology and 100 medical and surgical beds. This will be a very important piece of health infrastructure, not only for Melton but for that western corridor.

It will have the capacity to treat up to 130,000 patients each year, and it will see 60,000 patients in its emergency department. It will be the first hospital in Victoria that will be all electric. It is a big thing, this hospital. We are committing up to \$900 million to deliver this hospital in the Cobblebank area of Melton, and it will transform our blooming outer west, giving not only the Melton people but the people of the western corridor better healthcare facilities closer to home.

It complements the other health services that we have got: the new Footscray Hospital, which opens in 2025, the upgrading of the Sunshine Hospital, building the Joan Kirner hospital and upgrading the Werribee Mercy and Ballarat hospitals, and Bacchus Marsh hospital has had some renovations also. It just complements that whole western corridor of health services. People can complain that they have to drive 40 minutes or 45 minutes to a hospital, but we are going to have a fantastic network along that corridor.

One of the other things in the Melton is the removal of four level crossings – three in Melton and one in Truganina. I know my colleague from Kororoit will be very happy about the Hopkins Road removal.

We are removing the Exford Road level crossing, the Coburns Road level crossing and the Ferris Road level crossing. The removal of level crossings is not just about the train services, it is also about road traffic management and safety. As an old paramedic I did do some incidents at level crossings where pedestrians were hit by trains, and unfortunately they are not a nice outcome – the train always wins. But we have seen with these level crossing removals many, many lives have been saved.

There is better traffic management. Two of these level crossing removals in Melton are near schools, and at peak times there is no movement because the boom gates are down for up to 28 minutes in peak periods. You have got to try and get kids to school. It is like a car park both at Ferris Road and at Exford Road. This will change the movement of traffic, the movement of people, so they can get to work, to school and to recreation within Melton, and that is a fantastic asset that we will have. With that we will have a new Melton railway station, which is well overdue. It is one that probably should have been done a few years ago, but it is now going to be done and the Melton people will notice a hell of a difference.

There is a lot more that I could say in regard to what this Andrews Labor government is doing for Melton and for the state of Victoria. I am proud to be a part of this government, and I look forward to these assets being built.

Members applauded.

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Creative Industries) (15:53): It is always a great pleasure to speak on the address-in-reply and acknowledge the Governor's speech. She is an outstanding Governor who I had the pleasure of seeing yesterday at the launch of the first runway of the Melbourne Fashion Festival.

It is a privilege to be returned to government. We have an ambitious agenda, as colleagues have outlined and as the Governor outlined at the opening of Parliament. We are going to make a bunch of improvements to the lives of people. We are going to change how the city moves, delivering the Suburban Rail Loop from Cheltenham to Box Hill. By the end of this term Melbourne will be arguably the largest city in the nation. Some say we already are; it depends how you count the border. This orbital rail loop will make that growth sustainable.

We are going to deliver the State Electricity Commission, the SEC, for reliable, clean and affordable energy, and that is welcome news to many, many families and businesses who are finding it unbearable to deal with energy prices. We did a lot of other work before the SEC, but this will be one of the most important reforms in the energy market in Victoria.

We are going to deliver free kinder so more kids can learn and play. This is something that 10 years ago people would not have thought of perhaps as important, but research has shown that it is fundamentally important to the success of people's lives when they are older, the fact that they have done two years of preschool. We will also continue to provide 70 free TAFE courses and open up eligibility so Victorians can get the skills they need for the jobs that they want.

There is plenty to be excited about in my portfolios too, with a packed events calendar. Already we have seen a brilliant Boxing Day test and record crowds at the Australian Open. Coming up is what is called Mad March, which we are in now. We have the Melbourne Fashion Festival that I referred to at the beginning of this contribution, the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival, the Golden Plains and Port Fairy festivals, the Melbourne International Comedy Festival – one of the three top comedy festivals in the world, and I would argue the best – and the Formula One Grand Prix. That is just to name a few. In fact if you look at the last weekend, between Ed Sheeran's two concerts, Super Rugby at AAMI Park and the Avalon air show, we had half a million people attend those events. Of course moving into winter, we will see the RISING Festival take shape around the CBD; the FIFA Women's World Cup, which will be incredible, the biggest female professional sporting event on the planet; and the Winter Masterpieces series at the National Gallery of Victoria, *Pierre Bonnard: Designed by India*

Mahdavi. I had a glimpse of that the other day at the NGV – it will be fantastic. And it is only available here in Melbourne – not in Paris, not in New York, not in Mumbai, just in Melbourne.

There is one live music venue for every 8915 residents, according to a survey done immediately prior to the pandemic, in Melbourne. So on those numbers we are ahead of Berlin, New York and London on live music venues. In fact, if I am name-dropping a little bit, when I was hanging with Zac Efron and John Cena the other day on the set of *Ricky Stanicky* –

A member: Taking some photos.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: Yeah, I did take some photos. The journos were talking to them about what their experience of Melbourne and Victoria is, and of course they defaulted to wine and food and coffee – right, that makes sense. We enjoyed that for a little while and then I said: did you know – exactly the stat I just said – we have more live music venues than most global cities that you would think would have more like New York and Berlin? They could not believe it. I gave them some tips about where to go from the iconic Corner and the Tote and others –

A member: Tips from the minister.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: Tips from the minister – and some of the big venues too, as in Ed Sheeran and the others. If you think about that, that is such extraordinary capital to have here. We already have enough talent to put on shows every night of the week. The concept of getting these international stars to come and play here is only one part of the equation, a compelling part of the equation, but only one part of the equation. Every night in Melbourne there are events to go to – normal gigs every night of the week from Monday to Sunday when Victorians and Australians get a chance – and we are going to bolster that chance for them because we have announced as an election commitment 10,000 gigs over the term to back local artists and venues where we will provide up to \$1000 for them to perform. That is important for them because the music industry, parts of it, are still having to get a bit more confidence, I suppose, to put on a gig, particularly at that level, to come back out and put on a gig for a live audience. We are backing them with 10,000 gigs. That part of the ecosystem to me is just as important as Elton John and Billy Joel and Ed Sheeran being in Melbourne as they have been in the last few weeks.

There is so much to say about what we will do in a whole range of areas, and I might just touch briefly on a few. Mental health hubs – as someone who held the position of Parliamentary Secretary for Mental Health, that is something fundamentally important to all of us – we are rolling out those hubs. We are rolling out 12,000 affordable homes right through Victoria, from regional Victoria to Melbourne, through the Big Build with the leadership of the Premier and the former member for Richmond. Women's health clinics right across the state – we will deliver more in this Parliament than many other parliaments, although we have got a big, big record in the last two parliaments. I am proud to be part of that government, that team, that agenda.

But I would like to thank a couple of people who have given me the opportunity to be here. Obviously my community, the incredible electorate of Oakleigh, the electorate I grew up in, went to school in, had a business in, worked in and now have the absolute pleasure of representing: I want to thank them for their trust in me a third time.

I want to thank my electorate office and campaign teams. They were incredible. Firstly, I would like to thank Tess, who did so well to manage so much during the campaign and helped us share our vision for delivering more for the people of Oakleigh. I would like to acknowledge and thank Mark Giles, the president of the Oakleigh ALP branch who helped build one of the best campaign teams that any candidate could want. There were a lot of other people involved who I have been close to for 20 years and have been extraordinarily important to me, and they know who they are.

I want to thank Kieran Boland for managing our communications and for decades of friendship and probably some of the most strategic guidance anyone could provide to me and Caroline Lucas for

holding down the fort and helping to organise campaign events. Caroline has been with me since day one and with the Oakleigh electorate even longer. Her work outside of hours was just as dedicated as her work in office hours. I want to thank Aidan Wright, who was with me up until earlier last year, for his extraordinary support over the term. I want to thank Steve Staikos for his friendship and guidance and his excellent work with more than 300 volunteers across the polling booths, and of course we had a lot more polling booths to cover this time around. A sincere thankyou to Julie, Tenzin and Annie for all their work in looking after the constituents in the electorate of Oakleigh. We had over 300 volunteers doing so much, as many colleagues would know, standing at polling booths, making phone calls and working at street stalls. We were at the pre-poll, and I reckon our people outnumbered the opposition generally by two or three to one.

Martha Haylett: That sounds about right.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: The member for Ripon says that is about right. It is compelling candidates, member for Ripon, isn't it? It is compelling candidates bringing out that support. But they believed in the potential of what we are building here: the potential of a better society, a society where the government is not just a bystander and where the government absolutely gets in and actually reforms.

There are a bunch of local electoral commitments that I was really proud to share with my community, including a \$250,000 lighting upgrade at Lord Reserve and Koornang Park, both in the same precinct in Carnegie, and our \$50,000 of support to Embrace Education, who do amazing work with asylum seekers and migrant communities in tutoring programs. I met with the young student leaders at Monash University who run that extraordinary program. Hughesdale kinder has been one of my pet projects for years, and I was really pleased to get \$1 million for the refurbishment of that incredible kindergarten, one of the only parent-run kinders left in my area. We are also supporting the work of Radio Lollipop with \$150,000 to provide comfort, play and entertainment for children in local schools. The St Kilda Mums Building Blocks partnership will see \$13.3 million invested with Monash City Council to deliver six new, expanded and upgraded facilities for kinder. There is \$200,000 invested in the Oakleigh Village traders, \$100,000 for Carnegie traders and \$100,000 for Clayton traders. I cannot wait to get started on the work with them.

With the privilege I have in being in this government as a member but also as a minister and the portfolio that I have been given, I want to thank obviously the Premier for his trust. I also want to thank my ministerial office team, led by Andrea David, for their extraordinary work. I want to thank my predecessors, Martin Pakula, Danny Pearson and Martin Foley. They have really made this job easier for me by their incredible work. We have so many excellent things in this space – so many excellent things. I cannot cover them all off now, but in terms of investment right through the major events calendar, if you look at our investment in terms of female participation in professional sport from AFL to netball to basketball and to a range of other sports such as football, the FIFA Women's World Cup and the home of the Matildas at La Trobe University – \$100 million there – there is an extraordinary investment by our government in supporting that agenda.

If you look at the success of the major events calendar – separate from professional sport, although they are obviously linked – it is an extraordinary story. Since 2014 we have seen tremendous growth in the major events sector. It has increased by 350 per cent since 2019 and even more since 2014. Now it generates \$2.5 billion of economic activity and hundreds of thousands of jobs right across the spectrum. You could be pulling a beer at the Australian Open or you could be managing the Melbourne International Comedy Festival's social media platform. There is so much work and depth in the talent pool of the Victorian major events staff and sector. The latest tourism data has shown, and this is iconic, that Melbourne is the most popular city in Australia for overnight interstate travellers – not the Gold Coast, not Sydney, not anywhere else, Melbourne.

Over summer Victoria hosted 10 out of 10 of the nation's largest events. All 10 were here over summer, and that does not include a whole bunch of the big events that we have come to know – the Twenty20 clash, Ed Sheeran at the G, the Avalon air show as I mentioned before, and all those others.

One of the most outstanding successes for me was the Australian Open. No Nick, no Naomi, no problem – we still had over 900,000 people attend. We left the next best tournament – New York, Flushing Meadows – behind. We are a country mile ahead of them. There are four grand slam tournaments on the planet and the best one, both in attendance and revenue, is here, with New York next. Why would you go to New York and Flushing Meadows when you could come to Melbourne? And that is what the world has done. I want to thank the trusts that run these great facilities – the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust, the MCG Trust, the Kardinia Park Stadium Trust and the State Sport Centres Trust. They do extraordinary work on behalf of the Victorian people and on behalf of this portfolio.

There is a lot more I could say, but I want to finish on the note that it is an endearing quality of the Victorian community that they choose optimism over pessimism, that they choose love over fear. I have not been negative once in this contribution so far, but frankly, if you are forced to call a spade a spade, the opposition – most of them, not all of them – have not learned any lessons from 2014 or 2018. This election, just like the other two, they fought based on fear. The content of the fearmongering changed. This time it was not African gangs, it was not crime; this time it was debt, that somehow we were being puppets of China. It was identity politics. They talk about us being into identity politics; I have never met a political outfit more into identity politics in the reverse.

Women have too many rights: I had people coming up to the polling booth, Liberal hander-outers, saying that – check this out, look at this ridiculous logic – we support full-term abortion. Then they went further. Some would say we support abortion after the baby is born. One of my colleagues said, ‘That’s actually murder. There’s already a law against that.’ It was just ridiculous things like that. Even the stuff we got on the netball deal that we did – on identity politics, the outfit on the other side have not learned their lessons. But the best part about that is on a third occasion in eight and a bit years the Victorian community said, ‘No, I don’t think so. I don’t think so.’ For all that was thrown at us in this government by News Corporation and effectively Channel 9 and the *Age* – not the entire outfit; I am not talking about every journalist, but the outfits generally – and the opposition, the Victorian people said, ‘No thanks. We support this government. We support the work they do.’

Members applauded.

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (16:08): I rise to give my address-in-reply following the 2022 Victorian state election. I have contested a number of elections now, and I have to say that this was the hardest. The global pandemic has not been kind to any of us. Whilst we might all want to forget and move on, we have all been changed by it, some more than others. Some have been made worse off than others. The 2022 state election came off the back of the global pandemic and a world of uncertainty and change, and I believe that it is the policies, the actions and the commitments of the Andrews Labor government that best place us to tackle those challenges and the uncertainty ahead and to provide for a brighter future.

I would like to thank the voters of the Thomastown electorate for casting their ballots and being part of the democratic process. I also thank those who supported me as the Labor candidate, now member, and for electing our third-term Andrews Labor government, a government that will govern for all. Since we were elected to government eight years and three months, roughly, ago, I want to talk a little bit about the transformation that has happened within the Thomastown electorate and then talk further on about what I see as the government’s policies that really will help us with having a brighter future.

The transformation in Thomastown since we have been in government over the last four years is sort of broken into two. There are the established areas of the electorate that have seen the redevelopment and rebuild of most state schools, with some still under construction and a few yet to be done. We are building new kindergartens and upgrading existing ones. There are major road upgrades, such as the Childs Road road and bridge duplication, removal of the Dalton Road roundabout, the M80 upgrades and new ramps at Edgars Road. There are now bike paths and walking tracks. The removal of the Keon Park level crossing is underway now, supporting the beautification of the area through the

Growing Suburbs Fund. There are improvements to playgrounds and parks, including the redevelopment of the Whittlesea gardens and our election commitment for a new dog park there.

We are supporting local sports clubs by contributing to pavilion builds and, most importantly, listening to what clubs want – and that is in many cases providing competition standard night lights for games as well as scoreboards. We are also adding gyms and basketball and netball facilities to schools so that they can be opened up to the local community for their use as well.

In the outer suburbs of Thomastown I think I am most proud of the partnership that brought the O’Herns Road duplication and freeway interchange some years ago. It was a great example of a community-led campaign joined by local MPs and our government working together, a project that was decided by residents and delivered by Labor.

The suburbs of Epping and Wollert have seen brand new, state-of-the-art schools with performing arts centres, ceramic rooms with kilns and music and music production studios. There are new kindergartens in the new suburbs and community centres where people can gather and celebrate and meet, although we are still working on the council to open a fully operational library.

We have created parklands and nature reserves in the electorate of Thomastown. There are more bike and walking trails in those new suburbs, not to mention our election commitment to new parklands and tightening planning laws to protect Edgars Creek and Merri Creek to protect wildlife and waterways for future generations to enjoy and of course to protect our biodiversity. We have got new bus services in those new areas, and the Epping Road duplication is now underway. Again, there is more to be done to meet the needs of these fast-growing estates and growing populations but certainly we have made the start.

Earlier I mentioned that I also wanted to talk about our future – and when I say ‘future’ I am talking about all Victorians and I guess in particular those living in Thomastown – because I believe that the Andrews Labor government, with the policies and commitments that it took to the 2022 election, were best placed to be able to provide for the best future. I know, for example, that the pandemic was a huge strain on our health system, and there are labour shortages across all occupations. There are supply chain disruptions. But, for example, the Andrews Labor government election commitment for the \$1 billion hospital plan for the north provides for huge upgrades in the emergency department at the Austin, which many people from the Thomastown electorate attend, as well as a huge transformation of the Northern Hospital, where the emergency department will be increased by some 40 per cent. A new tower will be built to be able to treat another 100 patients, and this is on top of the recent opening of the mental health tower of some 30 beds at the Northern Hospital site. And even before that, within the last eight years Labor also funded and built the first tower at the hospital. So it is actually starting to look like a first-tier, important hospital.

I have to give a big shout-out to the CEO there, Siva, and all the staff, because they really work so hard. I still remember going when Jill Hennessy was the minister to announce the funds for that first tower, the first investment really in the Northern Hospital since it had been built, many, many years ago. When it was announced there were staff there that actually were reduced to tears – they were so thankful, but also it had been such a hard slog for them and they really had not been given the credit that they deserved or given the respect that they should have had. But now I think whilst the pandemic has been tough, there really is a sense of optimism at that place, at Northern Health, because we are investing. We are showing the confidence that the government has, and the population has, in that hospital and the staff there, and people are responding to that. Just look at, for example, the innovation that the Northern Hospital can be credited for like the virtual emergency department, where they are now able to talk to people and have consultations not over the phone but, for patients that may have been attended by a paramedic, by an ambulance, on a conference video with a specialist, with a doctor that is able to then triage that patient. They may avoid then having to go to the emergency department, where earlier in the piece they might have been then subjected to the virus themselves. They do not

really have to leave their home, or they can go to another place where they are not waiting for many hours because it is something that might need emergency care but it does not need urgent care.

That takes me again to another innovation from the Andrews Labor government, and that is the priority primary care centres. I think the first one was opened by the now Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas just recently. In order to reduce the load of the emergency department at the Northern Hospital, patients are being diverted to this. Really it is a doctors surgery, a GP practice, that has partnered with the state government to provide care such as wound dressing, the treating of broken bones – again, those things that are emergencies but not life threatening – therefore reducing the amount of waiting time at the hospital. I think these things may be contributing. Recently in the paper they were reporting on the KPIs or the performance of various hospitals. There were two, Northern and Bendigo Hospital, that were actually the only ones that were meeting their performance criteria for the amount of time that it took a person in the emergency department to be treated. Again, these are innovations and initiatives that I would not have thought would ever be seen under a Liberal state government if that is the way that it had gone.

Now, I do want to talk a little bit more about the supply chain and shortages across occupations and, again, about Labor being the government that is addressing these things and is best placed to address them. Before I do that – because I often get to the point where I am running out of time – I want to be able to thank some people so I do not miss them before coming back to some of the work that is also affecting those people living in the Thomastown electorate. I have a lot of people to thank, and I would like to thank first and foremost Monique, who worked so hard and was so organised as the campaign manager. She never let us down. Her work was all the more amazing for the fact that she had never been involved in an election campaign before, let alone managed one, so I do not know how she did it, and came out the other end sane and organised as well.

To those in my office: the indomitable Yammi, who kept the office running and managed every crisis and organised every fundraiser; Holly, who was also holding the fort and helped out in the nights and early mornings; and Lara, who helped everywhere and anywhere working on two campaigns, and I thank her for her incredible insight and empathy for people while on the campaign trail.

Thanks to Gary, who kept telling me he cannot do another one but still did, and also to the AMWU crew: Tony, Mav, Sam, Bic, Chris, Lorraine and Tony. Every time we work together they have really got the campaign and booth organisation down pat. Also to the Electrical Trades Union – to Danny, Troy and the ETU crew – for helping out particularly on pre-poll and election day, and to all the ALP branch members and many members of community organisations that came out: thank you so much. To Chet and Yogi and Sally, Sharman, Naveed, Rana, Khalil, Brian, Munish and Gowri: thank you so much for all your help. There were other people that did a lot of work, and I thank all of them as well.

Getting back to the issues around occupation shortages or labour shortages in all occupations and supply chain disruptions, in addition to building things like hospitals, not only is the Big Build where we are building infrastructure for now to increase productivity and for the future generations, but these Big Build projects are also being used for social contributions, so using the government's purchasing power to do things that are compassionate and good sense in terms of looking after people within the state. Perhaps it is providing free TAFE so that young people and women in particular take up free TAFE in order to maybe change the direction of where they are working or to get into some of the shortage areas where TAFE training often leads to much better, higher paid jobs; or using our procurement and purchasing power to make sure that we provide jobs for young people; or through apprenticeships for groups of people who perhaps find it more difficult to get a job and keep a job. We have Jobs Victoria, which funds all sorts of organisations to provide really top-notch employment services to ensure that in particular young people are really getting a go and are really shown the way to get into the workforce, how to keep doing the work, and what sorts of jobs there are and what they can expect. So these are the things that you can do, which only Labor governments do, things that have proper enterprise agreements so that not only are wages decent so that people can actually have a

decent living standard but they also provide an equal playing field with a lot of businesses that have all contributed to the work.

In the Thomastown electorate there are a number of metal shops – metal fabrication, structural steel, construction businesses – all of these types of businesses as we know because they are so expensive are getting lots of work, and a lot of that is generated through the state’s program to not waste money on giving people a couple of thousand dollars to do a renovation but substantial things like level crossing removals and hospital buildings that really do actually improve people’s lives not just for the here and now but forever – for us, for our children, our grandparents, our parents. These are the sorts of things that really only Labor governments do.

I acknowledge that fewer people in the Thomastown electorate voted for Labor than in the past, but I say to them: I hope that in the next four years we can win back your trust and demonstrate our commitment to you. I of course pledge to work hard, advocate hard and listen.

Members applauded.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples) (16:23): It is a privilege to be back in this place representing the people of Dandenong, and it is a privilege I do not take lightly. As we will all be aware, our boundaries changed this time, so it was particularly wonderful to be able to take in some new areas in Noble Park and in Keysborough and some new communities in those areas and to learn about their challenges and needs in the time going ahead, and also of course acknowledge that they were well served by the former member for Keysborough, who is no longer in this place. To that end I should also say it was a shame to lose some of the residents out of Endeavour Hills, but I know that they are in very good hands under the member for Narre Warren North.

Before I get into making a few comments about things I am proud of that this government has achieved and looking to the future of what we will achieve, I want to – so I do not forget or run out of time – thank at the outset my campaign team and also my staff in my electorate office. You do not win elections in the campaign period. For those of us who have had the privilege of serving multiple terms, you win it through the work that you do each and every day and through the trust that you build with your communities over time by delivering for them. I came to this place in 2014 being very clear that the function of my office is one of service and that we are there for them irrespective of whether they voted for us or not and that our primary reason for being is them. You cannot do that as a local MP without an incredible team of people who represent you each and every day, sometimes in very difficult circumstances, and over the last few years for all electorate officers on all sides of politics – but arguably particularly for those serving government MPs – it has been a very, very challenging time and one that I know has tapped out the energy reserves of many of our staff. So I want to say a particularly big thankyou to Stefan, to Mojgan, to Sofia, to Ariel, to Janaki and also to Derya – and others who have been in and out of the office over the years, but they represent a very significant core of my staff who have seen me through some very challenging times.

I also want to thank though a couple of people who have been exceptional throughout my campaign, starting with of course my campaign manager, Jordan Bassilious, who is a remarkable young man. Jordan is a man who actually did work experience with me when he was 15. He had extraordinary talent. I think he was more widely read at 15 than I am at 40. He had read every political biography at 15 that had been published, which was quite disarming but also quite remarkable, and to watch the young man that he has grown into has been an absolute joy. To have him run my campaign for me was such a great privilege, but to know that I was in the safest of hands was truly heartwarming, particularly due to the fact that I had only recently had a baby, come the election. My son Ruairi was born six weeks prior to the election, which meant I for most of the formal campaign was somewhat out of action and in the lead-up to the formal campaign was very heavily pregnant and dealing with all the vagaries that come with pregnancy, and to have a young man show such great sensitivity to my

reality and to manage my time and try and keep me as stress free as possible was a great sign of his maturity, so a big thankyou to Jordan Bassilious. What a bright future that young man has.

But also thank you to Angie Venuto-Cole, who has been a stalwart of the Labor Party out in the south-eastern suburbs for a very long time. Her dedication knows no bounds, and her commitment to the cause knows no bounds. Her husband Phil is equally a stalwart of the party and somebody who is always by her side. Nothing is too much to ask of those two remarkable people, and I owe them a great debt of gratitude. I thank many other volunteers who manned a long and very tense pre-poll for a couple of weeks. I know I had volunteers that stood day in, day out, for hours and hours at a time and who have done this for decades for the Labor Party. I am loath to mention specific names, because I know that there are so many of them, but I do have to give a special shout-out to Jackie Weatherhead, who did extraordinarily long hours in very trying conditions at Dandenong Stadium. But there are many others like her, so I want to say a big thankyou.

Also, and this might be somewhat unusual in this place, thankyou to my opponent in the Liberal Party, Karen, who conducted herself at all times in our local election with great integrity. Unlike other booths we had virtually no incidents at the Dandenong booths and particularly in Dandenong pre-poll. I think that starts from the top, and if you have got a candidate that is respectful of their opponent and of other volunteers then that does seem to trickle down to the way volunteers conduct themselves. So it is in no small part a credit to her that things ran very smoothly at the Dandenong pre-poll.

I want to take an opportunity too to reflect on the community that I represent. We all think our communities are the best ones. That is why we are here. We are flag wavers and advocates for our local constituencies. Dandenong is I think one of the most unique places in Australia – home to 158 different nationalities, over 200 languages, around 100 different faith groups, all in the one community. We are a living, breathing example of how multiculturalism can work, and it has been an honour over the last eight-and-a-bit years to represent this community; to learn so much about its people, our people, and so much about what brings people to this country, to this state and to my local community; and to see firsthand how they bring their experience to bear in the way they live their lives here and ultimately how they go on to serve our collective good – and they do.

Dandenong is a great example of the wonderful opportunity that exists not only for migrant communities and particularly for refugee and asylum seeker communities but for us in receiving them. We are so very fortunate to have these people with their experiences, with their knowledge, with their compassion and empathy, living among us and teaching us to be better people. I firmly hold that view and always will.

There are so many things I could talk about in terms of what we have achieved in Dandenong and what we will continue to deliver on. I always had it as a key objective, from 2014 to this very day – and will always – that delivering for our local schools is important, and I am very proud to be able to say that almost every one of our local schools has been or is being upgraded. That of course also includes our local special school, Emerson School, which forms a part of our broader commitment to upgrade every special school in this state. It is very important that we do not impose any additional barriers to anybody achieving the best possible education or to unlocking their full potential. I am very proud of what we have achieved in our local schools in Dandenong and I remain committed to ensuring that they continue to have the facilities that enable the best possible models of education that we can deliver well into the future and create the opportunity that comes with it.

I have also been very pleased over the years to be able to have expanded the service options in Dandenong, whether it be through the Orange Door or a range of other facilities and services that we have boosted and enhanced in my time in this role. There are a range of other infrastructure upgrades as well, whether it be the Monash Freeway, the removal of level crossings at Abbots Road, South Gippy highway, Greens Road, Corrigan Road, Chandler Road and Heatherton Road, and of course Progress Street and Webster Street level crossings are on the way out too. This is more than just removing an inconvenience for commuters, as important as that is – and it is – but in my part of the

world, where some of these level crossings sit in industrial precincts, it actually goes to productivity of business and their ability to recruit workers into their businesses, because believe it or not, a 45-minute commute to travel 8 kilometres is a bit of a turn-off when it comes to looking for a job. So if we can make that a little bit quicker and safer along the way then those businesses are able to tap into some incredible expertise that exists within our community. We all benefit from that, and certainly our local economy does.

I also wanted to reflect on the fact that many of our statewide policies have been extraordinarily important for the community in Dandenong, from free kinder to free TAFE, to our power saving bonus, which I know has been extraordinarily important in a time of rising prices, and of course our sick pay guarantee for casual workers as well. We will as a government always ensure that we are delivering for those people who most need our assistance in the time that they most need it.

I also want to reflect in my last few minutes – I did not bank on taking this long in just talking about Dandenong but I could, as everyone knows, talk about Dandenong for a very long time indeed; it is a place I love, a community I love – on some of my ministerial roles. I only get a chance to talk about one in the time I have got, but it is one that is very dear to my heart and it is going to be a very big year for this portfolio and the agenda that sits within it. That is my role as Minister for Treaty and First Peoples. In coming months, by the end of this year, this state will be commencing negotiations on treaty between the state of Victoria and our First People. This is a truly historic undertaking. I do not think treaty is particularly well understood, either in here or out there. It is better understood on this side of the chamber, I should say, but still not well understood enough. It is underpinned by a really simple proposition which we should never lose sight of, and that is that putting Aboriginal people in charge of their own affairs leads to better outcomes. We know it because we have seen it where we have done it. We have done it in small ways, in small programs, and every time we delight in the fact that with those we have managed to move the dial a little bit. But we have got a big dial to move, and we have got a big dial to move across a multitude of systems. It is difficult work, it is challenging work, but I think what we have learned is we cannot just bandaid over many of these issues. We have got to look at structural reform, and treaty is our pathway to do that. It is as simple as that: treaty is about driving better outcomes.

So while I know my opposite, my shadow on that side of the house, has often had a caveat to his support of treaty, which has been ‘But we must be focused on closing the gap’, I think he is misunderstanding what we are talking about. We are wholly, 110 per cent focused on driving better outcomes for Aboriginal people. We just know that treaty is the vehicle to do that and to do that in a long-term way.

In talking about treaty and the work that is to come I want to pay a special thankyou to the First Peoples’ Assembly of Victoria for the partners that they have been in this process so far in all that we have managed to achieve. It has been very complex and detailed work, more complex and detailed than I could explain certainly in the 2 minutes I have got left but even in the 15 minutes I had to start with. It has taken great commitment and resolve to get this far, and it will take even greater commitment and resolve to get to where we need to be. A special thankyou to Marcus Stewart and Aunty Geraldine Atkinson as co-chairs of the assembly for the commitment that they have given, the time that they have given and the energy, effort and heart that they have given to this work. A big thankyou.

I am also really keen to be able to point out that an important part of this journey is the truth-telling journey. It really does set us up for the why of treaty. They say that the truth will set you free, and I think that this is particularly true for us as a nation and as a state. It is what we need – the freedom that comes with reconciling with our past and looking to our future confident in who we are but also unburdened by the shame of untold truths that we have been holding onto for far too long. It is important for us to be able to make that commitment that we will do things differently and we will not make the same mistakes again. That is a really important part of the truth-telling journey that we are on and the way that it folds into the treaty process which sits before us.

Finally, it is wonderful to have a partner in Canberra. Of course we know it is a big year on the national front as well with a referendum later this year, which is very much based on the same proposition – that our First Peoples deserve a voice, that they deserve to be heard on the issues that directly impact them – and that is a very simple proposition to have recognition in our nation’s founding document. I hope that as a state we do not let some nefarious voices confuse the simplicity of that proposition and that we do the right thing and vote ‘yes’.

I am sorry I have run out of time to talk about my other portfolios, but suffice to say I am very proud to be the member for Dandenong and hope I can continue to deliver.

Members applauded.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (16:38): In my address-in-reply to the Governor’s speech and specifically to the motion moved by the member for Ripon, I would like to begin by commenting that the Governor, as is the convention, set out the government’s plans for the coming parliamentary term. So her speech, unsurprisingly, was a reiteration of government election promises, just as we would expect, and one of the first of these was that the government will increase renewable electricity targets to 95 per cent by 2035. I must emphasise how important this is. The state currently has a renewable energy target of 50 per cent by 2030, and so this is a substantial increase to 95 per cent, even if it is five years later. Clearly, we will need to be well above 50 per cent by 2030 to get to 95 per cent within five years.

I recall moving to amend the government’s renewable energy target for 2030 from 50 per cent to 100 per cent four years ago. The Labor and Liberal parties did ridicule the idea and they blocked it of course, but last year the new federal Labor government declared their intention to achieve 82 per cent renewable energy by 2030. If we were to achieve that here in Victoria, that would put us well on the way to our 95 per cent target by 2035. It may be slower than I would like, but I do commend the government for moving this far. But why would we even bother to do this when we have so much brown coal – centuries worth of brown coal? It is obviously because of the climate crisis that is now plainly visible in so many ways – at least it should be obvious.

The Governor’s speech talks about public ownership of energy generation, keeping power bills down and creating jobs, all of it good and necessary, but there is not a whisper about climate change – no mention of global warming or the greenhouse effect, nothing about the climate emergency and its droughts, fires, heatwaves, sea level rises and the resulting ecological collapse in our forests and oceans, none of that. Surely the government has not forgotten. Perhaps the government believes their plans to own 51 per cent of a small proportion of the wind and solar generation in the state and call it the SEC addresses the problem, but that would be the problem. It only goes some way toward addressing the drivers of climate change. The climate crisis is caused by much more than coal. Weaning Victoria off coal is urgent, but burning coal to produce electricity produces less emissions now than the combined emissions from transport, agriculture and burning gas for heating. Of these the fastest-growing sector and source of emissions is transport, principally cars, almost all of which burn petrol or diesel. So we need to really look at how to address this urgently. The government has a number of big-ticket public transport projects underway, but there are some more cost-effective and perhaps more urgent measures that could be introduced very quickly at lower cost and that might – in fact would – have a greater impact on shifting people from cars into public transport.

I will start with buses. Buses are probably the most cost-effective public transport in terms of dollars per passenger kilometre, and I would urge people to have a look at the *Melbourne on Transit* blog to get a better idea of some of the improvements that could be made. For example, increasing the frequency of buses to every 15 or 20 minutes – and I am thinking, as an example, of the east–west buses that run across Essendon, Brunswick, Northcote, Clifton Hill – would increase passenger usage in this poorly served east–west direction. We have quite a good radial transport system in Melbourne with trains and trams running into the CBD, but the buses that intersect with those run less frequently, tend to stop around 7 o’clock at night and often barely run on weekends and not at all on Sundays,

depending on individual bus routes. Simply increasing the frequency and the hours of those bus routes would increase passenger patronage and mean more people left their cars at home, and of course the best electric vehicle is an electric bus. I know the government has finally bitten the bullet and decided to start investing in electric buses – and good on them – but we should actually just stop buying diesel buses and go all electric straightaway. There is no point in a government buying something that burns petrol or diesel now that is still going to be burning petrol or diesel in 20 years time.

Other excellent electric vehicles I would like to recommend are trams and trains. Increasing the frequency of our tram and train services has been shown also to increase patronage and would be an important measure to encourage more people to leave their cars at home. Likewise active transport – some jurisdictions, some governments, spend upwards of 5 up to 10 or more per cent of their transport budget on improving routes for active transport – that is, walking and riding bikes. We need to do the same here. There is a big gap in Melbourne in infrastructure for safe bike riding and if we fill that we know that we will get more people using their bikes for short journeys, and short journeys constitute a large proportion of car travel and petrol use in Melbourne – trips to the shops, trips to school, journeys of less than 5 kilometres – and they can easily be met by bikes or e-bikes. This sort of investment will drive people onto or away from cars and reduce petrol and diesel consumption, but still a lot of Victorians are going to be using cars for a long time to come.

In fact Australians buy about 1 million new cars per year, and I imagine with a quarter of the population Victoria is probably buying about a quarter of a million new cars per year. When someone buys a petrol-burning car this week, it is still likely to be burning petrol in 10 to 20 years time. We must urgently dissuade Victorians from buying petrol and diesel cars. The best thing they could buy if they must buy a car is an electric one, so I urge the government to review its policies and see what adjustments could be made to encourage people if they are going to buy a car to buy an electric one or an electric bike or to take the bus.

The next sector and source of emissions I want to touch on is agriculture. The most important emissions are methane from cows and sheep, and the next most important are nitrous oxide from cow manure and nitrogen-based fertilisers. The solutions to these are a lot more complex, so I do not expect this problem to be solved in the short term. Nevertheless, we need to start now, and we know some of the answers. Regenerative agriculture will reduce a lot of the problems, as will using some feed additives and educating people to eat less ruminant meat and move to other sources of food.

I want to come back now to the SEC briefly. The former State Electricity Commission owned 100 per cent of generation and it owned 100 per cent of the powerlines that distributed the electricity and 100 per cent of the shops that sent out the bills. I do not think the former State Electricity Commission had a website; it might have been before that time. The new SEC will own 51 per cent of some of the state's wind and solar generation, and there is talk of branching into storage as well. The biggest barriers to expanding renewable energy in this state are the lack of capacity in the powerline grid to carry electricity from northern and western Victoria into Melbourne and the lack of storage to supply power to our houses in the evenings, so this is where we most need investment, and who better to drive this than the new SEC. Of those issues, I believe fixing the grid is the most urgent need.

I will just touch briefly on electricity storage. We are already generating a large amount of solar electricity in the middle of the day, so demand from the grid is falling. Every year Victorian households are taking less energy from the grid at lunchtime, and that is largely because of home solar and increasingly due to solar farms, but that is not happening at dinnertime because the sun is low or the sun has set. Hence the need for storage, which can come in the form of household batteries or community batteries. The government has some plans to subsidise the former and build the latter, as well as some large batteries that are appearing on the Victorian grid – privately owned and public.

Pumped hydro is the technology that could do the heavy lifting. It is disappointing to see that Snowy Hydro 2 has had a major setback recently, but hopefully that will come online some time towards the end of the decade. What might come to our rescue, though, is another battery that is not getting a lot

of publicity, and that is car batteries. A typical large household battery is somewhere between 10 to 15 kilowatt hours, but a lot of car batteries are up towards 60 kilowatt hours. A parked car could probably power two houses overnight and still have enough power on board for a long journey the next day, so incentives to have workplaces provide charging stations for parked vehicles during the day could be a major part of meeting Victoria's energy storage needs.

Let us talk briefly now about methane gas. So-called natural gas, fossil methane, provides energy to about 2 million Victoria homes, most of that for heating, a fair proportion for hot water and just a few per cent – 4 per cent by a recent estimate – for cooking. It is also used by industry, and we should not forget public buildings – heated swimming pools. We need to start getting Victoria off gas, so we need subsidies and loans, we need help for people to pay disconnection fees and we need a program to start disconnecting our 2 million homes from gas. It will take decades, and we need to start now.

We are running out of gas in Victoria, and so we can drill for more fossil methane or we can import more or we can use less – or any combination of those three. Importing gas obtained by fracking is like burning very expensive coal. A lot of the gas provided in Queensland and planned in the Beetaloo Basin in the Northern Territory or in the Pilliga in New South Wales is going to be obtained by fracking, and large amounts of that escapes unburned into the atmosphere. Methane in the atmosphere is over 80 times more polluting than CO₂ as a greenhouse gas. That means that if 3 per cent or more of that gas escapes unburned, the gas is just as polluting, just as damaging to the climate, as coal. Why would you replace Victoria's polluting brown coal with something much more expensive but with a similar greenhouse impact?

I implore the government to resist the urge to allow a gas import terminal in Geelong. We need to use less gas, not import more. Drilling or importing more gas, exploiting coal reserves for brown hydrogen and trying to bury the carbon dioxide – these are all misguided fossil fuel projects at best, and in the future when we look back at this era we may be less forgiving than that. And so in response to the motion moved by the member for Ripon, I move:

That the following words be added at the end of the motion: 'but respectfully regret that the speech fails to announce a ban on new coal and gas projects'.

Continuing to exploit new fossil fuel projects while we are already counting the rising costs of climate change is madness. I think some in the government know this, and I urge them to speak up.

Members applauded.

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (16:52): It is an honour to stand here as part of a re-elected Andrews Labor government to represent Northcote once again. In doing so I recognise that long before our Parliament existed, the lands and waters we now call the inner north were nurtured and protected by the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, and I reaffirm the Labor government's unwavering commitment to walking alongside Aboriginal Victorians on the road to treaty.

Today the suburbs of Northcote, Thornbury, Fairfield, Alphington, Westgarth and Preston are a vibrant mix of creativity and culture. We are proudly diverse, we are hardworking, we are adaptive and we like to push the envelope. I have spoken many times in this place about my love and affection for the inner north, the place where I was born and raised and where I am now raising my own family. To be chosen by your local community to represent them and be their voice for a second time around is something truly special, and it is a responsibility I will never, ever take for granted – and as I reflect on the last four years I know that we never did. Each and every day our small, dedicated, hardworking team at the Northcote electorate office put our hearts, minds and bodies into supporting our community through some of the toughest years Victorians have ever faced. We took on cases big and small, gave voice to our constituents and businesses, relayed critical information, supported community groups and backed our local economy, all while we worked to deliver the major projects that Northcote needs and the critical reforms that our state deserves.

I want to thank the electorate officers who have worked side by side with me at various points throughout the last four years, including Samantha Newton, John Appleton, Johanna Sarakinis, Marion Dormer, Shanae Murnane, Sammi Turner and Campbell Hughes. You are remarkable people who care deeply about our movement, about helping people who need it most and leaving our world better than we found it. Thank you for being at my side, weathering the storms and celebrating the wins.

Our community is resilient. We showed courage, compassion and innovation at a time of great crisis, but we also felt deep impacts. We lost businesses, we lost opportunities. For some, we lost loved ones dear to us. And for a huge number of health workers in my electorate, many servicing some of Melbourne's busiest public hospitals, the pressure was acute. We are resilient, but we are not invincible, and the impacts of the pandemic still reverberate in our suburbs.

We need to tackle inequality and cost-of-living pressure in the inner north. There are still far too many renters living in poor conditions, powerless to move. There are still far too many workers without job security, too many older people living without adequate support and too many people suffering with mental health issues as we work to reform a broken system. We need to invest in local, accessible health care. We must continue to work to build modern schools and career pathways that offer opportunity and security. We must create more livable, sustainable suburbs and work on reforms that bring better balance to our busy lives.

Across health, housing, education, transport, jobs and the environment, it has been my priority to push for initiatives and reforms that deliver real prosperity into our suburbs and change people's lives for the better. This election was a critical one in our state's history. Victorians had a big choice to make, and they chose comprehensively to back a Labor government and a future of hope not hate. Despite all the extreme campaigning we saw from our opponents, despite some of the awful narratives that have pervaded the last four years, Victorians chose the Labor government they know will be there for them. In an interview recently the Premier said it best: he said that as a Victorian community we are kind and generous and thoughtful, and our better selves know and understand that sometimes leadership is all about doing what is right, not doing what is popular.

The truth is that while our government worked hour by hour to overcome serious challenges and complex issues with the objective of saving lives, Victorians witnessed the conservatives busy themselves spreading dangerous misinformation while the Greens thrashed around trying to find more opportunities to solicit donations. I am not going to sugar-coat my experience of the election campaign because some of the language and behaviours that I witnessed were utterly appalling. And though it gives me great comfort to know that Victorians utterly rejected this polarising, aggressive, pessimistic outlook, I believe we owe it to our democracy and the value we place on peaceful engagement with that democracy to call some of this out.

In Northcote we faced an incredibly tough contest, contesting as we did not so much with a political party as with a marketing machine. Between the ultra right and the ultra left, we were up against vicious misinformation campaigns, hyperpersonal attacks, threats and intimidation, and outright racism. We had to take the Greens-dominated Darebin council to the Supreme Court because Victoria Police discovered they were unlawfully stealing our paid advertising billboards in the dead of night. Some of my volunteers were physically assaulted. I want to put some of these things on the record not to be negative but to highlight the vicious desperation of the effort that was pitted against us. But it did not work. Despite the Liberals teaming up with the Greens, it did not work. My community chose hope not hate. They chose action not words.

I am so proud of the Northcote Labor team, who came together with energy, passion, our shared vision and our strong values. Together we worked every day over the last four years to make real progress in the inner north, and we put forward a real offering to our community for the future – one with true reform, tangible investment and genuine opportunity. People are always at the heart of our Labor movement, and I am so incredibly grateful to all of the members and volunteers who made phone calls, knocked on doors, hosted yard signs, letterboxed our streets, handed out cards on election day

and spoke to thousands of locals. Special thanks also to my campaign team, including my campaign manager Joshua Pelach and field organiser Jean-Marc Kurban, and to my family, who I have put through far too much and who somehow never waver.

In Northcote the Greens primary vote dropped by almost 10 per cent – a very clear signal that our community is not buying what they are selling. Sadly it is no surprise across Darebin and Yarra that the Greens voting record and decision-making has left my community deeply wounded. Our real-life experience under these Greens councils demonstrates time and again that they will put their own interests over issues like social housing, multiculturalism, working-class people, small businesses, local sports and even the environment. As the member for Northcote I have gone head-to-head with them on these issues, and I will continue to do that because our community deserves more. We do not deserve to see services cut, our sports clubs closed or social housing projects stall or businesses fail or the most marginalised people become even more marginalised.

In Northcote Labor has a record of achievement and a tangible plan for the future. Locally we have a commitment to opening an early parenting centre in Northcote so that parents and babies can get the support they need in those tumultuous early years. We will also open a mental health and wellbeing local in Northcote, giving residents direct access to life-saving support they need close to home. Across our community our local schools are being upgraded, and I am looking forward to seeing progress on Thornbury Primary as we deliver on a \$17.6 million election commitment for that fantastic and deserving school. Free kinder, TAFE and nursing courses are generating opportunities like never before, new social housing is on the way and there are plans to make our tram and train networks more accessible. Our neighbourhood houses, which deliver such critical services to people in my community from adult education to men's sheds, playgroups, wellbeing programs and more, will receive additional funds to continue their work.

Northcote City Football Club, one of our largest clubs in the inner north, will receive \$500,000 towards female-friendly change rooms and bathrooms at John Cain Memorial Park in Thornbury, something I know the Cain family are happy to see as we look to the future of this important sports precinct. Labor will also provide a \$1 million investment to upgrade the sports pavilion at Deep Rock in Yarra Bend Park to provide modern, accessible spaces for the sports teams who use these grounds, including the Fitzroy Junior Football Club and the Edinburgh Cricket Club. At Merri station we are investing \$1.5 million to design and deliver a new vision for Merri Common, co-designed with locals. We will work together to create a welcoming space where the whole community can come together, socialise and stay active.

Labor has also committed to introducing planning controls to prevent inappropriate development along our creeks. Our creeks are very important to us. We will back this with a \$10 million fund to create wildlife corridors, protect our waterways and restore the natural environment. My heartfelt thanks to our hardworking Friends of Merri Creek, Friends of Darebin Creek, Merri Creek Management Committee and Darebin Creek Management Committee, who worked with me and Minister D'Ambrosio to get this commitment up.

Of course there are so many more projects underway in the north and across Melbourne. Our \$1 billion hospital plan for the north will deliver upgrades at the Austin and Northern hospitals. At the Austin we will expand the emergency department to support an extra 30,000 emergency patients every year, ensuring the hospital can meet the needs of our growing population. This week my own family attended the Austin emergency room when my five-year-old daughter Ariana unfortunately broke her arm. The break was more complex than usual, and she needed surgery. For any parent or child this is a distressing experience, but I am so grateful for the care she received at the Austin. The hardworking nurses, clinicians and surgeons were wonderful. They made her feel safe and comfortable, explained things clearly and gave her the best possible care. Traumatic as it was, she is now back home and adjusting to her new normal as she heals with a cast on her arm.

Our investment in Victoria's healthcare system is vital. As Parliamentary Secretary for Women's Health I am looking forward to bringing new focus to improving women's access to informed, timely, quality care, because despite centuries of world-changing research and medical advancement and unprecedented investment in our health system, infrastructure and workforce, there are still far too many barriers to women seeking, reaching and receiving health care, and every day the cumulative impact of this is borne out on women's bodies. That is why Labor will open 20 women's health clinics across the state and expand our existing sexual and reproductive health hub network to 20 sites. These new clinics will be one-stop shops for women needing treatment and advice on issues ranging from contraception to pelvic pain, polycystic ovary syndrome, endometriosis and menopause symptoms. We will also establish a women's health research institute and a women's pain management inquiry to help us find new ways to identify and treat diseases like endometriosis and improve patient care. The Minister for Health and I are incredibly passionate about this policy area, and I look forward to working at her side as we progress these critical reforms.

My community is proudly climate conscious, and one of the most incredible announcements our Labor government has made is the return of the State Electricity Commission. The SEC will not just be a publicly owned power company; it will be a 100 per cent renewable energy publicly owned power company. After years of failed privatisation and out-of-control energy prices, this announcement is a game changer, delivering cheaper power bills, lower emissions and putting power back in the hands of Victorians. It should leave no room for doubt: under Labor Victoria is a global leader in climate action. When we came into government in 2014 renewables counted for just 12 per cent of Victoria's energy generation, and the Liberals' huge exclusion zones had ground renewable energy investment to a halt.

In just eight years under Labor we increased renewables to over 30 per cent and we have completely outstripped our initial emissions reduction targets. We are now committed to going even further, to reduce emissions by 80 per cent in 2035 and bring forward net zero to 2045. Under Labor we will run our state on 95 per cent renewables in little more than a decade. I will say it again because it is truly remarkable: in 2014 under the Liberals we had 12 per cent renewables, under Labor we will reach 95 per cent by 2035. That is an extraordinary jump, and it does not happen by accident. It happens under strong and progressive Labor governments that knuckle down and do the work to transition our economy and, vitally, bring Victorians with us, because transition cannot be for some and not for others.

As the member for Northcote I will always fight for real climate action, and I look forward to the work we will do this coming decade as we dramatically ramp up renewables, build energy-efficient homes, transition industries off gas, introduce a container deposit scheme, ban more single-use plastics, restore vast areas of wilderness, set up neighbourhood batteries, invest in electric vehicles and infrastructure and protect our biodiversity, including by ending forestry for good. Whether it be in health, education, climate or social justice, Labor is unashamedly about delivering real change, real improvement and real opportunity in people's lives. Victorians have made their voices loud and clear – rejecting the pessimism, opportunism, extremism and tokenism, and backing a Labor government to continue delivering a positive plan for the future. Northcote is part of that story, and there are many exciting things on our horizon. I am honoured to have the opportunity to work with my community again as we make our state stronger, fairer and more livable.

Members applauded.

Vicki WARD (Eltham) (17:07): Firstly, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, and I pay my respects to elders past, present and those emerging. I also pay my respects to the Wurundjeri for being the traditional custodians of the land on which I live and where my electorate stands, and I express my gratitude for living in such a beautiful part of our state.

I am also grateful to the people of Diamond Valley who make up the Eltham electorate. I thank them for their support for the work that we have been doing over the last eight years and the exciting projects

that we have got ahead. Our community in Melbourne's north-east is made up of deeply passionate and engaged individuals. I understand the great privilege it is to live and work in such a unique area which values community, and I absolutely understand the immense privilege of being elected to represent such a wonderful community.

I do not take re-election for granted, and I know that I will continue this hard work every day to achieve the best outcomes I can for our community, a community which is engaged and community minded, which is in a beautiful and unique location. Over the next four years I will continue to keep working with my community, as I have done for the last eight years, to ensure that the people of Eltham district are delivered the services, support and infrastructure that our community needs.

Before I get to the wonderful local investment that will be coming to our community, I want to celebrate the announcement last year that a re-elected Andrews government will bring back the SEC. The SEC will be 100 per cent renewable and 100 per cent publicly owned. It will be Victorian for Victorians. The State Electricity Commission will initially invest \$1 billion towards delivering 4.5 gigawatts of new renewable energy projects by 2035, the equivalent replacement capacity of Loy Yang A. Through these renewable projects we will push wholesale prices down and lower bills.

Acting Speaker Taylor, I know that you are as excited as I am by the announcement that there will be another round of the power saving bonus, round 4 which begins on 24 March. It is hugely popular, and I see from the noise of the colleagues that are in this chamber today that our communities love it. They understand what it is. They understand what is meant by it. It is not just the fact that you get a \$250 payment to help you with your bills, it is that you can actually work on changing your bills and making your bills cheaper in the future as well. With the SEC back in public hands the State Electricity Commission will not be run for shareholder profits but for all Victorians. The SEC will help deliver our nation-building renewable energy and emissions targets of 95 per cent renewable energy by 2035 and net zero by 2045. It will help increase gross state product by about \$9.5 billion.

We have committed to establish an SEC centre of training excellence, backed a \$424 million energy and training package to help workers upskill and to create 6000 positions for apprentices and trainees. Our clean energy programs and policies, including the SEC, will help create 59,000 jobs. And our tech schools will be a part of this skills creation – wonderful news for Banyule Nillumbik Tech School at Melbourne Polytechnic TAFE, the one the Liberals closed and wanted to flog off. I am looking forward to my role as parliamentary secretary, and I thank the Minister for Education who is here at the table for her amazing amount of work. I am so looking forward to working with her, the work that we can do together and the work I do supporting the new six tech schools the Andrews government will deliver. Of course free TAFE continues to grow, helping to remove barriers to accessing education and training.

I can tell you that parents and early childhood educators alike are enthusiastic about free kinder for all three- and four-year-olds in Victoria, and Acting Speaker Taylor, I reckon your community would be thrilled with this as well. We are helping to provide for these extra kinder kids through our great Building Blocks grants. Not only will this help our kids have the best start in life, it will also help families save an average of \$2500 a year, which is important to begin to help to address the cost-of-living pressures that families are experiencing. We committed last year to investing \$400,000 in Research Preschool, further improving this wonderful kinder with fantastic educators and terrific kids. We are also helping to improve the lovely Eltham Woods Childcare Co-operative with an investment of \$1.5 million.

Yesterday I was at Montmorency Primary undertaking the sod turn for the wonderful new build about to be undertaken at this great school. The old, dilapidated castle has gone and will be replaced with the brand new science, technology, engineering and maths centre, as well as new outdoor learning areas and a music space for all the wonderful performances and musicians, and maybe even an appearance by Pevan & Sarah. I had the fantastic opportunity to speak with Monty Primary School captains Joel Koolstra and Celina Tong and vice captains Amelia Bradley and Gus Natoli, as well as

Monty's energised and enthusiastic and engaged SRC – Olive, Willow, Nina, Lucas, Esther, Eva, Aaron, Lacey, Luca, Sabine, Riley, Sarah, Osha, Sam, Neve and Julian – terrific kids who are fantastic leaders and representatives of their school.

We are also in the middle of building a new gym at Greenhills Primary School, giving the school a space where basketball can be played and students can enjoy a much larger space that is fit for purpose. But there is of course more to be done with our local schools, and I know that is not just my electorate that is keeping the Minister for Education busy. At Eltham High School we have committed \$8.94 million to support the school to rebuild their science block. This is an excellent school, and I thank principal Vincent Sicari and his team for all of the work that they undertake to support our students and be one of the most, if not the most, inclusive school in our state.

I want to talk about our fantastic local community health service HealthAbility. Recently their Baby Makes 3 program won VicHealth's outstanding health promotion award. This is a fantastic program which delivers important mental health and wellbeing benefits to more first-time parents across Victoria, particularly those from vulnerable, marginalised and hard-to-reach communities. I send huge congratulations to HealthAbility and their wonderful staff. It is fantastic that at last year's election we committed \$100,000 to HealthAbility, supporting them in the wonderful work that they do. Baby Makes 3 is just one example.

I do not think any of us can thank our healthcare workers enough. Like the member for Northcote, I have also recently been to Austin emergency, and the care I received there was terrific. I look forward to the Eltham area community hospital, one of 10 community hospitals we are continuing to build across Victoria, delivering for our communities. It will deliver both hospital and primary healthcare services, including unplanned urgent care, general medical and specialist appointments, day surgery and chronic disease management.

Acting Speaker Taylor, my community is about to go through seven weeks of intense round-the-clock work on the Hurstbridge line upgrade stage 2, and I think your community is experiencing a bit of their own work at the moment. We are delivering new stations for Montmorency and Greensborough, which includes a duplicated track, pedestrian crossing at Diamond Creek, additional morning peak services, new train stations and greater frequency of trains. Crews have already dug more than 200 piles through 320 cubic metres of concrete, installed 1369 sleepers, fixed 155 tonnes of structural steel and built walls using 220 blocks made of recycled plastic and stone mix.

A member: That's a lot.

Vicki WARD: It is a lot, Minister. There will be approximately 700 workers per shift working along the corridor 24/7 to deliver more trains more often on the Hurstbridge line when the new Monty and Greensborough stations open on 30 April, and with more trains more often, with increased accessibility and services for commuters in the north-east, who can commute through public transport rather than on our roads, we will be even closer to achieving our government's increased emissions reduction target of 75 to 80 per cent by 2035 and bringing forward our most ambitious net zero emissions target by five years to 2045. We are also seeing the shared user path between Greensborough and Monty underway, and I am very excited that last year we committed to linking the Plenty River Trail to the Diamond Creek Trail through extending this shared user path from Monty to Eltham. Finally, Greensborough station will have all-abilities access, as well as heating and cooling in the waiting room. It is amazing because I tell you what: it can be a very cold station. Greensborough and Monty will also receive new art installations, a great outcome.

Speaking of Monty, the Monty bowling club is a fantastic community sporting club which is not only highly competitive and successful, but they are also fantastic in building a community and looking out for each other. Last year we committed half a million dollars towards refurbishing their rooms, allowing more space for their growing club. Another wonderful local club is the 2nd Eltham Sea Scouts. Thanks to the re-election of this government they will receive \$70,000 towards the upgrade of

their facilities. I live in a community where dogs are absolutely loved, and that is why it was great news to know that our government will support improvements to the Diamond Creek Dog Park.

So much is happening right now in Eltham district at the moment. The gateway project is underway, restoring a forgotten part of the entrance to Eltham as well as installing a beautiful art piece by sculptor Maureen Faye-Chauhan. I want to thank all of those involved in this project, including Nillumbik, the friends groups and Sue and Dennis for their work, and I want to give Sue an especial shout-out for her environment work over many years, revegetating our area wherever and whenever she can. Fitzsimons Lane is nearly done, and the Ryans Road intersection upgrade is about to get started.

Where I live is incredible, as are the people who live there, and I really want to acknowledge and thank some very important people, those who work in my office and support our community above and beyond. Over the last four years this includes Josh and Adele, and especially over the last 12 months it includes Katherine, James, Jennie, Tim, Darcy, Michelle and Jack. They are an incredibly dedicated team, and I am especially grateful for everything that they do. In addition I would like to thank Rhonda, John, Garry, Sandra, Terry, Tim, Laura and Ann. I thank you for all of your work during the campaign.

Thank you to the phenomenal Eltham branch of the ALP, who are a machine that just keeps working and working, always doing all they can to support Labor and the good, important work that Labor governments do. I thank Jimmy James for his amazing work as campaign manager and Emily and Katherine for the phenomenal support they gave. You guys worked so hard. I am incredibly grateful, and our community has benefited from your kind hearts, tremendous work ethic and questionable humour. Thank you to Biden, Dog President and campaign champion. Thank you to Danielle Green, Kate Thwaites and Rob Mitchell for all of their support.

A huge thankyou to the hardworking machine of Young Labor, including Young Labor Left, who volunteered in Eltham, smashing those hills, knocking on as many doors as they could and making a huge amount of calls. I thank the whole Young Labor movement for their work across our state, helping to deliver a Labor government that will continue important reform, a Big Build agenda and ongoing social justice reform for Victoria. I love that we are supported by young Victorians who value the contributions that this government is making on education, on environment, on health and on infrastructure.

To every volunteer who helped at election day, at pre-poll and in the lead-up to the campaign, thank you. It takes a lot to stand out in the streets in rain, hail or shine. It takes a lot of effort to deal with the variety of people that we had on pre-poll – their attitudes, their different personalities and some very challenging behaviour at times. I know that in Eltham we did not experience the depth of challenges that were experienced in other electorates, and I do hope in future elections that we see better behaviour on our polling booths and particularly at early voting, because some of the behaviour, particularly the sexist and misogynistic behaviour, was uncalled for, unwanted and unnecessary. So to all the volunteers that helped on election day and in pre-poll, particularly from the Labor Party but across all parties – those who behaved well – I say thank you, because democracy is important, and it is only through the help of our volunteers that we are able to communicate our messages, that we are able to get out there and talk to people and that we are able to really strengthen our desire to be activists. For those people to step up their volunteer hours, to get out there and to help is really incredible, and I am so grateful, as I know everybody in this chamber is – particularly those Labor volunteers. They are investing in our community's future. I thank them for their commitment to Labor and the Labor cause.

I cannot finish without thanking my own family. I thank my partner Mark for all of the work and support that he gives me. I thank our two girls who, despite the fact that they live locally, that they have grown up, that they know friends from school, are still there helping me at pre-poll, are at polling booths and are wearing my T-shirt, no matter how embarrassing that must be, and I am very grateful for the support and the patience that they give to me. I also want to thank my mum and dad for their ongoing love and support. It is wonderful to have people in your corner who are always there for you

and who do support you. I know that I am not only lucky, I am very privileged to have such a lovely supporting family around me.

I think we have been in government now for 3015 days. I could be wrong; I am happy to be corrected. It might be one less, it might be one more.

Gary Maas interjected.

Vicki WARD: Thank you for the confirmation, member for Narre Warren – South, North?

Gary Maas: South.

Vicki WARD: South, thank you. It is amazing to be a part of this government. I thank the Premier for his leadership. I thank all of our ministers for the work that they do. I thank all of my colleagues. We are an exceptional team, this Labor caucus. We want to get out there and do really good work for our communities because we love this state, we love the justice that this government creates, we love the opportunities that this government creates and we are extremely grateful to be here in this place. As the member for Essendon often says, every day in government is a good day, and it is exceptionally good to be a part of the Andrew Labor government.

Members applauded.

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (17:22): I rise to give a big shout-out to Bass and everyone within it. It has been wonderful to hear everyone's contributions thus far. Now in our third term I guess a lot has been delivered. Progressive reform has taken shape across many big areas and much is in progress. There is always more to do, and I am absolutely energised and excited to be given this opportunity to represent the people of Bass in season two and to work with and for them and all our amazing communities for the next four years. From better health care to modern schools; secure jobs; recreation and cultural facilities; safe and secure housing; a cleaner, greener economy; roads and rail; parks and open spaces; and protecting our precious environment, our community is at the heart of what we do. It is a partnership and we get on with it.

I was thrilled and relieved that our Andrews Labor government was returned for this third term and we can continue to build on this progressive and positive program and agenda for all Victorians. It is important that our big reforms like rebuilding the mental health system and transforming our kinder system will not be dismantled and that locally our election commitments will be delivered regardless of the local outcome – which was two weeks in the making – and that we will continue to support, invest in and deliver the services and programs, infrastructure and funding that we need in Bass, because this is what we are as Labor. It was always going to be close, with or without a redistribution of the seat, and we never once took anything for granted.

We were out and about on the doors. We had an amazing team in Bass: volunteers, branchies, supporters, friends, and my kids as well. Member for Eltham – they loved wearing my T-shirts, I think. They also stood there in the rain and the hail and had their lines that they came up with themselves: bringing back the SEC, building stage 2 of Wonthaggi Hospital, delivering a rec reserve for Tooradin, all sorts of things. I would be absolutely lost without them. We were all out and about, on the doors, at the shops and markets, making phone calls and having conversations with community members at every turn. Our branch members, friends and supporters worked their absolute guts out. I promise I will not use any unparliamentary language this time around. They were helping in a myriad of ways. It was a team effort, and my family and I are very grateful for their support.

Each conversation we had was important and valued because we got an insight into what matters to people and their families and communities in the area. It is an opportunity to learn about what needs attention and to see if it already aligns with our social and infrastructure agenda or a funding program, support or service, and if not, we go in and fight for it. Across the electorate you find those commonalities too, those golden threads that bring us together as a community and as a society. There

are challenges, especially around the cost of living, access to services close to home, housing and facilities that need a revamp to make them more inclusive and welcoming.

It is absolutely amazing and humbling to have been re-elected and a privilege and an honour to work with and for our community. I will continue to apply that same grit and determination and fight to be the voice for the people of Bass here in the chamber and around the government table and build on the momentum that we have already started and keep at it, because we deserve a whole heap more.

I want to take this opportunity also to welcome the new Bass communities coming in from the Tooradin to Pearcedale areas – the coastal villages of Warneet, Blind Bight and Cannons Creek – and Devon Meadows and Cranbourne South, and I really look forward to listening and walking beside the communities here and representing them as well, because they equally deserve the services, infrastructure, supports and programs.

I also want to thank the communities and people in Pakenham and Clyde North. In the redistribution I did lose 20,000 people in Pakenham and 15,000 people in Clyde North – mine being one of the largest electorates in the state. They were so welcoming. You know, they opened their arms, their homes, their schools, their clubs and their centres in welcoming me so that I could represent them and work with them to get some positive outcomes too. On a side note, it was great to be at Devon Meadows Cricket Club with the under-14 girls, who actually won their grand final.

Vicki Ward interjected.

Jordan CRUGNALE: I know. It was a great thing to do on the way to Parliament – to sit for a couple of hours and watch a whole cricket match at Devon Meadows. There was Kellie; she was like, ‘Hey, Jordan.’ She is one of the teachers at a Clyde North primary school, Grayling Primary School, and it was wonderful to reconnect with her. Although I have lost Grayling Primary School, we have gained Kellie and the community at Devon Meadows. Our paths will always cross, as do many of our projects and programs that go beyond those electorate walls, and the beautiful connections and friendships that have been made are long-lasting too.

We had some big commitments in the electorate of Bass, and we actually kickstarted the whole Labor campaign in the electorate of Bass at Wonthaggi Hospital, where we announced up to \$290 million for stage 2 and the paramedic practitioners program as well, and I will talk about that in a second. We have also \$6.7 million for Wonthaggi Primary School; \$5.3 million for upgrading San Remo; \$16.7 million for jetties and boating facilities, including two new jetties at Warneet and an expansion at Cowes; upgrades to boat ramps and car parks at Inverloch, Lang Lang and Tooradin; \$2.15 million towards a new modern pavilion and revamped skate park at Tooradin recreation reserve; 200 grand towards Corinella Boating & Angling Club’s new community clubrooms; and of course three new schools in the Clyde area.

I might just talk in a bit more detail, I guess, about some of those commitments if time allows. I am a little unprepared because this was a very last-minute thing. Our commitment in San Remo – one example – was back in November, and there were streams of happy tears rolling down the faces of all of us, joined by Harriet Shing MP, school council vice-president Kelly Woolford, Amy, Lucy, Gus and Harvey. We can now get on with delivering this and get them modern, light-filled, accessible and permanent classroom spaces. I so love that school, and four years in it is great that we committed to this one. The school does need a little love too, but its reputation reverberates across the region. The principal, Karen Bowker, is so well regarded and respected. Their teachers and education support team are dedicated, talented and all heart, and they work crazily hard. The school community themselves have their arms wrapped around each other, and the kids are divine, creative sparks of energy, community-minded and kind. It is a dynamic school with outstanding educational opportunities – descriptive superlatives, really, at every turn.

We also, as I said, mentioned Wonthaggi Hospital. In 2018 we funded \$115 million in stage 1, and this time around, with our Premier and also the Minister for Health we went down and committed up

to \$290 million. Well, here we are, and this is what is in the mix: there are new wards, 64 beds; a new birthing complex; a new outpatient clinic, which means more dialysis, chemo and specialists, complete with medical imaging unit and refurbished allied health spaces; more car parks, of course; training areas; and heaps of construction jobs. Our community has rallied behind and walked beside Bass Coast Health and their professional, dedicated, all-heart and amazing staff for decades.

Recently we had a tour of Wonthaggi Hospital, and the great thing too when we look at stage 1 is that it already contains a section in that stage 1 building for a future expansion, because we do think ahead of ourselves, which means it is actually ready to be fitted out. There are two shells, and I am certainly advocating for some early works funding there to get maternity up and running. At the moment we have got 300 women that birth outside the catchment, and it would be great, with a higher level of maternity support, if we can have them birth closer to home, surrounded by their family.

Wonthaggi Primary was a \$6.7 million announcement, and here we have come to upgrade several buildings that are bursting at the seams and need a lot of love too. The community there, with the school president Caroline Moore, has been very active and a big cheers to them and all involved.

Locally the new builds have been Bass Coast College, Wonthaggi Secondary senior and also the junior campus in San Remo, and that is an \$80 million investment. Those two new schools are just gold, really, for our community. There is always more to do, obviously, with upgrades. I will certainly be working with my community to get the Dudley campus upgraded as well.

Back to Tooradin, I tell you what: Sally, the amazing sports physio who works at Tooradin football club, was very happy with the news of \$2.15 million into the recreation reserve there towards a new pavilion and a revamped skate park too. The Corinella Boating & Angling Club, 32 years strong, with 200 members and growing, is one big family that loves all things fishing I visited them last year to make the announcement of \$200,000 towards their new community clubrooms. I did not win the meat tray, but they were very happy with that announcement. They have been relentless in their quest for a club, a community space that is welcoming and inclusive, and are super keen to run programs, fish days and fish comps – all things fish – but also have space for local playgroups, gatherings and other activities. They are a great crew there with Murray Wannan, who is the president, treasurer Sally Van Hees, the committee and the members.

Statewide we are really happy with the V/Line fare capping as well. We have got a couple of buses that come down to Bass – the V/Line bus – and that will make a huge difference for our local community. The SEC was obviously a massive announcement of statewide government-owned electricity, and it turns out that after that announcement there were quite a few people that came to my office in Wonthaggi mentioning that my electorate office was actually a former SEC office, so that was quite brilliant too.

Mary-Anne Thomas interjected.

Jordan CRUGNALE: Yes, we were very happy about that.

On specialist school support – and I am going to run out of time – I was doorknocking in Wonthaggi and I was speaking with a woman who has a child that goes to the local specialist school. We were talking about the supports, and she said, ‘Wouldn’t it be great if there was before- and after-school care, if maybe specialists could come to our school. It’s just really hard sometimes as a single mum.’ The very next day – yes – there was the statewide announcement, so the day after that I went back and I got the biggest hug in the world when I mentioned that a re-elected Andrews government would transform the schools for kids with disabilities, including through after-school care, holiday care, specialists coming to the schools and NDIS navigators for each of our specialist schools across the state. It is certainly a hug that I will remember forever, really.

Free nursing and midwifery – when you are out doorknocking, you talk about some of the things you are doing and want to do. I was out doorknocking and I met Brigitte. Brigitte had just finished year 12,

and Brigitte was very happy with the free nursing because she had just got into ACU to study and under a Labor government it is free. I was playing basketball against her team recently, and she was very excited – she was coming up for orientation week. She loves it. Her mum, who is a nurse, loves it. Her sister Alice loved the fact that her big sister could study nursing – and we all do. It is such a great program for future jobs as well in our health sector.

We have got a lot of things – I am really going to run out of time again. I do not do this every time, but I know with the budget replies I have done it every time.

Members interjecting.

Jordan CRUGNALE: I know, I know. Just keep going. There is so much to get on with already. I just want to thank the people of Bass really for putting their trust in me.

A member: Because they are smart.

Jordan CRUGNALE: Well, you know, it was hit and miss there for a while, but we are here. I am going to fight for you. There is a whole heap of stuff that we want, and I am going to keep fighting till we get it.

Members applauded.

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (17:37): I want to begin by thanking the people of Macedon for once again electing me to be their representative. There is no greater honour than being an elected representative of this fabulous community that I call home. The Macedon Ranges of course are extraordinarily beautiful. I am sure you would all agree it is the most beautiful electorate in the state of Victoria, and we really relish the environment in which we live and work very hard to care for that. As the elected member I work hard in turn to ensure that I am delivering for the people that I represent. In my third term as the Labor member for Macedon in a third-term Andrews Labor government, it is a great honour and privilege, but the thing is, in order to win the trust of the community, you have to deliver and you have to talk to that community about the things that matter to your community. It is not just good enough to talk; you have to deliver, and that is what our government has done time and time again.

Standing on pre-poll, doorknocking in my community, making calls and so on, I was able to talk to people about the issues that were of concern to them. Not only that, there was a track record of delivery to back in the promises that our government was making. Looking to the eight years that we have been in government, I was able to talk to my community about the investments and the reforms that have been delivered in education and in health in our community, the jobs that have been delivered, the family violence reforms and the really hard work that is underway to implement each and every one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. Unlike our opponents at this election, we had a strong story to tell, one of delivery but also of promise, of more initiatives, more reforms to be delivered. I think we all agree in this place that until you have done pre-poll, you have never quite experienced anything like it. Unless you have done it for the 11 days, it is hard to explain to other people. But I must make the observation that while I was able to talk about the things that mattered to the people of my electorate, my opponent only had one negative message, and that was to get rid of Daniel Andrews. Well, the people have spoken, and they spoke to deliver a government that would keep delivering the services and the reforms that matter to them.

One of the most popular initiatives, I have got to say, was bringing back the SEC. I have spoken in this house already about my family's connection to the SEC, and I have got to say there are people of a certain demographic, myself included, who understand exactly what the SEC meant. Not only did it mean cheap, affordable power, it meant great jobs and opportunities for young people, highly skilled jobs and so on, and that is exactly what we will continue to deliver.

Cheaper and fairer V/Line fares capped at \$9.20 – I have seven V/Line stations in my electorate, and I can tell you that this announcement was very warmly received by the people of Macedon. This represents massive savings for those in my electorate, many of whom commute to Melbourne. You know, those on the other side are always banging on about the city of Melbourne and so on, and let me tell you that these cheaper V/Line fares will see people return to our city and take advantage of the fares. It is so much cheaper to commute now on V/Line rather than drive. But it works in reverse. We look forward to welcoming visitors from the city. There is no excuse, people. If you have not been to savour all the fantastic delights that my hometown of Kyneton has to offer in terms of restaurants, wine bars, gin distilleries and so on, it is a \$9.20 return fare. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: And no driving, exactly. Of course I will be able to talk about our women's health agenda, and I have got a little bit more to say about that later.

As a former teacher, I fully understand the life-changing potential of a well-supported public education system, so I was really proud that our government was able to announce \$5.83 million to build a new trades hub at Gisborne Secondary College. This will enable that school to build on existing reforms that we have made, not just to VCE but through our program that enables our young students to do an apprenticeship while they are still studying, Minister for Education.

Natalie Hutchins: Yes, it does.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: This has been really well taken up in my community in the high schools of Kyneton, Gisborne and indeed Daylesford, so delivering a trades facility there is extremely welcome.

Of course everyone knows that sport is at the heart of so many country communities, and our government has had a particular focus on ensuring that we are getting the balance right and that we are providing support to the sport that more women and girls play than any others sport in our state, and that is netball. So \$1.5 million was announced. I was able to announce that myself – it was very exciting – at the Kyneton Football Netball Club, and that will deliver new courts and women's changing facilities for the girls and women of Kyneton to play netball. And that is on top of \$1 million that had already been committed to build new netball courts and spectator shelters for the Woodend-Hesket Football Netball Club. Ensuring that we are making an investment in girls and women sport is really vital, and it speaks to women in the electorate of Macedon about the value that we put on them and their recreational activities, their health and their education. We have a story to tell, and I have got to say that is in contrast to those on the other side.

Not everyone wants to play team sports – we know that – so it is really important that we make sure we have got a diversity of activities available for kids in country communities. So half a million dollars will enable a redevelopment of the very tired and worn-out skate park in Romsey. And what I love about this commitment is that we were able to deliver it in partnership with the Lancefield Romsey Lions Club. Now, the Lions club got in there and raised funds to develop a design, which they have been lobbying council with, but it was the Andrews government that came through and delivered the goods in terms of making this \$500,000 commitment which will ensure that the skate park will be a reality. It is in a great location. It has already got toilets, a barbecue and so on. It is on a site that is in view of the community. It is going to be fantastic, and I know that the people of my community are really looking forward to it.

Before I talk about some of the statewide commitments that have been made in the health portfolio, I do want to take this opportunity, because I think it is really important, to acknowledge the Labor Party volunteers in my electorate, who worked so hard and have continued, time and time again, at each election, state and federal, to support Labor candidates to get up – and congratulations of course to Catherine King, to Lisa Chesters and to Rob Mitchell, the three federal members that cover my electorate. But if I may, I thank Marg and Eric Darricott, Barry and Janet McDonald, Margot and

Greg Clarke, Marg Leahy, Mary-Beth O'Brien, Terry Larkins, Lyn Richardson, Louise Johnson, Danny McDiarmid, Chris Gingell, Christine Barker, Chris Byrnes, Lisa Ohlmus, Jan Maplestone, Kevin Fothergill, Dennis Franklin, Jill O'Callaghan, John and Rita Benson, John Frearson, Julie Smith, Jim Ingemann, Hamish Brown and Dave Wauchope. Can I also acknowledge some up-and-coming young activists: Sasha, Ethan and Sean. I look forward to continuing to work with you all and delivering for you all, and I thank you for all of that support.

I talked a little bit about our women's health agenda. Indeed I will have opportunities to do this again tomorrow, I suspect. Our government was able to take a comprehensive package to women of all life stages to talk about in the election campaign. So for the first time ever a comprehensive package that is a real game changer for women's health will be delivered here in the state of Victoria, and I am so proud to have been asked by the Premier to continue in my role as Minister for Health in order to deliver on this agenda.

We have already got a great record in this area. We are investing in women's health, funding Australia's first clinic focused on women's heart health and of course the state's first statewide sexual and reproductive advice phone line. We made pads and tampons free in all of our schools, and we are extending that now into community centres because we want to end period stigma and we want to ensure that girls and women feel supported to talk about the particular health challenges that they face.

We are going to deliver a \$71 million package that is going to see 20 women's health services established right across Victoria. They will deliver a one-stop shop for women needing treatment or advice on issues from contraception to menopause to pelvic pain – you name it, symptoms that are particular to women – and we will deliver the health services that women need. We will also work with our Aboriginal health organisations to deliver a dedicated Aboriginal-led women's health clinic, because our government is committed to self-determination. We understand the need to continue to invest in sexual and reproductive health hubs. We will establish an inquiry into pelvic pain and of course we are working to establish a women's health research institute, because what we know is that women have been under-represented in so much medical research that in fact a lot of conditions that are particular, once again, to women are either undiagnosed or women are not believed when trying to explain their symptoms. It is time that this ends, and it will end under an Andrews Labor government.

We know, and I think I made a point of this many times during the election, that there is so much more to our health system than building buildings. We are building many of them; in fact, the nation's largest health project will see new towers for both the Royal Women's and the Royal Melbourne hospitals down at Arden. But more important than that investment is the investment in our workforce. I was so proud during the election campaign to attend so many events, standing side by side with proud members of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation. Our nurses and midwives were backing our government in because they know that we will stand with them, that we listen to their ideas and that we implement their ideas. It is from that engagement with the nurses union that we were able to make so many fantastic commitments to support our wonderful health workforce, be that our \$150 million package delivering for our nurses, delivering a sign-on bonus, stronger nurse-to-patient ratios or more nurses and midwives in the public system.

More than 10,000 students are already set to have the cost of their nursing or midwifery undergraduate studies paid under our government if they work in our public health system for a period of two years. We are also delivering a \$5000 sign-on bonus for student nurses and midwives who graduate from 2022 to 2024 when they enter the public system. This is fantastic. This is sending a very clear message to our healthcare workers about how much we value them. Of course we are supporting postgraduate nurses. There are scholarships for enrolled nurses to become registered nurses, and we have provided an election commitment to boost the number of GPs practising here in Victoria. We will fund more nurse practitioners and more paramedic practitioners.

Only the Andrews Labor government delivers for our health workforce. Only the Andrews Labor government delivers for the people of Macedon and the people of Victoria.

Members applauded.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (17:52): It is with pleasure that I give what I think is an inaugural address, but there could be some debate about that with my having served in this Parliament before. I thought I would begin by just thanking the people of Hawthorn. On 24 November 2018, as members may recall, I lost the seat of Hawthorn live on national television. It was, to be completely candid with members of the house, a very tough and painful experience. One of my siblings said to me the following day, ‘Oh, this will make you a better politician, John.’ I struggled to believe that; I thought I was already perfect!

But we all benefit from growth, and we all benefit from experiences, including setbacks, and I want to begin with that because I think it is important for young people in particular, with all the pressures they face in the world today, to understand that setbacks do not define you. There will be times when you have good days and bad days, and you just have to trust in yourself and back yourself that if you just keep going, the sun will shine on you eventually. For all the young people out there, whether they go into politics or any other field of endeavour, do not be deterred if you trip at first. The people of Hawthorn have given me a second chance, so I come back into this house with that very much in mind: that everybody deserves a second chance if they want it and are trying. And it has defined what I would like to do in this second innings.

I want to acknowledge John Kennedy for his service as the member for Hawthorn between 2018 and 2022. I have seen his pictures of him and Bronwyn overseas travelling. I can assure all members of the house that he already looks younger than I do. I wish him and Bronwyn and their family all the best.

I would hope, before I turn to some other matters, that the government might consider some of the commitments that I made on behalf of the Liberals and Nationals in the seat of Hawthorn. I know some of those were matched, and I trust that they will be honoured. But I would just quickly like to go through some specific local commitments and ask that the government, in the spirit of goodwill, look at honouring those commitments if possible. First of all, a number of schools are in dire need of support: for Camberwell Primary, \$9.1 million was committed; for Canterbury Primary School, \$7.8 million; and for Glenferrie Primary, \$5.5 million.

We made a commitment to remove the Glenferrie Road and Tooronga Road level crossings, and I would urge the government to elevate both level crossings up their list of level crossing removals and also put on the list Prospect Hill Road and Riversdale Road level crossings for future work.

We also committed \$8 million for the iconic Anniversary Trail, a really worthy investment, and I hope that the government will look at that. Four other commitments that I hope the government will look at are Canterbury Sports Ground, \$1 million; Auburn Bowls Club, \$600,000; Camberwell bowls club, \$100,000; and \$500,000 towards Boroondara’s Gardiners Creek master plan. All are worthy projects in my view, and let us remember these sports facilities that we fund are not just for the immediate users of those facilities but also for the wider community and the groups that rely upon and use these facilities for their own use.

I will quickly just do what I think ought to be done very quickly, which is to thank all of those who helped me return to this place and to resume my work as the member for Hawthorn. Can I formally put on record my deep and sincere thanks to the Hawthorn electorate conference committee and broader membership, all members of the ECC who worked on that, and put on record some specific individuals who gave their all to help me get back here: Chantalle Abou-Haila, campaign director; Xavier Boffa; Ephie Bokas; Kate Beaumont; Kane Afford; Henry Corcoran; James Stevens; Charles Pruden; Chris Kounelis; Dean Dell’orso; Arthur Litsas; Natalie Litsas; James Sutherland; Tim Rose; Ben Tialan; Sam Smeele; Sam Smith; Ian Quick; Warwick Ball; Ros Harding; Liz Sceney; Jan Dimmick; Allan and Jenny Lawton; Marg Puszka; Garth Fountain-Smith; and of course two locals, both former premiers of this great state of ours, Ted Baillieu and Jeffrey Kennett, who both helped out on the campaign trail; and to all Liberal Party members who helped with the Hawthorn campaign.

Can I turn to my family, to my kids, who despite being too cool for school I know were there all the way with me. While I cannot name them, I can just say how much I love and cherish our three daughters. And to my wife Betty: when I stood there on 25 November in 2018 it was Betty who stood there with me, and I would not be standing here if it were not for Betty campaigning with me. I remember for about six months last year Betty would go to work, she would finish, I would go and pick her up and we would go doorknocking together. Not exactly the most romantic way to spend an afternoon, but we spent time together and her indomitable spirit in that I will never forget, and I will always cherish that. So, Betty, I love you very much, and thank you so much.

Given what happened when I did succeed in winning the seat of Hawthorn back, as you know, I put myself forward for leadership of the Liberal Party. I just have to say to all of my colleagues here and those elsewhere in the building, thank you. There is not a second which goes by where I am not alive to the heavy responsibility and great honour each of you has given to me in this role, and I will strive to do everything to make you so proud of the decision you have made.

I now want to share some of my thoughts and to share my vision for Victoria, one that is based on opportunity and responsibility; a vision where Victoria is a leader in our federation, one that is driven by an enterprising culture both in the private sector and in government, a culture that values taking opportunities, a culture that values ingenuity and that supports innovation, particularly from younger generations that are coming through; a state that is inclusive, where diversity is upheld and radiates like a beacon of hope and opportunity for our First Nations people and all peoples who have come here and want to make Victoria and Australia their home and to be part of the Australian family; a vision of Victoria that sees us as a shining destination for businesses global and national to invest here, a state where we are a leader and a driver of reform and constructive debates in our federation.

That is how I see our state, but to achieve this Victoria will require leadership to overcome many of the challenges that we face. In dealing with our economy we face serious headwinds. Most obviously we have higher interest rates, with a 10th interest rate rise today. We have inflation, which is eroding real wages for Victorians and Australians, and we have labour and supply chain shortages. At the macro level, Victoria's economy whilst it has always been diversified is not doing enough to make the most of the opportunities we should be able to seize. We are an economy which even today is heavily reliant on the property and construction sectors and related sectors, and whilst we want those sectors to continue we need, in a competitive environment not just nationally but regionally, to be an economy that is diversifying even further. We need to work hard as a state, and we need leaders who are prepared to work hard if we are to make Victoria a magnet for investment into our state.

Our economy first of all needs to be prudently managed, and that is not happening in my view. We have spiralling government debt – which went up further today with higher interest rates that add \$400 million, I understand, to the level of our debt alone in that 25 basis-point increase – and out-of-control spending. We know from recent budgets that spending growth continues to outstrip revenue growth in our state. This will not deliver benefits for Victorians, who deserve good services from the government that is supposed to lead them. This mismanagement of debt and spending has an adverse impact on cost of living and the quality of life we all aspire to. If spending is not delivering results, then that is a critical failure of government. In health we are told that investments are being made, but response times and waitlists are deteriorating. In education we are told we are a leader, but this state spends the least amount of all other states and territories in the country on public education. It costs more in Victoria to send your kids to a government school than in any other state. And we know that many schools are struggling with staff, and they are having to pay a lot to recruit staff – not in terms of their wages but in terms of the fees for trying to find the principals and teachers they need to fill their classrooms.

This mismanagement of our economy, debt and spending is also fuelling uncertainty, which adversely affects investment and creates sovereign risk. Investors are less likely to see Victoria as a destination for their capital if they cannot rely on the government that is supposed to lead us. I want Victoria to be an exciting place that people invest in, where we are out there competing for global headquarters, not

just in terms of Sydney and Brisbane in particular but throughout the Asia-Pacific region. We want global companies which have large workforces and enormous amounts of capital to invest to see Melbourne and our regions as the most attractive place to invest.

We need to make more of our tertiary sector. We have the highest-ranking tertiary sector in this country, but do we do enough as a state to build the partnerships necessary to capitalise on innovation and international investment? I do not think we do. In manufacturing and design, are we making the most of the opportunities that come with robotics, machine learning and artificial intelligence? I would say not. For so long we thought that Victoria could not compete in manufacturing and design and innovation because we said our costs were too high. Well, technology is putting paid to that. We have just got to be hungry as a state, with leaders who are out there proactively seeking and seizing those opportunities to draw investment into our state.

Take defence technologies – an obvious example where Victoria, with its innovation hubs, with its tertiary sector, should be leading the nation, yet we see Queensland and New South Wales running rings around us. Even South Australia is outbidding us on work from international investors in that space. So there is a lot more we can do. In the life sciences we should be competing much more and harnessing all of the partnership opportunities that exist in Victoria. Our strengths as a state must also go beyond Melbourne, and that is where we differ perhaps from the other side of the house. We want the entire state to share in the prosperity of our state's growth – regional as well.

In terms of state financial relations, our population growth and the challenges we face mean that Victoria should be leading the debates I spoke about in terms of vertical fiscal imbalance – this government has done nothing to lead the reform effort on that front – and horizontal fiscal imbalance.

On energy and climate change we do have a difference with the government over the SEC, but we want to see more detail. Who is allowed to invest? What is the rate of return? Will taxpayers underwrite that rate of return, particularly in the early loss-making years? These are long-term investments; they need to be supported and they need to be explained before you can ask the Victorian taxpayer to pay for it.

Home ownership and housing affordability is a critical area for us. It is slipping from the grip of Victorians, and more needs to be done. On the demand side you can only do a limited amount. You have to work on the supply side and look at all of the costs which go into construction in Victoria. We should not give up the fight on housing affordability and home ownership. We do not on this side. I have created a special portfolio just for that purpose.

I also wanted to talk a bit about the non-economic forms of opportunity. Criminal justice reform is an important part of what we stand for. It is about giving young people in particular but all people, I guess, across the board that second chance I spoke about to prevent them from falling into the clutches of the justice system and to give them that sense of esteem that will see them get onto a productive pathway in their life. It is not just about the laws. It is not just about fixing broken bail laws that were brought in in 2018. It is about saying to young people 'We will invest in you' and investing in the programs that will keep them out of the justice system and put them on a fulfilling pathway.

The final thing I wanted to touch on is integrity and standards in this state. None of what I have said matters unless we have a government that will lead with standards and principles. Whether it is the catalogue of IBAC and Ombudsman reports or whether it is evidence of a minister sitting around a cabinet table making decisions that affect shareholdings of that minister, integrity and governance matter. So my vision for Victoria is that we will have a state that will make Victorians proud because of the principles we uphold and the standards we demonstrate in all of our activity.

I come back to this Parliament with enormous gratitude to the people of Hawthorn and enormous gratitude to my colleagues and supporters who have helped me get here. I will not waste a moment having had that second chance to make sure I make everything count from here.

Members applauded.

The SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the member for Preston, can I acknowledge former members the Honourable Luke Donnellan and the Honourable Christine Campbell in the gallery.

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (18:08): It is an honour to rise as the sixth Labor member for Preston. I would like to begin by acknowledging the Wurundjeri people, upon whose land we are gathered. And I would like to begin by thanking the people of Preston and Reservoir for electing me as their representative. Elections are this wonderful opportunity for all of us to have this great, big collective discussion about government. We knocked on about 5000 doors, and we were lucky to have a remarkably diverse set of conversations about all of the ways in which the words and actions of government touch upon the lives of the people of Preston and Reservoir.

I would like to give a shout-out to Steve and Laura in West Preston, who talked to us about climate change. I would like to give a shout-out to Amalia, also in West Preston, who really, really liked the idea of bringing back the SEC, and a shout-out to Nicole in Keon Park, who talked to us about the challenges of crossing the railway line. For reasons that I do not fully understand, when they built the railway line in Reservoir they built about a 2-kilometre stretch that has no rail crossings. I do not know if any other members have a stretch that long in an established suburb with no crossing, but it is certainly a long way for those who perhaps live on one side and have their child zoned into a school on the other. You have to go all the way down and back again. It is known sometimes locally as the Berlin Wall for that reason, and for a long time historically the problem was that those crossings as a result were very congested.

Anyway, I am very proud to be part of a Labor government – and indeed the first government in a hundred years – to do something about that problem, which is that we have made it easier to cross at Reservoir station, fixing one of the worst intersections in the north, and we are in the process of making it easier to cross at Keon Parade. And of course in doing so we are also making it possible to run more trains more often and build a more public transport-oriented city.

A shout-out to Cath from Newlands Friends of the Forest who, as you may guess, lives in Newlands and talked to us about the forests, but who also very thoughtfully and very seriously let us know about the passing away of her close neighbour and our friend the local Labor legend Lily Coy. Vale, Lily Coy.

A shout-out to Tim in Reservoir East, who reminded me that the Bolte Liberal government had a plan for quite some time to put a freeway across the top of the Merri Creek and a freeway across the top of the Darebin Creek, the infamous F2 and F6 as they were to be. We are very lucky that those plans did not go ahead, and I should make it very clear that this Labor government's policy is the exact opposite. We are going to increase protection for those creeks, and we are going to plant trees and shrubs and ground cover so that they are more natural for the next generation, not less.

A shout-out to everyone in Preston and Reservoir who lives in public housing. We made it a particular priority to doorknock public housing dwellings, and we will continue to do so. A shout-out to all the young kids who translated for me on behalf of their parents, which is just always amazingly cute but also, I feel, sometimes very hard. There was one young man down near Clements Reserve whose mum was very, very animated about public housing rents. I do not know if Guleid is here; anyway, thank you, Guleid, for bailing him out.

A shout-out to Janya, Sylvia, Mauricio, Mark, Gwenda, Caroline, Christina, Genevieve, Zheng, Chris, Maria and the approximately 300 or so other people who talked to me about Preston Market. I thank the minister for the generosity of her time in allowing me to convey their thoughts to her in quite some detail. For those of you who do not know, Preston Market is the second-largest market in Melbourne. It is a great market. It is privately owned, and the current majority owners would like to move it into the south-east corner of that site and put 19-storey apartment buildings on top of it. One way perhaps to think about that for those of you who are not familiar with the area is to imagine this building, which actually sits on a very similar 5-hectare site next to a train station. You could if you so desired demolish

this building, move all of us into a small, more modern, more efficient building in the southern part of the site, and then you could put up 19-storey buildings where we stand today. Planning people would tell you that that would positively activate East Melbourne. I did actually share that with some planning people, as the minister knows, and they took it a little too seriously, but I would like to think for those of us who know and love this space that we would see that that activation certainly came at a great cost and that basically you were really saying you valued apartments more than the Parliament. For those of us who live near Preston Market and love it, we do feel that the proposals that have been put forward very clearly say that the people who wrote them value apartments over the market. I will not go on about it at length, but there are other proposals about, including from the Save the Preston Market group who have an alternative proposal that many of us think is much more reasonable.

I would like to thank the Labor Party, its affiliated trade unions and the broader labour movement. There is a bit of a tradition in these speeches to try and whip through several decades of camaraderie in about 3 minutes, and in the spirit of the member for Bayswater I am going to try and do that now. I will start on Monday 19 August 1997, when David Dyer, a fellow student at the University of Melbourne, encouraged me to attend a meeting the next day with a 20-year-old young campus activist known as Lizzie Blandthorn, who is of course well known to this place as the former member for Pascoe Vale. I can tell you that at age 20 Lizzie already had extraordinary judgement, great Labor values and was pretty much ready to walk into this place. I say that because in very stark contrast I was not. I probably was not really ready to take on anything, and I think if we are honest, Lizzie only signed me up because I happened to have some very specific technical skills – desktop publishing, as we called it back then – that were useful in a student election campaign. I look back now and I was certainly a young man with a lot to learn, and I am doing these thanks in chronological order in part because the people who had to work with me early on did have a lot of work to do.

In that spirit I would like to thank Jesse Nonneman, Mandy Coulson and Ann Smith. All three of them will have totally forgotten who I am, but a long, long time ago they called me out for various stupid things that I wrote and said in campus newsletters and the like. They were right, and 24 years later I have their emails still with me to this day.

I want to thank the wonderful 2004–05 Jacinta Collins Wantirna South electorate office team: Helen Cooney, Gabby Staffa, Lizzie, Johnny McLindon and Senator Collins herself. I would like to thank the head office team of 2005, including Sel Sanli, Alison Vaughan, James Pawluk, James Raynes and the inimitable Bruce Cohen.

I would like to thank Robin Scott and the late Michael Leighton. I am grateful to them for introducing me to Preston and Reservoir many years ago. My brother had actually before that worked as a police officer in Reservoir. He was the very first person who said to me in about 2001 that I should stop saying ‘Reservwah’ and say ‘Reservoir’. But Robin and Michael were a great support to me for many years when I was still a relatively young man. I can remember at that time that Michael used to send me emails from question time on his BlackBerry, which I found amazing in every possible respect. Of course it is more common now, and perhaps possibly a few people may be even doing it as I speak.

It was also about the same time – circa 2006 – that I had the opportunity to meet and begin working with Michael Donovan. Michael has been an immense source of support and mentorship to me, as he has been to many others, and I hope his influence continues for a long time, because it is an influence that always acts in the interests of his union members and the broader labour movement.

Thank you to Jamila Rizvi, Andrew Anson, Cecelia Burgman and Sebastian Zwalf. Thank you to Bob Korb, Andrew Navakas, Annette Hurley, Trevor Nichols and the data team of the federal election 2013. Thank you to James Merlino and my old boss from whom I learned a great deal, the Treasurer. A shout-out to Steve Kamper, the member for Rockdale, and to Curtis Pitt, the member for Mulgrave – the Queensland member for Mulgrave. There are pros and cons to having moved around a lot and doing a lot of different things, but I learned a great deal from working on their Sydney and Cairns campaigns respectively.

A shout-out to Paul Smith and Deb Hall and my former colleagues in forestry and climate change at Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, who the member for Macedon knows well. They are very strong public service team, and they taught me a lot about how to get things done in the public service. As the member for Footscray knows, Deb Hall was also part of a famous Western Oval mixed netball team back in the day.

Thank you to Senator Don Farrell, David Feeney, Dean D'Angelo and Adele McBride. Adele could not be here today, but I know she will be watching – I do not know which camera to look into, but hello, Adele. A huge thankyou to Emily Sagolj and Rachel Davies, who, along with Adele, ran our local Preston campaign. I started this chronology in 1997, and it is always disconcerting to me that both of them were not born then. But they are incredible women, and in various different ways I actually see a little of the young Lizzie Blandthorn in them. We had an amazing local campaign. Thank you to Arya, Reggie, Nidzam, Spencer, Guleid, AJ and Finn – also none of whom were born in 1997. Thank you to Susie Byers, Daniel Scouller, Ranjan Jayalath, Geraldine and Gillian Wood, Peter Kemp and pretty much the entire Kemp–Wood dynasty up our way. Thank you to Maureen Wilson, Michelle Zhung, Jim Shen, Louise Kenney-Shen and Mick Ricardo. Thank you to Tracy Bouchier for liking all of my Facebook posts.

Thank you sincerely to our scrutineers. Ideally you do not need to thank your scrutineers for scrutineering for 11 days straight, but thank you to Cam Petrie and Laura Blandthorn for leading that effort.

Thank you to three women – the member for Northcote; Ged Kearney, the member for Cooper; and Senator Jana Stewart. In our part of the world, in Darebin Labor, they are our leadership, and they have taught me and many others a lot. We have just moved house, but we lived a few doors down from Jana and Marcus. I really think it is one of the great things about Preston and Reservoir that you have a very significantly above average chance of running into one of our state's great First Nations leaders while you are in the Murray Road Woolworths in your tracksuit pants.

Finally, a big thankyou to the Premier. The Premier has a very deserved reputation as someone with an amazing track record of implementing Labor values, but he also should have a reputation as someone with an amazing track record of advocating for Labor values. When the Premier speaks about truth, justice and treaty, when he speaks about multiculturalism being our greatest asset and when he speaks about equality not being negotiable, a lot of people in Preston and Reservoir are listening, and if you know our demographics you will understand why. I will certainly join the Premier in making those comments for as long as we need to make them, both in order to support those who we need to support but also because there are still out there people, like myself back in 1997, who are not bad people in any way and have not done bad things but who still need to hear that sort of stuff in order that they can be good actors in building an inclusive society.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. The last eight months have been a real challenge for us. We were lucky enough to be joined by Hannah – hello, Hannah – but Hannah spent her first 37 days in hospital, and she has a genetic disorder – hereditary sensory and autonomic neuropathy type 3, also known as familial dysautonomia. Good luck, I suppose, to the Hansard team in transcribing that one. It is not a great thing; you do not want to google it. I hope one day that Hannah will be able to tell her own story, but for the time being, as her parents, we are very grateful to the staff at the Mercy, the Austin, the Northern and the Royal Children's, and thank you to Kufumam and Leenu, who were helping us out at the Northern on Saturday night.

I am immensely grateful to our friends and family for getting us through that period, which of course overlapped with a tough election for all Labor candidates and also overlapped with us getting an eviction notice. Noah's parents Danny and Esther and her uncle Jack have been immense, and we are very lucky to have them. My brothers Andrew and Marcus were also a great help. They came out and doorknocked on the campaign, and as brothers tend to do, they were nervous for about 15 minutes and then they started telling me how I should do it. I know the minister will be particularly pleased to hear

that my brother was very big on the power saving bonus. He loved it, as well he should. I have learned something from him.

I need to thank my mum Marion. My mum grew up on a farm between Sea Lake and Nandaly at a time when farming in the Mallee was pretty tough, and through a farming accident she was involved in things were probably tougher, but mum is an amazing woman who never let any of that hold her back. She has had such a rich life. She is such an inspiration. She taught everywhere in the Victorian education system, and then when some people suggested that it was time to retire from that she moved instead to Abu Dhabi so she could continue teaching there for another four years and then to Chiang Mai and then to Legazpi in the Philippines and so on. Mum looked after Zoe for hundreds of hours, but again in the way that mum operates, she saw me going out doorknocking and said, 'Hey, why don't I come out and do that?' And with the fullest respect to our great young Labor team, after a few minutes mum was one of the best doorknockers we had.

Thank you to my uncle Rod Lambert who could not be here but was very generous with his support of the campaign early on. Thank you of course to my dad. My dad is a very community minded person. I like to think I inherited that. Hello, Dad. My dad though is a very black-and-white engineer, and I also inherited that. I would not have it any other way, but it is quite an interesting combination. I would like to thank Zoe for being Zoe. Hello, Zoe. Zoe is not listening.

And finally, I would like to thank Noah. Noah and I have been an absolute team all the way through this. Many of you would have received texts from me complaining about some local issue and they would have been lighthearted and funny, and that would have been because Noah wrote them. I would have written a first draft, and then she would have taken the phone out of my hands and reminded me that our friends are our friends, and they are more likely to do things for you if they like you. Probably one of the reasons that this speech is a little patchy and also – sorry, Speaker – over time is because I did not give Noah enough time to look at it. Noah is an incredible person in many ways, but her ability to stay positive over the last eight months has carried me through it. Seriously, Noah could have been on the *Titanic* and she would have made jokes about it. I think we have had one argument in that time, and that was over the question of whether it is legitimate to put butter on pasta. But I have checked with the member for Monbulk, De Martino, who said that it is, which some of us think.

I have three things to say to Noah. The first is I love you. The second is a fun fact: last year Noah was in the top 1 per cent of Wiggles listeners on Spotify, and anyone who knows that world would know what an extraordinary achievement that is. That is literally thousands of hours, and I hope Zoe is grateful. Finally, I want to say to Noah: I think we should get married. I will not bring a ring out now because I am not allowed to have any props, but it is securely stored at the moment, and I am planning in fact to bring it out very romantically tonight in the roughly 10 minutes between the kids falling asleep and us collapsing in exhaustion.

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak a little bit today about myself and my family, but I would like to conclude by saying this will be the last time. From hereon in it will be about the people of Preston and Reservoir, and for as long as they want a local hardworking Labor member who listens and follows things up, they will have one.

Members applauded.

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (18:30): There will be no renewing of vows tonight, but I can say: my great and hearty congratulations to the member for Preston in particular because, having been born at Preston and Northcote Community Hospital and attended Bell Primary School, the neighbouring electorate of Ivanhoe is Preston. I grew up in West Preston, and to know it is in the great hands of Mr Lambert and his great passion and to have him as a neighbour is a great thrill for me and for the community of the neighbouring Ivanhoe electorate. West Preston and Preston in general are in great hands.

Moving to the mighty electorate of Ivanhoe, Speaker, can I firstly congratulate you on your election as Speaker of this place. Can I also acknowledge First Nations people. Most days I remember to wear the Aboriginal flag in my work. When, after 11 years and one week in this place, I was sworn in as a minister in the child protection portfolio and aged care, carers and disability portfolio, I wanted to make sure that I was reminded each day – and that others who raised questions with me understood that it was a clear priority of not only our government but of me personally in my role as a minister and member of this place – to advocate for and advance the interests of First Nations people in our community. That is not just for our efforts to advance treaty but our efforts to advance the Voice as well on a more national scale. I want to start my remarks there.

Furthermore, I also want to acknowledge that Victorians always get it right, and we saw that at the election last year. They always get it right, and I said that in this place with you, Speaker, in 2010, when they got it right and you and I were sitting in a different part of this chamber. They got it right again. and they handed those opposite their heads on a plate for the second time in very overwhelming numbers. They did that because we promised, I felt, with purpose, with principal and with clarity not necessarily what is always popular but what we felt was right and what we felt needed to be done to support our community. I want to touch on the fact that equality is not negotiable. I want to touch on the fact and reaffirm again that Safe Schools matter, that the Big Housing Build matters and that bringing back the State Electricity Commission matters to people in the Ivanhoe electorate.

I want to say also that we want the job for the work. That is what the Premier has always said: we want the job for the work. Those opposite at different times want this job – they want government – to keep it away from the Labor Party. They want to keep it away from those who want to represent, advocate for and advance the interests of working people in our community.

We have heard all but one of the speeches – and I am looking forward to hearing from my former work colleague the member for Broadmeadows, who will speak shortly and round out our inaugural speeches in this place – and I want to say to all the new members: we do reflect on our own time when we give that reflection and on the social compact that we have with our electorates, our commitment. We learn something more about not only our colleagues but the work that we want to reaffirm ourselves – the additional work that we need to do to redouble our efforts to be as passionate, committed and hardworking as our first day in this place. I want to thank and congratulate all those who have given their reflections and their commitments to their community in this place.

I want to touch on the fact that in the Ivanhoe electorate we saw a swing to Labor of just over 0.5 per cent in two-party preferred terms, up to about 13 per cent: a 42.7 per cent primary vote. The Liberal primary vote was down 1.4 per cent. Less people voted Liberal at the state election in the Ivanhoe electorate than the time before and the time before that and the time before that.

I want to acknowledge Emily Bieber, the Greens candidate – there was a 19 per cent primary vote for the Greens in the Ivanhoe electorate – and Sonja Ristevski, the Animal Justice Party candidate, with their 2-and-a-bit per cent, for their work and advocacy in the community and the work that we will do together to advance the interests of the vast majority of people in the Ivanhoe electorate who have re-elected an Andrews Labor government.

I want to say also that when you live in your electorate, when you went to school in your electorate, when your parents taught in your electorate, when you raise your own kids in your electorate – when you live there – you are accountable. You are accountable every day for the work that you do. When you get up in the morning and you walk out the door, you are accountable to people every day of your life when you live there. There is no substitute for people who live, work, raise their family or have been educated in their electorate. It is a great opportunity to be able to represent the electorate where you were born and raised – or pretty close to it, when Preston was only up the road. That too is something that those opposite should think about, and the tricky nature in which people try to make the claim that they live locally and get caught out on that each and every time. You cannot fool local Ivanhoe people, I can tell you that much.

I want to go also to some of our election commitments – there is the Austin Hospital emergency department expansion of \$250 million to \$300 million for an extra 30,000 patients. It was Labor that built two hospitals on the one site, the Mercy Hospital for Women and the new Austin Hospital. It was Labor governments who built those hospitals, and it was Labor MPs who were elected to this place when those opposite under Kennett sought to sell the Austin Hospital and privatise it. The ‘toenails’ of the state – we do not forget these things. We do not forget the cuts to the education maintenance allowance. We remember these things. The voters in the Ivanhoe electorate remember them. They are not forgotten.

Macleod level crossing removal – just as we removed the Rosanna Lower Plenty Road level crossing, we have committed to remove the level crossing at Macleod. Just as we duplicated tracks between Heidelberg and Ivanhoe in past Labor governments during our time under Premier Daniel Andrews, we will continue our investment with a half a billion dollars of works further up the line between Eltham and Greensborough.

Heidelberg Primary School – there is \$14 million for a new gymnasium and learning centre at that primary school in my electorate. Ivanhoe Bowls Club – we are giving them \$350,000 to renew and expand their change room facilities. We have also seen our ongoing commitment to the North East Link to get some 15,000 trucks off our local streets and roads in the Ivanhoe electorate.

I want touch also on the Victorian Electoral Commission. We will pursue this further in the Electoral Matters Committee, asking why there were not ballots available on the pre-poll on the first day when the doors opened for those who wanted to be enfranchised and vote in the Ivanhoe electorate. You have one job to do, and it was not done. We can all have our platitudes about how tough a job it is, but that is the job that needed to be done, and it was not done. Questions will be asked about that because is not good enough.

We will also be asking further why people in West Heidelberg, some of the most disenfranchised people in the community, had to queue up for well over an hour and a half to cast their vote, to cast their ballot. That is wrong. Why is it that in other parts of my electorate there are half a dozen tables for people to cast their vote – in Eaglemont, in Ivanhoe, in east Ivanhoe – but in West Heidelberg there is one? People queue for an hour and a half and staff come out and say, ‘Well, you can come up to the front.’ What they do not understand is people in my electorate, whether they have mobility issues, whether they are aged, whether they are infirm, they know people in the queue, they live with those people, that is their community, and they are not pushing in. They would never do that. And so they waited patiently for their chance to cast their vote – to cast another blow for working people and for Labor – but they should not have to wait that long to do that. It is wrong. Why are all the pre-poll voting places the furthest from West Heidelberg they could possibly be, and why are they the people queuing up on the day with the least resources to cast their vote? It is wrong. Why is it in Viewbank that people did not have a ballot at 5 o’clock, because they had run out? That is wrong. It should not happen in a democracy, not here in Australia and in Victoria. The Electoral Commissioner will be held to account for that through the Electoral Matters Committee and the presentations that I will make and others will make in relation to those matters. Perhaps that is enough said for now.

I want to acknowledge in my role as Minister for Police our \$4.5 billion investment in Victoria Police and the work that we have done to fund some 3637 additional police here in Victoria, the work that we have done to see a decrease of 4.3 per cent in the past 12 months – the lowest level of reported crime statistics by the agency since 2005. These things do not just happen. They happen because you have given Victoria Police the tools to do the job, and you have invested in additional police to go out on the streets and do that work. That is what our government is about. Not one additional police funded during their time in office, a cut of \$100 million to the police budget – that is the record over there.

I also want to touch on the racing industry. There is \$4.7 billion in economic activity in the racing industry across the state and 34,900 full-time jobs. Do not go knocking the racing industry. There is a fair chance the person you are talking to works in or knows someone who works in the racing industry

in regional Victoria and in metropolitan Melbourne. It is a global industry. It is a great industry. Ethan Brown – we give our thoughts to him, who is recovering from his injury. Jockeys are some of the bravest people in sport in the world, but understand that whether they are racing at Boort or Burrumbeet or wherever it might be, it is the investment of \$72 million in our Victorian Racing Industry Fund, it is the commitment to be in most country towns and places, whether that is any code – harness, greyhound and thoroughbred racing – that makes huge contributions to our state. The jobs that that creates and the employment and the history are critically important to our community.

I want to also rattle through, from my past roles in child protection and disability, the work that we have done on a new state disability plan; the work we have been able to do with the federal member for Maribyrnong in holding to account those who try to rip off and defraud our national disability insurance scheme; the work that we have done around some 1500 families, including over 400 Aboriginal families, that were connected to the family preservation and reunification response in the first 18 months of operation; and the work of the former member for Narre Warren North on Home Stretch and the work we have been able to do to build on that and to provide more than 750 young people up to the age of 21 the support they need to stay with the carers that look out for them to help them live independently.

I want to thank the people in my electorate who have done so much work: the Ivanhoe branch; my electorate office staff, Marie Trevithick, Helen Coleman, Bronwyn Jones and Sarah Yang, Seda Cinan and Jason Garufi; so many pre-poll volunteers; my campaign manager Bianca Sullivan. The work that is required from people on the pre-poll over a couple of weeks but also across the electorate is humbling.

We have a collective view about what our community wants, who we support, why we live in the Ivanhoe electorate, why it is the best place to live and why we want to be there. It is because of the people that come through the door in a pre-poll, the people who want to live there and vote there, the people who understand what is important not just to them but what is important to their neighbours, what is important to their broader community. They are there. It is why they come and vote and why it is important that they have got Labor representation in this place. They have very high expectations of Labor governments to deliver for them and the people they care about on the issues that are important to them. I can tell you they are a very accountable electorate. They do not miss anything. They have high expectations and high standards that they set for us. We do not always meet them, but we do our very best.

I could not be prouder and more thankful to represent the Ivanhoe electorate and have the opportunity reaffirmed more than ever before. More people than ever before have chosen a Labor government, Labor representation – not others – to represent in this place. There is no greater job interview for people in this place than to put themselves forward to the electorate and seek the affirmation of the community where they live to come back here and do it again and do it better and more effectively. I want to thank our new members of this place, who have really given the rest of us another kick along about what is important, what we need to be doing and to remind us to go back and have a look at what we committed to doing.

Have we delivered the North East Link? Have we delivered Viewbank College? Yes, we have. We did stuff at Kew High that others across the road have never done. It is not because it is in our electorate, but it is nearby and it matters and it is important, and we have got it done. We will continue to do things wherever you live across the state that are important for you. We will do things because our Premier Daniel Andrews has taken on the hardest job at the hardest time and he has delivered. He has done that and he has had the affirmation of the Victorian community, as we have on this side of the house, because we make the decisions that are tough, the things that are hard.

We talked about some of those in question time today. It is about what we can do to support people, what can we do to save lives, what we can do to enhance people's lives and make people feel they are part of the decision-making in this place. That brings us back to where we started. It brings us back to

voice, it brings us back to treaty. It is about making sure that more Victorians than ever before, that more Australians than ever before, feel that they have a say and a seat at the table, that they have a part in everything we do in this place. On this side of the house I look around and around at so many people representing so many communities from so many diverse backgrounds but driven by a collective and common goal about our values, about our desire to do what we can with what we have for others and to be their voice in this place for as long as those communities give us the great opportunity to form government in this chamber.

Members applauded.

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (18:45): To begin I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land we stand on here tonight, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung. I pay my deepest respects to their elders past and present and First Nations people here tonight, including Sheena Watt and Uncle Andrew Gardiner.

While the Broadmeadows electorate has been my lifelong home, it has been the home of the Wurundjeri for over 60,000 years. Bordered by the Merri Creek to the east and the Moonee Ponds Creek to the west, the electorate includes the suburbs of Campbellfield, Coolaroo, Dallas, Fawkner, Glenroy, Hadfield, Jacana and Oak Park. Respected Wurundjeri elder Uncle Andrew Gardiner passed on to me that it is known as the Moonee Moonee Merri Merri area, after Wurundjeri-willam clansman and head man Moonee Moonee and the waterway which we love so much. At Minister D'Ambrosio's announcement of the huge new marram baba conservation parklands, which will stretch from Campbellfield to Beveridge along the Merri Creek, Wurundjeri's Emma Mildenhall spoke of the ancient songlines that run through the electorate. I love the thought of our footsteps and our children's footsteps following these same ancient paths over our lifetimes.

As the oldest continuing culture on earth, First Nations people are resilient and proud, and I am so proud of Labor's commitment to voice, treaty, truth and justice at both state and federal levels. Our nation's truth needs to be told for healing and reconciliation to occur. I thank the first democratically elected body of Aboriginal Victorians, the First Peoples' Assembly, for the incredible work they have done to progress this important work in Victoria.

I grew up on the steep hillside of the Moonee Ponds Creek valley. It was an idyllic childhood, even if during our games of street cricket half our tennis balls ended up in the creek when we were not quick enough. I would enjoy exploring the creek with my brothers – and the yearly bonfire nights. My husband Joe even proposed to me on the banks of the creek at the Jacana Wetlands, and we scattered our stillborn son Tom's ashes there over 16 years ago now.

I remember walks along the Merri Creek in Fawkner with my aunties and several of my 42 first cousins. I love being part of a big clan, and I am so honoured to be part of this clan of 71, the fabulous Labor team in the Victorian Parliament. I have had so much support from so many of you, and I thank my comrades here in this chamber and in the other place.

Big families are not uncommon in the Broadmeadows electorate, which ranks the highest in the state for women who have had six or more children. My dad was one of nine Wards who attended St Mark's primary in Fawkner. His mother helped build the school and church by baking thousands of apple pies to sell at the Sunday cake stalls. My mum Moira was one of 10 O'Sheas, so there is no shortage of aunties, uncles and cousins and no shortage of love and fun – and luckily plenty of hands to help at election time.

Late last year we lost my mother-in-law Nora, who was the toughest, humblest and kindest woman, with a great sense of humour. Nora was raised on a dairy farm in Glenormiston and, like so many country kids, came to find work in Melbourne, where she met my father-in-law Max. During the Second World War, Max served on four ships in the navy and narrowly survived the sinking of the *HMAS Canberra* in the Pacific. He lost a brother at El Alamein, and another was taken prisoner of war. He carried the effects of this for the remainder of his life, as so many servicepeople do. Max and

Nora were dedicated and loving parents and raised four beautiful humans, Andrew, Liz, Maureen and Joe, and I am so lucky to have them in my life.

My grandfather died when my mum was three, leaving my grandma a widow with 10 children in the days when there was no social safety net. Grandma did an incredible job of raising her clan, and I thank the Labor legacy of social welfare so that families do not now suffer, as they did.

My parents Moira and Gary Ward met at work in 1964. Both had left school in their early teens and Mum later went on to study nursing at the Heidelberg repat while Dad was conscripted to the army. Mum was well suited to aged-care nursing, with her compassionate nature and appetite for hard work, but always felt held back by a lack of formal education, so in her 40s she enrolled in a VCE bridging course at Broadmeadows TAFE. Along with her friend Rose, who was living at the Banksia Gardens housing estate, they studied their way through that bridging course whilst raising their young families. They both graduated with social work degrees some years later and have helped so many since. Never underestimate the power of TAFE to transform lives.

Education is my number one priority, and I thank Minister Hutchins and former education minister James Merlino for their support of local capital upgrades and the local education plan. We are also delivering a tech school and building two of the new, affordable government-run childcare centres in Broadmeadows and have invested over \$12 million to expand local kinders.

Dad started working at the union just after I was born. Through my childhood I remember him travelling all over the state, working hard to represent members. He was out many evenings at Trades Hall, the commission and the tribunal, but we knew he was doing important work standing up for others and fighting for a better deal for workers.

The Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association have always been a big part of my life, and I thank them for their support, especially Michael, Mauro and Dean. We know from our brothers and sisters in the union movement that unity is strength, and I pay tribute to all those who have fought the good fight for workers' rights and conditions.

Mum and Dad have worked hard all their lives, always giving of themselves and advocating and caring for others. In the last 18 years they have both shown incredible fortitude, since Dad became paralysed in 2005.

In the Catholic tradition they instilled in me a strong sense of social justice and a sense of duty to contribute positively to society. We were raised to stand up when we saw something wrong and speak up for those who were not being heard. The fabulous and dedicated teaching staff at local schools I attended – Corpus Christi Primary, and Sancta Sophia and Geoghegan College, which are now Penola – never hesitated to reinforce this message. It was on a poster outside the school library that I first read the words 'The pen is mightier than the sword', which sparked my letter-writing activism as a teenager. I recall being so inspired when Tom Uren spoke to our school on Hiroshima Day. With his incredible capacity for forgiveness and his amazing legacy of service, he ignited my interest in politics.

I became a member of the Glenroy branch of the Labor Party when I was 18, and I recall fascinating discussions between members like Jim, Ilia, Mick, the Purcell brothers, and Wally the electrician, who always had cables hanging out of his pockets. While Labor values of social justice, solidarity and compassion for the vulnerable have always been a part of my life, here I found the platform that could make a difference to many.

In 2000 our local member, Christine Campbell, asked me to work with her. She gave me a masterclass on the true power of advocacy and what can be achieved locally with strong representation. The Premier once said, if he was a constituent, he would most want Christine to be representing him as an MP. Thank you, Christine, for your support and friendship. You inspired me to run for council, and I loved my eight years in local government with some fabulous colleagues. We worked collectively across party lines to get great results. We delivered new and upgraded parks, sporting facilities,

neighbourhood houses, libraries and pools and continued to provide quality aged-care services and Meals on Wheels. I have former council colleagues here – Jo Connellan, Alice Pryor and Enver Erdogan – who I would like to acknowledge for their work.

I would like to thank Lizzie Blandthorn for her belief in me when she first asked me to work for her as her policy adviser and for her constant support since. Locally it has been such an honour to open the Glenroy Road level crossing with her, along with Minister Allan and Minister Carroll, and the amazing new community hub along with Minister Stitt.

I also pay tribute to the work and dedication of the former Labor representatives of Broadmeadows that have come before me: Frank McGuire, John Brumby, Jim Kennan, Jack Culpin and John Wilton. I am grateful for the support of Minister Carabine. I really enjoyed working as his adviser and learned so much from him. I have a special place in my heart for Luke Donnellan, a good man and an empowering boss. As his adviser for ageing during the worst of COVID, we went through a lot together.

I loved being part of the ministerial office team with so many fabulous people, including Drew, Jono, Kieran, Jana, Flora, Sandra, Molly, Tim, Jeremy, Angela, Paula and the Bees. I am proud of what we were able to achieve together, with significant investments in public aged care, improved training for palliative care, dementia and oral health, and the expansion of food relief during the pandemic, making sure that those who had no support from the Morrison government – like the temporary protection visa holders and international students – could access state support. During COVID we saw firsthand how dangerous insecure work is, particularly in aged care, and I am very proud of this government's sick pay guarantee.

The Broadmeadows electorate may not have beautiful beaches or trendy shops, but it has the most wonderful inhabitants in all the world – unassuming, hardworking, generous and unpretentious. It is Josepina walking her shopping jeep down the shops and passing homegrown tomatoes and cucumbers over the fence. It is Jamuna, Rita, Jyoti and Nirajan looking after their mother as she passes on Dashain blessings to the younger generations. It is Birgul and Nilufer collecting donations to send over to earthquake victims in Türkiye and Syria. It is Yvonne, Bec, Roger, Tim and hundreds of others who volunteer their time so our kids can play sport. It is Nadia, Seemab and Saffa catching up at the park every day and supporting other local mums. It is Mariella organising food relief for local families doing it tough. It is Mary and Lou helping to run free meals from St Mark's and Vaissy rehoming items and building community through the hard rubbish rescue group. It is Molla and Mohamed supporting community members at the mosque on Friday, and it is Eric running his informal support group at the coffee shop in Dallas. I just love the people of the north.

Living in Glenroy I have been part of every wave of migration to Australia since the 1970s and have personally witnessed the richness each culture brings. I love that my kids go to school with kids from over 30 countries who speak more than a dozen different languages, including Arabic, Nepalese, Urdu, Turkish and Assyrian, and that they learned some Sinhalese from our beautiful family day carer Sureka. It is such an honour to represent such a diverse multicultural and multifaith electorate.

With 46 places of worship, faith is an important part of life for over 60 per cent of our locals. For the most part everyone is respectful of each other's culture and beliefs and the biggest tensions we have locally are over parking. The electorate of Broadmeadows showcases the best of diversity in Australia, and I intend to help keep it this way through dialogue, respect and greater understanding. Local religious leaders play an important role in our communities, and nowhere was this more apparent than during COVID. They stepped up without hesitation to help keep communities informed and safe, and we cannot thank them enough. Central to all the major religions is respect for others and encouragement of the universal human attributes of kindness, generosity and compassion, being part of a collective, something bigger than the individual, and giving many people a sense of purpose, community and belonging. It is these similarities that we should all embrace rather than the differences or the extremes, which feed on hate, polarisation and exclusion. The only antidote is inclusion, celebrating each human and their uniqueness.

My utopia is a world where everyone, no matter their age, ability, culture, religion, sexuality or gender, feels valued, safe and heard and feels a deep sense of belonging. I am so proud to be part of a government where inclusion is at the very core of the values we all hold, and that is where my focus will be – on programs and places that build communities, giving people connection and purpose.

The Broadmeadows electorate has the highest number of people living with disability, a high percentage of people who cannot speak English and over 40,000 people who have not completed year 12. We know that older people, people with a disability and those with low literacy are too often left out of the workforce. Everybody deserves the opportunity for purpose in their life and the dignity of work, and we all need to do more to address this. Their voices should also be heard in our boardrooms, on our councils and in this place. It is not just skilling people up or meeting quotas, it is making all decision-making bodies, institutions and our public services more accessible. In this Parliament we have people from a range of backgrounds – people who grew up in child protection, refugees, First Nations Victorians and family violence survivors – and we know that better decisions are made when different voices are heard.

According to the age discrimination commissioner, ageism remains the most accepted form of prejudice in Australia. And it matters. You might be surprised to hear that men over 85 have the highest rate of suicide in the country. Any person getting to the point of despair, isolation and hopelessness and concluding that suicide is the only answer is a tragedy. The commissioner for senior Victorians also found that over 40 per cent of older people experience loneliness. Loneliness is a growing problem for people of all ages, and there is much we can do. I will work to address transport disadvantage so that everyone can participate fully, especially those who do not drive a car, and will work with all levels of government to improve walking environments, expand community transport and, through the northern bus review, ensure our bus network serves people better.

The digital divide is also creating exclusion and isolation. On average nearly half of people over 70 are not connected and a quarter of people over 50 have limited digital literacy. It is worse for low-income and multicultural communities. One in five households do not access the internet in Broadmeadows. Programs that help people get online, like our recently announced library program for seniors, are fabulous, but we also need to make sure those who are not able to get online have alternative ways to access services and are not discriminated against.

I am proud of Labor's commitments to the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the initiatives rolling out across the state, including a new refuge in the north. I just love our investments in the SEC, in kinders, in schools and in TAFE, like the \$60 million Health and Community Centre of Excellence at Kangan Institute, which will upskill our next generation of healthcare workers, who give so much of themselves to keep us well and safe. But it was this government's commitment to special schools that really made my Labor heart sing. Most parents can access after-school care and school holiday programs and can choose to work full-time with four weeks leave, but for families like Kate and Dean with their son Jake and like Nadja and Mark with their son Luca, who both attend Glenroy Specialist School, this choice has not been available. This policy is a life changer for them and for Jake and Luca, and I thank the carers across the state who helped advocate.

There are so many people to thank. So many have been part of my journey, and I express my sincere gratitude and my apologies to anyone I forget. I will start with my hardworking electorate officer team: Sam, Chris, Enass, Sahar, Nathan and Suad, so ably led by the very capable and hardworking Archit. Every day they are helping so many people in the electorate. I also thank the advisers and staff that support us all. We could not do this important work without the hard work, dedication and personal sacrifices you make to serve in government for a better Victoria.

My amazing and dedicated campaign team, led by my good and wise friend Alice Pryor, and the incredible contribution of the Young Labor folk, particularly Disha, Ayra, Luv, Ishita, Mehul, Kevin, Karan, Tarzon, Anurag, Allen, Tvisha, Kunal and Simar. My booth captains, pre-poll stalwarts and

early morning helpers: Chris, Greg, Mick, Phil, Michael, Molla, Praveen, Nirajan, Karen, Basem, Zaheer, Iliia, Christine and Kevin and the wonderful Hosseini family. And the unstoppable Hassan Gul and the entire Gul family: Saman, Shaista, Shazad, Ashna, Inshira, Azel and Iniah, whose birthday is today. They helped in so many ways, fed us so often, taught me so much and covered half of Fawkner's fences with my face.

To all the Labor members and volunteers who helped so much, including Kerrie, Janet, Jenny, Anne, Sue, Helen, Peter, Paul, Habib and so many others, and to all those who have been part of my Labor journey over the last 30 years, including in branches and on policy committees: thank you for keeping the light on the hill burning so brightly. To Enver and the Erdogan family for their support over many years: it is great to be working alongside you again, Minister. Thanks also to Minister Suleyman, Hakki and Mem. To the team at head office, particularly Cam, Kareem, Mikaela, Laura, Oscar and Nicola, who was there to help and advise at any time of day or night. To my friends, the Glenroy crew, and Jo, Liz and Veronica, and the whole Leyden clan, particularly Glenn, who even with terminal cancer was by my side on election day fighting the good fight.

To my wide circle of family: I am the sum of you all. My wonderful sister Liz and brother Dan; Matt and Anna; Sarah and my nieces and nephews, cousins, aunties and uncles; and of course Mum and Dad, for all that you are to me. And my beautiful Joe, who I could call my rock, but being an engineer, he would probably appreciate being called a girder more – the main support beam in any structure, without which I would crumble. Thanks for always having petrol in the car, carrots in the fridge, sangers in the freezer, kids at sport, water on the plants and a warm hug and cup of tea for me and anyone else who needs one. Loved by everyone who knows you, you are quite simply the best, and I am so grateful for all you do for us and so many around you. And my two gorgeous girls, the centre of my universe, even though I am sure it sometimes feels like you are not. I am proud of the kind, strong, resilient, funny and brave young women that you are, and I thank you for your support, your love, your forgiveness when I am home late and for always keeping me humble. I love you both dearly.

Lastly, to the best people on the planet, the warm-hearted people of the Broadmeadows electorate: thank you for the incredible honour of choosing me to be your representative. I will do all I can, every day that I am fortunate enough to be here, to amplify your voices, to make your lives better and to ensure your troubles and your stories are heard, and I will make sure your voices are heard directly too. Whenever I can get you a seat at the table, I will do so.

Members applauded.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

South-West Coast electorate roads

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (19:07): (71) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is for the minister to drive through South-West Coast to experience in person the roads that this government seems to believe are in excellent condition. This is not the first time I have invited a Minister for Roads and Road Safety to visit South-West Coast and look at the disgraceful condition of our roads. Every previous invitation has been ignored, and I expect this one will be too. My office is contacted daily by constituents and tourists who have travelled through South-West Coast who are horrified by the condition of our roads. The potholes frequently span the width of the carriageway, and the corrugations scrape the bottom of cars and shred tires. These roads are not just dangerous, they are unroadworthy.

For the Minister for Roads and Road Safety's information I have compiled a list of the top 10 most complained-about roads in South-West Coast, and yes, each of these roads is an arterial road which is

managed by Regional Roads Victoria. They are Woolsthorpe-Heywood Road, Princes Highway, Hopkins Highway, Warrnambool-Caramut Road, Hereford Road, Cobden-Warrnambool Road, Mailors Flat-Koroit Road, Myamyn-MacArthur Road, Hamilton-Port Fairy Road and Terang-Mortlake Road. These roads are significant thoroughfares carrying not just domestic vehicles with families and children but school buses, caravans, coaches, milk tankers, log trucks and trucks carrying aluminium ingots, grain, fertiliser, stockfeed and livestock. These roads have not transitioned into this condition overnight either. It is the accumulation of years of neglect and mismanagement that has led to so many of our roads being unroadworthy. I note that for 18 of the last 23 years Labor have governed Victoria, and the connection between the shocking condition of our roads and the general disdain shown by Labor to the regions cannot be ignored. It is disappointing that the people of South-West Coast are subjected to dangerous and dilapidated roads every time they venture out of their driveway.

Minister, our roads are not safe. Will you be brave enough to travel to South-West Coast to experience these roads for yourself? Bring the Premier too. Let us make a day of it. There is lots to see and do in South-West Coast, and dodging potholes is only part of the fun. By driving on these 10 roads you will be able to see some of the best and worst parts of the roads in the south-west at the same time. Given your speech in the Parliament this week at question time boasting how good regional roads are, you have clearly been misled. Come, come and see for yourself. How many people have to die on South-West Coast roads before this government will take responsibility and fix our roads?

Wendouree electorate mental health services

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (19:10): (72) I direct my adjournment matter to the Minister for Mental Health, and the action I seek is for her to provide me with a briefing about how we are improving mental health services and supporting constituents with mental health conditions and their carers in my electorate of Wendouree. Last week marked two years since Victoria's landmark Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System handed down the final report into Victoria's mental health system. The final report included 74 recommendations to fully transform the mental health and wellbeing system and patient care. The royal commission's historic report had an ambitious vision for Victoria's mental health system, and one that I support. The royal commission's 2021 report outlined a 10-year blueprint for Victoria's future mental health and wellbeing services, building a system where every Victorian gets timely, tailored support they need close to home. This is particularly important for regional and rural Victorians, including those who live in my community.

Over the last four years I have met with community members who have been let down by the system, carers who feel broken after their loved ones could not access treatment and support and others who continue to fight for services for their children, their partners and their parents. I have also heard the saddest stories of what could have been done, but now it is too late. I strongly believe that Victorians suffering from mental health issues deserve safe and compassionate care that is responsive, supportive and equitable, as do their families, carers and supporters. Further, I want to ensure that the voices of those with lived and living experience are heard and embedded in the system so that we can improve their quality of care as well as others. I am proud to be a member of the Andrews Labor government that has invested \$6 billion to fix our broken mental health system, and I look forward to the Minister for Mental Health's response to this matter. This will give me the opportunity to report back to my community about the significant work that is taking place and how we are delivering better mental health services for all Victorians.

Latrobe River Bridge, Tyers Road

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (19:12): (73) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is for the minister to urgently intervene to fast-track replacement of the old Latrobe River Bridge at Tyers Road. The old bridge was built in 1936 and is the only direct connection between the two towns of Tyers and Traralgon. It regularly floods when there is heavy rainfall and its load-bearing capacity is only 30 tonnes, meaning heavy vehicles must lower their speed to cross the bridge safely. In 2015 the Premier announced a new bridge for the

town of Tyers as a matter of urgency. He said it was long overdue and promised it would be one of his first tasks. Now eight years later not only are the people of Tyers still waiting for the new bridge, but the old bridge that gives them access into town has been closed since November. When the bridge is closed public access to the town is cut off. A free shuttle bus designed to connect communities to the public transport network does not help parents get their children to school on time. It does not get residents to work on time. It does not help them access the medical services. It does not solve the problem our selfless first responders face in accessing and responding to emergencies. It does not help ambulances transporting critically ill patients to hospital.

Last week by stealth the state government posted an update to the Regional Roads Victoria website. It said work to replace the bridge was ‘well underway’, but that:

Tyers Road at the Latrobe River Bridge will remain closed until further notice.

At the bottom of the webpage it mentions works are not scheduled to be complete until 2024. By the state government’s own admission this is frustrating, but frustrating does not come close to articulating how justifiably angry the people of Tyers are. The state government lauds its own level crossing removal projects on a weekly basis, boasting it has scrapped yet another dangerous crossing for the people of metropolitan Melbourne – 67 since 2019, to be exact. If the Andrews government can remove 67 level crossings in Melbourne in less than four years, surely it can extend the same courtesy to the people of Tyers in regional Victoria, who are simply asking for the swift restoration of a single bridge, which was promised as a matter of urgency eight years ago. So, Minister, will you fast-track construction of this critical piece of infrastructure and provide a time line for delivery for the people of Tyers?

Bay Trail, Point Cook, upgrades

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (19:15): (74) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Environment from the other place, and the action that I seek from the minister is to visit the electorate of Point Cook, see the progress and update the community on the upgrades to the Bay Trail project. Of course this is a very important project to the people of Point Cook. It takes a 3.8-kilometre detour that people currently need to take and shortens that to 400 metres with a terrific piece of infrastructure alongside our beautiful bay in the west. For those people who do not know about the beautiful bay in the west, they need to visit and they need to visit quickly. The bay in the west and the Cheetham Wetlands in particular are known as the Kakadu of Melbourne because they have as many bird species as those of Kakadu, so it is time for everybody here to get down to the west and visit the Cheetham Wetlands. This is the latest in a series of upgrades that will see the bicycle and walking paths extended to the Point Cook Coastal Park. This is part of a \$21 million project by the government to upgrade 21 parks across Melbourne, a fantastic initiative that will see all parts of the community benefit.

The works will create a missing link, the missing link that I talked about between the Cheetham Wetlands and Sanctuary Lakes and Saltwater in the community that I represent. It leads to the Point Cook Coastal Park, an amazing piece of park infrastructure for Victoria. The link traverses some of the most important environmental areas in Victoria – Ramsar-listed sites – and that is why I am so pleased to hear about the initial design work, including elevated boardwalk-style paths to protect the landscape and an emphasis on environmental controls to protect those important areas. The Cheetham Wetlands, I might remind this house, were in operation as saltworks for more than 70 years, a great industrious part of Melbourne that is now great for the environment. The consultants that have already been appointed to undertake this detailed design work are getting on with this job. The link opens up the area to visitors from across the state and also importantly for northbound access to Saltwater for cyclists and pedestrians. Many residents from Saltwater and Point Cook are keen to hear about the next steps and how the minister intends to progress this fantastic and amazing project.

Sandringham electorate public housing

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (19:17): (75) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Housing, and the action that I seek is for the minister to authorise his department to meet with me so

that I may convey the concerns of the Bayside District Public Tenants Association, especially concerning necessary rectification works at the Dunkley Fox estate in Highett. Last week public housing residents from the Sandringham electorate met with me to bring to my attention the lack of care and maintenance that has been afforded to this estate. Residents presented me with a petition signed by more than 50 tenants calling for the local housing office to address the unsafe and dilapidated state of the children's playground. This petition also calls for the existing surfaces of the playground to be replaced with soft rubber and the instalment of sunshades above the playground. Parents, sadly, are too scared to allow their kids to spend time using the existing facilities due to the presence of syringes and regular drug use in public areas.

Residents have made numerous calls to Victoria Police to report the presence of squatters who are making use of the abandoned units for drug production and other illicit activities. These matters have also been brought to the attention of the responsible housing officer time and time again, and yet the concerns of the residents consistently fall on deaf ears. Often residents receive the advice that they must take their matters into their own hands by intervening in these dangerous situations and calling police themselves. Everybody has the right to live safely without fear for their own personal safety or the safety of their neighbours.

I am also aware of residents from other local public housing estates in my electorate who are desperately seeking a move into the Dunkley Fox estate; however, with limited suitable accommodation to meet their specific accessibility requirements, there is clearly more attention that is required for the public housing tenants in my community. I thank sincerely the Bayside District Public Tenants Association for making me aware of these issues, and I urge the minister, who I consider a good person and a good minister with their heart in the right place, to take the matters that I have raised this evening and to urgently action the request that I have made on behalf of my constituents.

Eating disorder strategy

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (19:20): (76) My adjournment is to the Minister for Mental Health. I ask the minister to arrange a briefing for me with her department to discuss progress towards finalising Victoria's new eating disorder strategy and delivering our first residential treatment centre for eating disorders. Victoria needs a well-funded, well-coordinated and evidence-based eating disorder system of care that can deliver tailored support and treatment for people living with eating disorders. Eating disorders are serious, complex and life-threatening mental illnesses. They occur in people of all ages, genders, sexual identities, cultural groups, in people of all body shapes and sizes and in people living with other physical and mental health issues. However, eating disorders are most prevalent amongst adolescents and young people. I have heard from several families in my community struggling to support their young loved ones with eating disorders and the huge toll it takes.

Disturbingly eating disorders increased by 11.1 per cent between 2008–09 and 2017–18, the largest increase of all disorders. They have the highest mortality rate of all mental health conditions. That is why we have prioritised funding to help those affected by eating disorders, investing \$20 million to provide dedicated, tailored treatments and services, and we are working to establish Victoria's first statewide residential treatment centre for eating disorders, due to open next year. This facility will provide 24/7 therapeutic interventions in a home-like environment, with statewide access and integration across all eating disorder services. We are also investing record amounts in mental health and support in schools to ensure Victorian students get support at this volatile age.

The complex, variable and fluid nature of eating disorder presentations necessitates a multidimensional and flexible approach to assessment, clinical diagnosis and treatment planning within our health systems. Unfortunately current eating disorder care across Australia is inconsistently delivered, difficult to navigate and not evidence based. For people living with eating disorders, their families and carers, this makes accessing the supports and treatments they need far too difficult – a heartbreaking and disempowering reality. For the large percentage of those with eating disorders who are also neurodivergent or present with additional mental ill health, navigating the system is even

harder. We know that addressing fragmentation in the system requires high levels of coordination between physical and mental health services, private and public services, health and community services and between disciplines. Our government is not shying away from this. We are working to build a more compassionate, responsive, coordinated system to support people living with eating disorders and their loved ones. It is what Victorians need and what we deserve, and I look forward to hearing more about how we are progressing towards a better system of care for people living with eating disorders so that patients, their families and their carers can access the treatments and supports they need to heal and recover.

Brunswick electorate level crossing removals

Tim READ (Brunswick) (19:23): (77) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, and the action I seek is that the minister and her Level Crossing Removal Project team pay close attention to the findings of the Merri-bek City Council's consultation of the Brunswick community in addition to the other consultation work that will be done by the Level Crossing Removal Project. Merri-bek City Council has had a series of roundtable meetings with local groups and a well-attended public meeting at the Brunswick town hall to hear the community's priorities for the landscaping and facilities associated with the project. I have attended most meetings so far, as well as meeting with other groups who live near the line, and I have heard some consistent themes about how people want the Level Crossing Removal Project to take shape. Most support the concept of elevated rail and look forward to having more green space beneath the lines in an area not richly endowed with parkland or even backyards.

Here are just a few of the ideas I have heard so far. Involve locals in choosing the features and designing the art and landscaping, starting with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and the Blak Dot Gallery, and release a concept design for community feedback. Preserve as much of the native trees and vegetation as possible, given most of it was planted by volunteers from the Upfield Urban Forest community group, which has been working on this precinct for decades. Trees are there because local volunteers planted them. For replacement plants, prioritise indigenous plants that will attract birds. Preserve and where possible incorporate heritage items like signal boxes into the new design. The population density is much higher in Brunswick than around the recent Coburg elevated rail project, and with so many apartment towers and houses right up against the line many have asked that the stations be less visually intrusive than the large, box-like stations in Coburg. Include spaces and activities for older kids and teenagers such as small soccer or futsal courts. Some of the area is prone to flooding, so plan for that. Consider walkers and riders travelling at different speeds and prioritise both at road intersections using priority signals and signs. Do not reopen any of the currently closed roads like Barkly Street. Bike use is high in Brunswick and growing, so we will need a good design for the many riders wanting to head from the Upfield path to Royal Parade, and they will need a safe, direct route to bypass the construction site while the Upfield path is closed for what is likely to be at least a year. Sydney Road comes to mind as the most likely option, and that is conveniently under state control. A pop-up bike lane there would be quick and inexpensive and heavily used – or make it permanent and add in accessible tram stops so people using wheels have an option when the train is not running.

Bell Street, Coburg, pedestrian safety

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (19:26): (78) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is that the minister provide the latest update on the steps the Andrews Labor government is taking to evaluate pedestrian and motorist safety along the Bell Street bridge, which intersects with the Pascoe Vale, Northcote and Preston electorates. As I stated in my first speech, with so many young families as well as elderly residents now living across Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West, improving safety across our transport network will remain an ongoing priority of mine. In this respect, working to make the Bell Street corridor safer will be critical.

As many of us know, the Bell Street corridor is a major east-west arterial road connecting the inner northern suburbs with the Tullamarine Freeway and the Eastern Freeway. Slicing through the centre of my electorate, Bell Street experiences up to 47,000 vehicle movements per day and is one of the busiest arterials in the state's road network. That is why the Victorian Labor government has been taking real action to improve safety along the Bell Street corridor, including through the removal of dangerous level crossings at Bell Street, Coburg and Bell Street, Preston. However, in the short to medium term ongoing opportunities also exist for us to continue making the commuter experience along Bell Street even more safe.

One of the key priorities includes the Bell Street bridge in Coburg, which facilitates east-west commuting over the Merri Creek and enables north-south travel between Elizabeth Street and Nicholson Street. The bridge itself provides for six lanes of east-west traffic, connects the Merri-bek and Darebin communities, connects locals to tram route terminus 1 on Nicholson Street and supports locals to access De Chene Reserve in Coburg. However, from the moment I was preselected as the Labor candidate last year residents have been sharing their concerns with me around safety along the bridge. Whether it be concerns around the narrow footpaths on either side of the bridge, the setback between the footpaths and traffic lanes, the mountable kerbsides or the left-turn slip lanes connecting Bell Street to Nicholson Street or to Elizabeth Street, residents have continued to raise concerns with me.

In response I was pleased to have worked with Labor colleagues, including the member for Northcote, to help support a range of safety improvements along the bridge, which have included reducing speed limits from 70 kilometres down to 60 kilometres and signage and pavement marking improvements, including dragon's teeth markings, slowdown markings and pedestrian warning signs on the approach to the bridge. However, with the one-year anniversary approaching of the introduction of many of these measures, I believe it would be opportune for the department to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the safety measures to better understand the risk profile of the area and to hear directly from my community about their experiences. In this regard I particularly acknowledge the work of the Safe Access over Bell Street Bridge for Everyone group, SABBE, including conveners Deb Wyatt, Lanie Stockman and Jose Villadangos, who I have had the pleasure of meeting with on several occasions.

I would also like to acknowledge the advocacy of Coburg High School students. More than a thousand pedestrians cross Bell Street bridge from Monday to Friday, with 79 per cent of Coburg High students having utilised Bell Street bridge and 30 per cent of students relying on it at least once a week. Of these students, 32 per cent have witnessed at least one accident or a near miss in the past year alone.

I look forward to receiving the minister's response and sharing it with the SABBE group, the Coburg High School students and the member for Northcote, who I look forward to continuing to work with in regard to this issue.

Rural and regional roads

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (19:29): (79) The action I seek is from the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and what I am asking is for \$3 million to be put into Regional Roads Victoria for intersection upgrades and road designs for Warragul and Drouin. This issue has been going on since 2017. We have had numerous ministers since then that have ignored this issue. Warragul and Drouin, or the Baw Baw shire in particular, is one of the fastest growing local government areas in Australia; in fact it is the ninth fastest local government area in Australia and the fifth fastest in Victoria. At these intersections now the residents of Warragul and Drouin in particular just cannot travel through these towns anymore. It is just growing at such a rate that the infrastructure is so far behind. So I ask the minister to please invest \$3 million into Regional Roads Victoria so they can get these studies and designs done.

We have Burke Street in Warragul, for example, where it takes you 20 minutes to travel 1 kilometre. To compound that problem, we have got a new ambulance station in the same area. If an ambulance cannot get through the congestion, people's lives are at risk. I really do encourage the minister: I am

more than happy for the minister to come down, and I am more than happy to show the minister around my electorate and the problems that we have there.

In Drouin, for example, it takes you 20 minutes to get through the town. I sat here today and listened to the minister say, 'We've invested hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars in regional Victoria.' We are only asking for \$3 million. We are not asking for hundreds of millions, we are asking for \$3 million, and I do not think it is too much of an ask to invest \$3 million in Regional Roads Victoria so these communities can start living a better life.

I know if these intersections were in Melbourne they would be fixed, but because they are in regional Victoria, they seem to be ignored. I did get concerned when through the election I heard people say, 'Narracan needs to be marginal to get funding.' To me, that is an insult to the people of Narracan. I do not think we have to be marginal to get funding. I think the government has always said that it governs for all Victorians. I would like the government to govern for all Victorians, and – as they say – I would like the government to do what matters for the people of Narracan. So I call on the minister for this funding. It is urgent. It has been five years. Since this was initially talked about, that population has grown 7500 people in five years. I call on the minister, and I am happy to chauffeur her around Narracan and show her the problems firsthand so we can get this problem resolved.

Shree Swaminarayan Temple

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (19:32): (80) We are so incredibly lucky to have a diverse and proudly multicultural community in the electorate that I represent, one that is home to beautiful temples, one being the Shree Swaminarayan Temple in Boronia. I have been a proud supporter of this wonderful temple and this community, who go out of their way to support their community and indeed the broader community. I am equally chuffed that the Andrews Labor government provided \$243,750 to back in this amazing temple with much-needed upgrades. So I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. The action that I seek is for the minister to come on down to the Shree Swaminarayan Temple in Boronia to understand further what the investment is delivering and the difference it will make to our community. The funding will deliver upgrades to their temple and community facilities, including flooring and carpet replacement, kitchen and non-working equipment upgrades, main roof replacement and solar energy system installation.

A member: Yes, love that.

Jackson TAYLOR: You love it – absolutely love it – because having safe and secure places to celebrate and share cultural history and traditions ensures our multicultural communities can continue to build connections, share traditions and celebrate diversity, and locally it will mean they can keep doing their incredibly valuable work. I am so proud to support this amazing community, who do so much to support our community. I am absolutely stoked by our government's commitment to back in our multicultural communities right across Knox and indeed all of Victoria, as it is one of the very best things about our state.

Responses

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (19:33): I rise to respond to adjournment matters raised by members. Firstly, the member for South-West Coast to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action that she seeks is that the minister drive through the South-West Coast to see the roads and their condition in person. The member for Wendouree raised a matter for the Minister for Mental Health, and the action she sought was for the minister to provide a briefing about how mental health services are being provided to residents and carers in her local community.

The member for Morwell raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety in relation to intervening and fast-tracking works on the Latrobe River bridge. The member for Point Cook raised a matter for the Minister for Environment in the other place in regard to action to visit the Point Cook

electorate to see the progress on the upgrades to the Bay Trail project. The member for Sandringham raised a matter for the Minister for Housing. The action that he sought was to authorise the department to allow the member to meet with departmental staff to put the views of the housing estate residents on related matters and actions and works that are required in the Highett housing estate.

The member for Northcote raised a matter for the Minister for Mental Health, and the action she sought was to arrange a briefing on the progress to deliver the new eating disorders strategy and related services. The member for Brunswick raised a matter for the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure seeking that the minister and the level crossing removal authority team pay close attention to Merri-bek council's submissions regarding landscaping and related services along the rail lines in relation to level crossing removal works and upgrades and improvements there, particularly in relation to landscaping matters and the significant consultation that the member has been engaged in with local communities.

The member for Pascoe Vale raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action he sought was the latest update to evaluate pedestrian and motorist safety across the Bell Street corridor. All roads lead to Bell Street when you represent the northern suburbs. The member for Narracan raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action that he sought is that up to \$3 million be allocated for expenditure by Regional Roads Victoria on studies and related designs – that is the word that I have written here – across the Drouin and Warragul communities. I will pass those matters on.

The member for Bayswater raised a matter for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, and the action that he has sought is that the minister visit his electorate of Bayswater to see and understand the significant capital investments funded by the Andrews government and the positive effects those investments will have on his community.

I commend members for the action items, and I will see that they are passed on to relevant ministers.

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

House adjourned 7:36 pm.