



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Thursday 23 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, Bronwyn Halfpenny,
Paul Hamer, Michaela Settle, Meng Heang Tak and Jackson Taylor

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Daniel Andrews

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Jacinta Allan

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	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	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Fowles, Will	Ringwood	ALP	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	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
	Narracan		Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

CONTENTS

PETITIONS	
Bright western gateway development	1207
Champion Road closure.....	1207
DOCUMENTS	
Documents	1207
COMMITTEES	
Parliamentary committees	1208
Membership	1208
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
Adjournment	1208
MEMBERS STATEMENTS	
Colac Neighbourhood House	1208
Kathy Niblett-Graham	1208
ChillOut Festival.....	1208
Public service	1209
Gippsland South electorate events	1209
Extremism	1209
Carey Baptist Grammar School	1210
Kew electorate sports clubs	1210
Boroondara police station	1210
Terry Norris.....	1210
My Mount Eliza Run and Fun Festival	1211
Mornington Men’s Shed.....	1211
Allan Godfrey	1211
Keilor Downs College.....	1211
Ramadan.....	1211
Traralgon Recreation Reserve.....	1211
LGBTIQA+ support.....	1212
Tyson Bale memorial game.....	1212
LGBTIQA+ support.....	1213
Breastfeeding	1213
Thomastown electorate early childhood education	1213
Samantha Fraser	1214
Clarinda Primary School.....	1214
Garrang Wilam Primary School.....	1214
Disability support.....	1215
Heath Snooks	1215
Bayswater electorate primary schools	1215
State Emergency Service Knox unit.....	1215
Narre Warren North electorate schools	1215
Marnebek School.....	1216
Backpacks 4 VIC Kids.....	1216
COMMITTEES	
Parliamentary committees	1216
Membership	1216
BILLS	
Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022	1219
Second reading.....	1219
Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023.....	1245
Second reading.....	1245
MEMBERS	
Treasurer.....	1250
Absence	1250
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE AND MINISTERS STATEMENTS	
Member conduct.....	1250
Ministers statements: health infrastructure.....	1251
Member conduct.....	1251
Ministers statements: Smile Squad	1252
Member conduct.....	1252
Ministers statements: mental health support	1253
Housing affordability	1253
Ministers statements: student mental health	1254

Government integrity	1255
Ministers statements: health infrastructure.....	1255
CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS	
Evelyn electorate	1256
Bass electorate	1257
Euroa electorate	1257
Ripon electorate.....	1257
Brighton electorate	1258
Ringwood electorate.....	1258
Mildura electorate.....	1258
Bayswater electorate	1258
Nepean electorate	1259
Laverton electorate.....	1259
BILLS	
Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023.....	1259
Second reading.....	1259
Third reading.....	1287
Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2023	1287
Second reading.....	1287
Third reading.....	1289
ADJOURNMENT	
Land tax.....	1289
Wantirna dog park and playground	1290
Wilson's Promontory walking track	1290
Thomastown electorate sporting facilities.....	1291
Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III.....	1291
Littlecroft Family and Community Centre	1291
Goulburn Valley Health.....	1292
Clifton Springs Primary School	1292
Mornington electorate sports facilities	1293
Point Cook schools.....	1293
Responses.....	1294

Thursday 23 March 2023

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

*Petitions***Bright western gateway development**

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) presented a petition bearing 728 signatures:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the proposed Bright Valley/Bright Western Gateway Development Plan, and the proposed removal of an unspecified number of Elm trees, which form an iconic entryway for the Bright township.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly

1. notes the opposition to the removal of said trees and the historical and tourism significance of said trees; and,
2. calls on the Government to prevent the removal of any trees, if practicable, in order to preserve the heritage and environment of the western entry into Bright.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Champion Road closure

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown) presented a petition bearing 1466 signatures:

The petition of residents and businesses in the State Electorate of Williamstown draws to the attention of the House the devastating impact the closure of Champion Road will have on the Williamstown and Newport communities.

Champion Rd is a vital link between the suburbs of Newport and Williamstown, with thousands of locals using it every day to access schools, supermarkets, sport, and recreation. Removing this link will significantly impact the local businesses in Williamstown and Newport that rely on customers using this vital connection. It will also divert traffic to Maddox Road, where there are three child care centres and a primary school, and turning this local street into a major thoroughfare will increase congestion and pose greater safety risks for the children and families who use it.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria commits to working with the community to develop a solution that will keep Champion Road open and our community connected.

*Documents***Documents**

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Auditor General – Understanding Victoria’s Contaminated Land – Ordered to be published

Financial Management Act 1994 – Report from the Minister for Environment that she had received the Reports 2021–22 of the:

Barwon South West Waste and Resource Recovery Group

Gippsland Waste and Resource Recovery Group

Goulburn Valley Waste and Resource Recovery Group

Grampians Central West Waste and Resource Recovery Group

Loddon Mallee Waste and Resource Recovery Group

North East Waste and Resource Recovery Group

Fire Services Implementation Monitor – Report 2021–22

Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group – Report 2021–22

Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 – Government response to the Integrity and Oversight Committee’s Inquiry into the Education and Prevention Functions of Victoria’s Integrity Agencies

State Sport Centres Trust – Report 2021–22

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rule 18

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001 – Notice of request to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council for an assessment of the values of Immediate Protection Areas in the Central Highlands and East Gippsland

Workplace Incidents Consultative Committee – Report 2021–22.

Committees

Parliamentary committees

Membership

The SPEAKER (09:35): I have received the resignation of Gary Maas from the Integrity and Oversight Committee effective from 22 March 2023 and the resignation of Jackson Taylor from the Legal and Social Issues Committee effective from today.

Business of the house

Adjournment

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (09:35): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday 2 May 2023 at 12 pm.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

Colac Neighbourhood House

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (09:36): I would like to put on the record today a fantastic event we held on the weekend, the Polwarth community function. This is a regular event we hold where we celebrate the great things that happen in the electorate of Polwarth. One of the great things that we managed to achieve this weekend was a fundraiser for the Fill It Up Mate campaign run by our local neighbourhood house. I can proudly report that the people that came along for the day raised around \$1000. We will be presenting that to this important service in our local community that makes sure that families have access to fresh and available food on a daily basis. Coordinator Julie Hallifax does a great job bringing people together, most importantly coordinating a really essential service, and it was great that the people of Polwarth could help with that.

Kathy Niblett-Graham

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (09:37): I would also like to say that on the day we acknowledged a great volunteer in our community, Kathy Niblett-Graham. Kathy received the Polwarth Medal this year, based on the fact that she is one of those wonderful people that we have in our community who works tirelessly for all sorts of causes, particularly around young people and associations she has had in the community. For the last 10 years she has been the district head of the Otways Scouts region, and that has been a great contribution, but of course she is well known for helping out with local community radio, school groups and others. A big shout-out to Kathy Niblett-Graham for this year's Polwarth Medal.

ChillOut Festival

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (09:37): I rise to celebrate Australia's largest and longest running queer country pride event, ChillOut, held each year in Daylesford in my electorate. On 12 March together with the Minister for Equality and the member for Wendouree I marched in the annual ChillOut parade. I am proud to march in the parade every year and let the LGBTIQ community know that the Andrews Labor government stands with them at all times. Marching in the parade were

elders from the community as well as many trans and gender-diverse young people, some stepping out for the very first time. The parade also boasted representatives from Victorian Rainbow Labor, the Victorian Ambulance Union, V/Line, the Victorian Pride Centre, Victoria Police, the Ballarat Frolic Festival and Central Highlands Rural Health. Daylesford bursts with colour and pride throughout the festival, and this is the inclusion and visibility that I am so proud to be a part of. Support provided to ChillOut and other LGBTIQ+ events through the Pride Events and Festivals Fund represents the Andrews Labor government's commitment to creating safe, strong LGBTIQ+ communities across Victoria. Big thanks to our festival director Emma Ireland on another wonderful festival, committee president Matt Clarke, all the community members and the many hundreds of volunteers from right across my region who make ChillOut one of the great highlights of Victoria's diverse festival calendar.

Public service

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:39): This morning's revelations in the *Age* that the Andrews Labor government has tripled spending on consultancy since coming to government in 2015 should be a surprise to no-one. This is despite Victorian public service numbers having risen around 60 per cent in the same time. What is frustrating about this, though, is the reduction in front-facing service from the Victorian Public Service in recent years. Based on complaints to my office the frontline service of many government agencies has been terrible, some of it the under the cover of COVID, but not getting much better in recent months. Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria has been one of the worst offenders, with constituents struggling to get hold of BDM for birth and death certificate inquiries. It took one Gippsland family in my electorate eight months to register a baby born outside the hospital system.

Right now the BDM customer service centre – it seems like an oxymoron in the circumstances – is still closed. In recent months I have had constituents with similar problems contacting anyone at Aboriginal Housing Victoria and the working with children check hotline, and we have seen reductions in office opening hours at Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action offices, as previously raised by my colleague the member for Gippsland East. I call on the government to urgently put the 'service' back into public service.

Gippsland South electorate events

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:40): Gippsland South has been revelling in glorious autumn weather, which has been perfect for the festival season. Congratulations to the organisers of the Prom Coast Festival in Corner Inlet two weeks ago. The free Sale Music Festival was another success. Well done to Heather Harrington and her team for putting on a great day. And the Stony Creek Cup on Sunday the 12th had a great crowd for a perfect cup event. I even backed a winner trained by Danny O'Brien.

Extremism

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (09:41): On the weekend, on the very steps of this building, the people's Parliament, the heart of our democracy, anti-transgender activists gathered to speak and to spread hate. Some performed a Nazi salute. Nazis are not welcome here; they are not welcome anywhere. Victoria Police has a tough job. They put their lives on the line 24/7 to keep Victorians safe. Our government does not interfere in the operations of Victoria Police. You only have to look at section 10 of the Victoria Police Act 2013 to know that. As advised by the Chief Commissioner of Police, Victoria Police established lines to keep protest groups separate. Just imagine the potential riots, the violence and the chaos if police were not present on Saturday. Our government, and I hope this Parliament, thanks police for the work that they do to keep Victorians safe every day. Our government banned the Hakenkreuz, the swastika, and the Attorney-General has made it clear we will also ban that evil salute.

As the Minister for Police for our state, as the member for Ivanhoe district and as a member of the Labor Party for over 30 years, I say this to every trans Victorian: our government will always support you. We will always respect you. Your rights are not negotiable. Police are the first responders who step in when others step away to keep Victorians safe. Hate speech inciting right-wing fringe groups, all at the invitation of a Liberal Party MP – shame on them all. They stand condemned. An apology is owed from the opposition leader to all Victorians.

Carey Baptist Grammar School

Jess WILSON (Kew) (09:42): I rise to speak about my recent visit to Carey grammar school in Kew. I was delighted to talk to Carey's grade 4 class about government in Australia. It is so important that young people understand and value our democratic system of government. I congratulate the teaching team at Carey for their admirable commitment to fostering a sense of belonging in our community by teaching students about the importance of upholding our system of government and the rule of law. The grade 4s had some brilliant and challenging questions for me, and I cannot wait to see the contribution they make to our society when they grow up.

Kew electorate sports clubs

Jess WILSON (Kew) (09:42): The electorate of Kew is home to many fantastic local sporting clubs, and this weekend I was delighted to mark the conclusion of the cricket season with our local teams. The Eastern Cricket Association put on a terrific lunch at Macleay Park to celebrate their grand finals, which were attended by finalists the North Balwyn Cricket Club, the Bulls; the Deepdene Uniting Cricket Club, the Deeners; and the Old Carey Cricket Club. I was thrilled to attend the Balwyn Saints and Balwyn Blasters junior cricket club's presentation night, where I was also pleased to see the growth of girls cricket across the club. This Saturday the Deepdene Bears Cricket Club are chasing 163 runs at Stradbroke Park to take the premiership. Go Bears! I congratulate all the players and club volunteers on a fantastic season.

Boroondara police station

Jess WILSON (Kew) (09:43): I would like to pass on my appreciation to Inspector Craig Pearson, the officer in charge of Boroondara police station, for his briefing last week on local safety and crime in the electorate of Kew and thank all the police officers at that station. As we approach the third anniversary of the horrific Eastern Freeway crash that saw four police officers tragically lose their lives, my thoughts are with the officers' families, friends and colleagues.

Terry Norris

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples) (09:43): I rise today to pay tribute to the late Terry Norris, former Labor member for Dandenong, following his passing earlier this week. Many Australians would know Terry best for his TV work, whether that be *Cop Shop*, *Bellbird* or any of the other 80-odd TV shows and films that Terry performed in throughout his career. Perhaps his most fitting role was when he starred in the infamous 'It's Time' television commercial to support the Gough Whitlam-led Labor Party at the 1972 election. In 1982 Terry began his political career as the Labor member for Noble Park, where he served until the seat was abolished in 1985. He then served as the member for Dandenong until 1992. He would reflect on his 10 years of service as both eye-opening and challenging, but his legacy in Dandenong is one that will live on.

When I was preselected for the seat of Dandenong back in 2013, one of the first people to call me to offer congratulations was Terry. He was humble and assumed that I may not know who he was. We had a wonderful chat about what I should expect from a political career – he was right – and he offered up his support whenever I should need it. I now know this kindness was very typical of Terry. When I posted on Facebook about his passing, the comments were filled with a consistent wave of words to describe the man: a good man, a kind man, a heart of gold, a man who took time to talk and listen and a top bloke, as my immediate predecessor in this place John Pandazopoulos said.

Terry was more than just a brilliant and beloved actor. He was a mentor and a passionate and engaged representative for the Dandenong community. He will be remembered fondly by Victorian Labor and the south-east community more broadly. I would like to extend my deepest condolences to his wife Julia and his children and all who had the great pleasure of knowing him or feeling like they did. Vale, Terry Norris.

My Mount Eliza Run and Fun Festival

Chris CREWTHER (Mornington) (09:45): On 19 March hundreds of locals, my daughter Yasmin and I again joined the My Mount Eliza Run and Fun Festival, a fun run to raise funds to tackle multiple myeloma. It is a fantastic event to increase awareness of blood cancer and to fundraise for the Snowdome Foundation. So far over \$25,000 has been raised to support research and accelerate new therapies and bring next-generation treatments to Australian blood cancer patients faster. My daughter Yasmin did the 4 kilometres with me and even raised \$65 on her own. I was also on Westy's team; he has multiple myeloma himself. Over the past three years the festival has raised over \$130,000 for multiple myeloma research.

Mornington Men's Shed

Chris CREWTHER (Mornington) (09:46): Second, I visited Mornington Men's Shed. They are looking for help finding new land. It was great to see that the dust extraction system that I secured funding for a few years ago is still going strong. The generous and talented men's shed team even gifted me a wonderful handcrafted Liberal coaster made by Bob Hayter. The shed has fantastic facilities for activities including woodwork, welding and metalwork, and members get involved with things including computers, 3D printing, woodworking, IT, internet use and more. It is fantastic to see such a wonderful and vibrant community organisation continuing to grow and thrive, and I look forward to supporting them and their projects and activities going forward.

Allan Godfrey

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (09:47): I rise today to wish Allan Godfrey a very happy 100th birthday. Allan is a veteran of World War II and served in Darwin and overseas, transporting wounded soldiers. He demonstrated courage, mateship and a true commitment to service. Allan is a proud St Albans local and a national treasure, and he has lived a life dedicated to his country. Thank you, Allan Godfrey, for your generous focus on serving others and helping the community. I look forward to celebrating with Allan and his family this Sunday.

Keilor Downs College

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (09:47): On another matter, I want to give a very big shout-out to the Keilor Downs College boys soccer team, who have made it to the finals in the premier league. All the very best and much success for the game next week.

Ramadan

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (09:47): On another matter, I wish all Muslims a blessed and peaceful Ramadan. Ramadan Mubarak to the Victorian community.

Traralgon Recreation Reserve

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (09:47): The Traralgon Recreation Reserve, which is home to the Traralgon Football Netball Club, Ex-Students Cricket Club, Traralgon Bridge Club, Traralgon men's shed, Traralgon fire brigade, TEDAS Junior Football Club and roller derby experienced the brunt of a major flood back in mid-2021. The flood that hit without any warning whatsoever had a major impact on the town, houses around the recreation reserve, a major shopping centre and an accommodation

venue, but in particular it decimated the user groups of the rec reserve. For nearly two years the change rooms and canteen have stood frozen in time as the government has been unable to fund the demolition and rebuild of the facility. Works are finally scheduled to begin at some stage this year, but the current allocated funding falls a long way short of being able to provide new secure homes for the user groups. The Traralgon Football Netball Club play in a major league competition in Gippsland and currently get changed in flood-affected facilities with no male or female football-netball amenities or proper change rooms. The men's shed also currently hold their breath every time a major rain event is happening, with the equipment used by all in the men's shed still very much vulnerable to being destroyed again with another flood. In the upcoming budget the user groups call on the government to commit the further funds, approximately \$8 million, still needed to complete the total build, securing the future of all user groups of the Traralgon Recreation Reserve going forward.

LGBTIQA+ support

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (09:49): I join with members of the government in sharing our love and appreciation for the trans and gender-diverse community. We are a place of absolute pride in Victoria, and we are one of the most inclusive and supportive communities in the world. It is something that we celebrate. It is something that people come and visit and share with us each and every day. The images that we saw out on the steps of Parliament are harrowing. We saw only a little while ago some of those nasty elements present at the Victorian Pride Centre and then on the very steps of our Parliament – Nazis all the way through to hate speech targeting some of the most vulnerable in our community. We know the stats and we know the impact, and it goes without saying that those that are impacted have a disproportionate mental health and wellbeing impact on them. As Parliamentary Secretary for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, I know that disproportionate impact and how that affects trans and gender-diverse community members.

I want to say on behalf of my community and on behalf of the government that we absolutely love and appreciate all of you and that you have a wonderful place in the Victorian story and the patchwork quilt that makes up our wonderful and inclusive society, so keep being as proud as you can be. I visited the Victorian Pride Centre a while ago, and I was just blown away by the love and inclusion that was on demonstration. To anyone that wants to go and see the beautiful support services that are there, that is what truly is Victoria.

Tyson Bale memorial game

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (09:50): I rise today to talk about my local community and the annual footy game held between the Warragul Dusties and Buln Buln footy clubs – both clubs I used to play footy with. In conjunction with Mindfull Aus, they started an annual game to raise money for mental health awareness in sporting clubs in honour of one of our local footballers, Tyson Bale, who played football with both of these clubs. Unfortunately, Tyson died in 2020 during the COVID lockdowns. Sometimes with tragedy, positives can occur. In Tyson's memory the Tyson Bale Memorial Fund was established. This year the annual footy game raised \$4500. All this money is used for mental health awareness in sporting clubs, implemented by Mindfull Aus, one of my local mental health providers.

It is a great testament to my community that they have got behind this event, and I give a big shout-out to the following businesses: Bowens, Bunnings, Hip Pocket Workwear, the Club Hotel, Warragul, the Warragul Downtowner, Ace Industrial and the Maffra post office. We talk and talk and talk about mental health, but it is so good when a community comes together to make a positive difference and create something into the future that may benefit many. Congratulations to all involved. Keep up the good work, and thank you to the local community for supporting this event.

LGBTIQA+ support

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (09:52): We stand against bigotry, against hate speech and against those who target and aim to humiliate some of our most vulnerable community members. We have seen the devastating impacts of questioning people's trans identity and trans people's right to participate in society as their authentic selves. It causes very real damage for people who are already experiencing enormous amounts of stigma, shame and discrimination. We will not take a backward step in supporting our LGBTIQA+ community, and we will not negotiate on equality and on people's fundamental right to be who they are. We of course have our 10-year plan for equality *Pride in our Future*, and we will continue breaking down barriers so that all Victorians can live safely.

Those who attended Saturday's protest to spread hate, division and fear should be ashamed of themselves. Those who stood with neo-Nazi sympathisers should be ashamed of themselves. This government will stand with every Victorian with love, with kindness and with compassion, because we know that our trans community needs us. We know that each and every Victorian deserves to be the person they are, free of violence, of hate, of fear. To those who attended on Saturday, you should hang your heads in shame.

Breastfeeding

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (09:53): In the last couple of weeks a woman was ejected from the County Court of Victoria for breastfeeding her baby. A lot of Victorians were understandably shocked by such an archaic response to a woman feeding a baby in a public space. As people know, I have breastfed three babies here in Parliament, sitting on the curb, in churches, in cafes. In fact any time my babies were hungry I fed them, because anyone who has breastfed knows that it does not matter where you are: when your baby has got to eat, they have got to eat. Little ones simply cannot wait, and feeding them is just a means of keeping them alive. Delaying breastfeeding can actually also be incredibly dangerous for the mother, leading to health conditions like mastitis, which is not nice. Preventing people from breastfeeding in public places – all it does is send a message to women that they are not welcome in public spaces, in public life, and this is unacceptable. Women should be welcome in any public space at any time.

In Victoria we do have the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, which specifically is supposed to protect pregnant and breastfeeding people in areas of public life, like work, schools, universities, shops and rental properties, but it seems there is a loophole in the law in Victoria that still allows discrimination in some public places, such as the courts. This could be fixed, so I am calling on the Labor government to fix the loophole in the law to ensure that women can breastfeed their babies anywhere and everywhere that they need to.

Thomastown electorate early childhood education

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (09:55): Last week on 15 March I had the great pleasure of visiting a number of kindergartens and helping to distribute a great Andrews Labor government initiative: kinder kits. The children were all very excited as they explored the books, the playdough, the blocks and all the other fun things. We are building a world-class preschool system, with free three- and four-year-old kinder and also increasing the hours to 30, to be phased in over 10 years. These measures assist with cost-of-living pressures as well as giving children a great foundation for life and learning. It is also expanding opportunities for women, particularly to pursue paid work without the prohibitive cost of child care.

I want to thank the kindergartens and preschools that I attended: Epping Preschool, Epping North early learning centre, Lalor East Preschool and Dalton Road kindergarten. Thanks to all the staff and educators: Krishna, Lily, Steph, Erika, Tau, Janet, Amy, Nicole and Mel, and a very special thankyou to Felicia and her daughter Hope, who reminded me, showing me a photo from many years ago, of when I also presented little Hope with a baby bundle, which was yet another Andrews Labor government initiative, some time ago at the Northern Hospital. It was really great to see these first-

class preschools and kindergartens doing great work with the children and also including families and all involved.

Samantha Fraser

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (09:56): Her name was Samantha Fraser. She was a gentle, beautiful soul with a vibrant personality. Her generosity of spirit was a marvel. Nurturing, talented, and passionate about everything she did, she oozed kindness. Sam touched the lives of many, including through her work as a psychologist and student support service worker at the local primary school. She loved and cherished her three children, Jemima, Rex and April. They were her world.

Samantha Fraser is no longer here – killed by the hands of her estranged husband. It was premeditated, vicious and brutal. It was 2018, her children nine, seven and five. In February this year he was sentenced to 30 years, at the highest end for murder. It has been a long journey. Our Phillip Island community came together, collectively grieved and got active. In 2018 a memorial service saw hundreds gather, businesses closed out of respect, thousands of white ribbons sewn and lining the streets – and again more recently – and thousands raised for the family. Friends formed Change for Sam, an initiative to bring services together. Her friends' words resonate, 'Say her name: Samantha Fraser'. Her memory will never be silenced, her kindness and want to make the world a better place never forgotten. To her parents and children: the island community walk beside you, love you and are there to add to your treasured memories. As April said, 'Mum will always be the angel that lights up our sky.'

Clarinda Primary School

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (09:58): I was delighted to attend this year's Clarinda Primary School badge presentation. The Clarinda Primary School is an amazing local school and has produced some amazing school and community leaders. Another huge congratulations to the new student leaders there – namely, junior school council leaders: Christina Christakos, Eva Greer, Natalya Piacentino, Sun Lee, Demarie Dimian, Alex Kim, Ellie Papagianakis and Tony Ahn. Special congratulations to school captains Anushka Pradhan and Anthony Theodoris as well as Semira Persi, Paulina Toumpas, Micaela Kelleher, Suwon Kwak, William Nichols, Oliver Dvorzak, Vanessa Huynh, Lexi Watts, Jainil Patel and Thomai Tzeli for their appointments. Finally, congratulations to new junior school councillors Jatan Carpenter, Efsevia Kalafatis, Louie Kaperonis, Ariana Stoevski, Michaela Asmanis, Claire Yin, Winston Huynh and Dilan Chalil. I know you will all be fantastic representatives for your school and for our community. Well done.

Garrang Wilam Primary School

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (09:59): It was an absolute pleasure to have the Premier join me in Truganina last week for a visit to Garrang Wilam Primary School, one of the newest and most fabulous schools in the Laverton electorate. I first visited this school in 2021 with the former Deputy Premier to officially commemorate the opening, and the school has absolutely blossomed since that time into a thriving community. Upon entering the school we were greeted by Ella, the school's wellbeing dog, who in addition to melting hearts like mine and the kids' gives the best hugs, and I can tell you that the Premier got plenty of them. We were fortunate enough to have a tour of the school grounds, where much of the original landscape prior to construction, like the natural rocks, was carefully reintegrated back into the school's environment. But nothing beats sitting down with grade sixers and having a quick Q and A with the Premier, and I think it is pretty fair when I say that the questions these children asked the Premier and me gave the press pack a run for their money. It was great to talk to these students about their lives and life at school as well as their hopes and most importantly their dreams for the future. When we talk about building the Education State it is schools like Garrang Wilam, a new school that our government has recently built, that demonstrate this, and it was great to show the Premier the very good work that our government has indeed done and will continue to do in building these schools, whilst also creating amazing school communities like the one at Garrang Wilam.

Disability support

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (10:01): I recently had the privilege of meeting Mikaela, a Greenvale constituent and a graduate of one of our great local special schools. Mikaela generously shared with me her experiences of special education and of her life as an adult living with a disability. Mikaela emphasised the importance of special schools equipping students with financial literacy skills and the tools and knowledge to ensure respectful and safe relationships so that young people are able to live independently, confidently and securely beyond their school years. I want to thank Mikaela for sharing her insights with me and for her contribution to our community, which she now serves as a passionate and highly valued early childhood educator. I want to particularly congratulate her on recently completing a diploma in early childhood education. Mikaela is a powerful advocate for people living with a disability. I am grateful that she was able to share her insights about some of the challenges that residents living with disabilities within my community may experience but also where opportunities exist for government and service providers to continue to improve their services and to ensure that people with a disability are heard, seen and at the centre of policy development and implementation. Thank you very much, Mikaela.

Heath Snooks

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:02): A big congratulations to Heath Snooks, a Boronia boy who represented Victoria as part of the Victorian Vikings, who took home the top prize earlier this month at the National Cricket Inclusion Championships up in Brisbane. Heath is a great example of never giving up. The first two times he tried out for the team he ended up on the reserves, but he stuck to it, showed a heap of dedication and skill and made it onto the pitch the third time. He said to me, 'People in the community often overlook people with disabilities, but anything is possible', and he is living proof of that. What a great attitude. Great stuff, Heath, and I cannot wait to see what comes next.

Bayswater electorate primary schools

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:03): It was great to get out to Mountain Gate Primary School recently to congratulate student leaders and check out the two new portable classroom buildings, which are looking great. Cheers to Lissa Jackway, the acting principal, for having me down and for all the work in what has been a busy year already.

With the cutting of the ribbon the new Bayswater West Primary inclusive playground is now open. I was stoked to help secure funding for this project, and I am grateful for principal Matt Tyndall's work in helping to get things done. Now kids of all abilities will get a fair go on the new playground.

Works have now kicked off well and truly at Templeton Primary School on the new double-level learning and specialist building with an art, science and resources centre. Works will also see a bit of an upgrade to the admin areas and some landscaping. All in all it is a massive project, and I cannot wait to see the new and impressive finished product.

State Emergency Service Knox unit

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:03): Finally, a big thanks to our massive SES volunteers at the Knox unit. It was great to throw my annual barbecue again – I think it is the fourth year. And a quick message to all those who are watching: if you are interested in volunteering with them, touch base with the team. They are always there when we need them most, and they absolutely need more volunteers to help back them in to help you as well when you need it.

Narre Warren North electorate schools

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (10:04): Schools, schools, schools! Since being elected I have had the pleasure of visiting many schools in my electorate of Narre Warren North, and it is safe to say that my community is home to some excellent local schools with absolutely top-notch, hardworking staff. Recently I met with principal Toby Cuss at Fleetwood Primary School to chat about

our \$300,000 commitment to upgrades at the school. I am looking forward to watching the progress of these works at the amazing school.

I also met with principal Simon Sherlock at Hallam Secondary College to check out the new plans for the \$24 million build, all thanks to the commitment of the Andrews Labor government. This is an incredible project, and Simon and his team have a great vision for the school. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Fountain Gate Primary School and their community hub leader Naz for organising an amazing community cultural festival earlier this month. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our diverse multicultural community, and fun was had by the whole community.

Last Thursday I represented the Minister for Education at the opening of the new senior school centre at Maranatha Christian college in Endeavour Hills. It was wonderful to meet with principal Bill and also some of the school's year 12 leaders, including one who told me she wanted to study nursing. Thankfully for her, her nursing degree will be free thanks to the Andrews Labor government – how good is that. I look forward to working with all the local schools in my electorate to achieve the best outcomes for all kids.

Marnebek School

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (10:05): I was very pleased to have the opportunity to visit Marnebek School last week and be involved in the leadership ceremony, and it was just terrific to see the sparkling and clever kids get their leadership badges and participate in something that is such an important part of our community. Marnebek School is a special development school that is going to benefit from a really significant infrastructure renewal, so we were able to open the first part of that infrastructure.

Backpacks 4 VIC Kids

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (10:06): I was also very pleased last week to visit Backpacks 4 VIC Kids. I know that the member for Bayswater and I both share a passion for the work that they do. They work out of Cranbourne West. There is nothing like the work that they do. I am very proud of our community and the altruism that I see displayed every day.

Committees

Parliamentary committees

Membership

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10:06): I move on behalf of Minister Thomas:

That Ryan Smith be a member of the House Committee and that Belinda Wilson be a member of the Standing Orders Committee.

Just briefly speaking to this motion, I commend both those members for nominating for service on those two important committees and also just for the benefit of the house, whilst I cannot move an amendment at this stage of this motion, foreshadow that the next government speaker will move that the member for Bayswater Jackson Taylor be a member of the Integrity and Oversight Committee and also that Mr Maas be a member of the Legal and Social Issues Committee.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:07): In speaking to that motion and amendment, my view and the coalition's view is that when it comes to committees and procedural matters in this house we should work outside this chamber to come into this chamber in a bipartisan way and have both sides of the chamber put forward their members without any partisanship in the way that we do that. I have spoken to the Leader of the House several times about that approach, and that is my approach. There have only been two instances when I had a different view – one on the chair of the Integrity and Oversight Committee, which was a subject of debate in the previous sitting week, and that, fortunately, though at the time it was not successful, has been accepted by the government since.

But today, in relation to the motion, the government initially moved forward its motion joining the question of two of the changes that were being put forward, and that was difficult for the opposition, because one of the changes is intended to increase the proportion of the government's representation on the Standing Orders Committee. It is increasing the proportion beyond where it was in the last Parliament, effectively meaning that the government will have an absolute majority on the Standing Orders Committee without the chair being required to use their casting vote – and that is in my view the purpose of the increased proportionality that the government is seeking on that committee – but then linking that question to a change putting one of our members onto a committee, and I feel obviously concerned about the linking of that question.

Setting aside the politics of that, house practice has always been, when it comes to these issues, that the questions be considered separately, and I take it from the government speaker that the government does intend to have those questions dealt with separately. In looking back through parliamentary history, through *Hansard*, there are only two instances that I am aware of in the last hundred years where the question has been dealt with jointly, and that is in 1921 and 1972. House practice has always been that when it comes to these matters the house would deal with them separately so that politics is taken out of those debates and the matters are dealt with as they should be. So I welcome the government speaker indicating I believe in his contribution to this debate an intention for the issue to be dealt with separately. I welcome that, and I would hope that you in the chair will be dealing with that issue separately.

I hope in moving forward that we can deal with these questions in a straight way, where both the government and the opposition can make changes to committees without politics being involved in it and one-upmanship. I hope the house will understand why, when it comes to the standing orders question, I have clearly put the case as to why we will not be supporting it. As I say, I would normally not be wanting to seek to play politics in dividing on questions of this nature, but on this particular one, on the Standing Orders Committee, the government is seeking to increase its proportion of the committee into an outright majority. There are things this Parliament will want to consider when it comes to changes to the standing orders that should be up for vigorous debate, and having an increased majority on that committee in this Parliament at the same time as the government saying it wants to review the standing orders, in my view, cuts against the spirit of doing that in a bipartisan way.

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (10:11): I move:

That after the words 'House Committee,' the following words be inserted: 'that Jackson Taylor be a member of the Integrity and Oversight Committee, that Gary Maas be a member of the Legal and Social Issues Committee.'

If I could just speak further to those points, obviously the member for Bayswater not only has an extremely strong work ethic, as represented by the fact he was returned to this Parliament, but also as a former police prosecutor, will make a great contribution to the Integrity and Oversight Committee. Just as I want to acknowledge the contribution and commitment of the member for Narre Warren South, who is also a legal practitioner and of course will continue to provide not only his legal acumen but his broader skills to the role as a member of the Legal and Social Issues Committee.

Also, in picking up on the honourable member for Bundoora's earlier matters in relation to the member for Warrandyte moving to the House Committee to ensure the sausage rolls are reasonably priced and are hot, which is important, the further work of the House Committee and the running of this place is particularly important and not to be underestimated, and his experience will be brought to bear I am sure in relation to that work. I would like to acknowledge the member for Narre Warren North, the Deputy Government Whip. It is a very good opportunity and makes a lot of sense of course in the practice of this house that the deputy whip would be on the Standing Orders Committee – an opportunity to review the procedural rules of the Assembly and make recommendations for change.

If I could also just quickly pick up on a couple of the points raised by the Manager of Opposition Business, the member for Brighton, I would say a couple of things, one of those being that, as I just

touched on, the Standing Orders Committee will only ever make recommendations that come back before this house, whether they are either affirmed or rejected. It will always be this house and all members of this house that will make determinations with regard to any recommendations from the Standing Orders Committee. It is not lost, I do not think, on this side of the house, that the government did increase its majority at the last election. It is not unusual. And in fact the Manager of Opposition Business touched on the fact and pointed to two examples of past practice – two occasions where what is being proposed here has been affirmed by this house in the past. And 1972, I think, was the other year that was mentioned by the Manager of Opposition Business. So past practice and customs of the house are very clear that these matters are not unusual and are very much within the order of the way in which these things are run here in this house. I commend those matters to the house and will conclude my comments there.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before putting the question I will make a statement on how the debate on the committee membership motion will be conducted. Because there are multiple questions in the motion and an amendment to it and because the member for Brighton has requested in his contribution that the question be split, I have decided that in accordance with best practice I will split the questions in the motion and the amendment to the motion.

The Minister for Police has moved an amendment to this motion. He has proposed to insert after the words ‘House Committee’ the words which have been circulated. As the amendment adds two members to committees, I will also split these questions.

The question is:

That Jackson Taylor be a member of the Integrity and Oversight Committee.

Motion agreed to.

The next question is:

That Gary Maas be a member of the Legal and Social Issues Committee.

Motion agreed to.

The question is:

That Ryan Smith be a member of the House Committee.

Motion agreed to.

The question is:

That Belinda Wilson be a member of the Standing Orders Committee.

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (47): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Jordan Crugnale, Daniela De Martino, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, 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, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (27): 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, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Jess Wilson

Question agreed to.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I distinctly heard the Government Whip read out 48 and then you read out 47.

The SPEAKER: The Clerk clarified and asked her to repeat it. You may not have been listening at the time.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! To clarify with the Manager of Opposition Business, who may not have been paying attention, the Clerk clarified with the whip that 47 was the correct count.

Amended motion agreed to.**Bills****Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022***Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Danny Pearson:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (10:25): I rise to lead the opposition's contribution to the Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022 debate. I know that my time allocation is 30 minutes. I just want to flag with the chamber that I do not intend to take my fully allocated time of 30 minutes. I know, Deputy Speaker, that will be a disappointment perhaps to you and others. However, on this occasion it is quality not quantity that I am aiming for.

Colin Brooks interjected.

Brad ROWSWELL: Indeed, minister at the table, you will be the judge of that, I am sure. I have said kind things about you previously. I am hoping for a return favour at some point.

There are just a few points that I want to make in relation to this bill. The first is around the process of the bill arriving in this chamber. I have not compared the bill that was presented in the last Parliament to this bill, but I am told it is identical. It was presented in the last Parliament, and as is customarily the case, the government offered a bill briefing to the then Shadow Treasurer Mr Davis in the other place. At the start of this new Parliament, the 60th Parliament, the government introduced this Statute Law Amendment Bill into the Legislative Council. I am of the understanding that the government, which is their right, introduced this bill in the Legislative Council as opposed to the Legislative Assembly really to get something on the Council notice paper. Again, it is their right to do so, and I guess it is important for the Council notice paper to look like it has got something on it as well.

At that point we as the opposition would have thought, as it is a new Parliament with new shadow ministerial arrangements which have been provided to both this chamber and the other place as well, and not being informed by the government that the bills in their view were identical – the bills in the last Parliament and in this Parliament – that a bill briefing would have been offered. It is of concern to me that this bill was considered and passed as I understand it on the voices in the other place without the opposition receiving a bill briefing on the bill that we are currently discussing today. It was only after I reached out to the Treasurer's office and then to the Assistant Treasurer's office that a bill briefing was offered just yesterday. I am grateful for the work of the Assistant Treasurer's staff and the departmental officer from the Department of Premier and Cabinet for providing that briefing to me and to the opposition.

Another point: I just wonder why the bill briefing or the thought of a bill briefing was not offered. It has been well publicised in this place and outside this place the fact that the Assistant Treasurer is perhaps occupied with other matters at the moment, and I have drawn the conclusion that it is perhaps

because of the Assistant Treasurer's occupation with other such matters that his obligation – in accordance with the standing orders, I might say, as I am informed, unless I am informed otherwise – to offer the opposition a bill briefing on this particular matter was not offered.

Nick Staikos interjected.

Brad ROWSWELL: Member for Bentleigh, if you were listening to my earlier contribution, I gave a fulsome explanation as to the circumstances. Yes, we were briefed but only after I instigated the briefing. This bill was passed by the Council before it actually came here, and we were briefed in the intervening period. I think it is because the Assistant Treasurer has been occupied with other matters, and for me that is a real shame. I come to this place – I have said this any number of times before – and we are not here for ourselves, we are here for others. We are here to do the work of and for the people who sent us here, and the fact that we have got some government ministers focusing more on themselves than their parliamentary and ministerial obligations is of deep concern to me and the opposition.

In large part the Statute Law Amendment Bill, as is customarily the case with bills of this kind, largely makes minor and technical amendments to a number of acts, ensuring the meaning of those acts is clear and accurate and reflects the intention of the Parliament. I am informed that, as with other bills, this bill was referred to the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee. I understand that the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee is still currently reviewing this bill and inquiring into this bill. They have reported initially, and I am expecting that another more fulsome report will be delivered to this Parliament, to this chamber. But I am also informed that that will not happen this week, which is interesting. The government has brought on this bill for consideration without receiving the good work of the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee. During the course of that parliamentary committee process it is ordinarily the case that parliamentary counsel appears before that committee and more or less certifies that in their view there are no funny buggers and there is no funny business proposed in this bill, that in fact the bill as drafted is in line with its stated intent, that it makes minor and technical limits to a number of acts to ensure the meaning of those acts is clear and accurate and reflects the intention of the Parliament.

I am informed by the minister's office that the chief parliamentary counsel has in fact provided a certificate to the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee on this bill and that was provided to that committee yesterday. As I say, I do not mean to anticipate due committee process. The fact that the executive arm of the government is able to inform me on a parliamentary committee process before that parliamentary committee process has been finalised is interesting in itself. Nonetheless, that certificate has been provided, which is an assurance not only to the government, not only to the committee but to the Parliament that there are no funny buggers in this bill. On behalf of the opposition, I inform the Parliament that the opposition will not be opposing this bill, and I am looking forward to the brief contributions of my colleagues the Leader of the Nationals and the Shadow Minister for Finance, the member for Kew, on behalf of the opposition. I conclude my comments.

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (10:32): I too rise to make a contribution on the Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022. As has already been noted, this is a bill that makes minor amendments to various acts of Parliament, and I am not going to go through each and every one of those amendments. It covers a wide range of areas, including the Housing Act 1983, matters related to the Domestic Animals Act 1994, the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Act 2022, terrorism legislation and competition legislation.

I really will be focusing my remarks on the amendments to the Housing Act. While those amendments are administrative in nature, they do feed into the significant work that the Andrews Labor government has done in embarking on the historic Big Housing Build. But before I speak on those matters I will just take up a few of the points made by the opposition's lead speaker, the member for Sandringham. The member for Sandringham claimed that the opposition was not offered a briefing. My understanding is somewhat different to the member for Sandringham's. The opposition was offered a

briefing. The offer was put to David Davis when the bill was introduced in December last year, and that is another point – I think I heard the member for Sandringham say that the bill was introduced in the last Parliament; it was introduced in December last year. The government offered a briefing to David Davis and the government reached out to Ms Crozier in the other place in the last sitting week when this was debated in the Council, and no issues were raised. But I think the member for Sandringham just wanted to pad out 10 minutes on this bill this morning and thought we would just go into those issues.

Needless to say, while the opposition are not opposing this bill but complaining about what they see as a process that was not followed, when it in fact was, I will focus on the Big Housing Build, because as I said, the amendments to the Housing Act in this bill feed into that historic investment by this government. My electorate has been an early beneficiary of the Big Housing Build. It was my pleasure to join the Minister for Housing very recently over in Cheltenham, and the Minister for Housing is in the house today. In Cheltenham the National Affordable Housing Consortium, with the strong financial support of this government, constructed a magnificent apartment building right next door to Southland shopping centre with 120 dwellings. Recently, at the opening, the Minister for Housing and I had the opportunity to meet with new tenants of that building. I think I speak for the Minister for Housing when I say that this particular development has changed lives – it absolutely has changed lives. We met various tenants. We met tenants who, because they now have stable and secure housing, are able to pick up studies that they had been undertaking on and off but due to a lack of stable housing had not been able to complete. Now they are able to put themselves back on that path of progress.

I think that is the significant point about housing. Having a roof over your head, having stable housing, is really the basis for being able to progress your life and having that dignity in life. We have a very significant free TAFE policy in this state, and this particular development in Cheltenham is located not too far from Holmesglen TAFE's Moorabbin campus, where a lot of our free TAFE courses are offered. But without a stable roof over your head, without secure housing, you really do not have a hope of enrolling and being able to complete a free TAFE course. If you do not have stable housing, you really will struggle to get yourself a job. Without stable and secure housing, you will struggle to contribute back to the community, and this is why the Big Housing Build is going to be life-changing for so many people.

I would like to say the Big Housing Build is bipartisan, but sadly it is not. Last year we heard some disgraceful comments from Wendy Lovell in the other place, herself a former housing minister, with regard to public housing tenants. And that is what I am absolutely fed up with: the vilification of public housing tenants, which we hear time and time again. Wendy Lovell actually said – and the comments are just disgraceful:

There is no point putting a very low income, probably welfare-dependent, family in the best street in Brighton where the children cannot mix with others or go to school with other children or where they do not have the same ability to have the latest sneakers and iPhones.

Now, there was a lot of outrage when Ms Lovell from the other place made those remarks, but I have got to say I was not surprised. I was not surprised because Ms Lovell has form.

Brad Rowswell: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member for Bentleigh is very welcome to cast aspersions on other members of this place or the other but in accordance with standing orders can only do so by substantive motion. Also, in relation to the member's comments, I would ask you to draw the member back to the topic before the house, and that is the Statute Law Amendment Bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I would ask the member for Bentleigh to return to the bill, please.

Nick STAIKOS: I am being directly relevant to the bill. This bill makes amendments to the Housing Act around Homes Victoria. But I was not surprised by Ms Lovell's comments, and it is because I recall in 2010 some Rudd government stimulus money was used to construct two significant housing developments, one in Moorabbin and one in Bentleigh, both in the Bentleigh electorate, and

at the time local Liberals, Liberal candidates and Wendy Lovell, who was then the Shadow Minister for Housing, ran a significant campaign –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I understand you just ruled and called the member back to the question at hand. The member has now strayed again after your ruling, and I would ask you to bring the member back to the question.

Colin Brooks: On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, this is a statute law revision bill. Item 3 relates directly to the Housing Act and substituting the title of the director of housing for Homes Victoria. Members will be aware that Homes Victoria is the body that is reforming housing in Victoria, and it goes directly to the work that the member is referring to. So it is relevant for the member to raise these issues in this debate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: On the point of order, the Housing Act is definitely a part of this bill. I would ask that members be careful about imputations on other members of this house or the other.

Nick STAIKOS: The act provides Homes Victoria with the powers it needs to grow Victoria's supply of social and affordable housing. I am simply demonstrating that those opposite have undermined efforts to grow social and affordable housing in this state, and I can give you firsthand experience of Wendy Lovell, when she was the shadow housing minister, opposing a social housing development in the Bentleigh electorate. Months later she was the Minister for Housing. When it was built, she turned up to cut the ribbon – just absolutely shameless. Sadly, the Big Housing Build is not bipartisan in this state. Thankfully, the opposition are so irrelevant that it does not really matter, because we are going to get on and build it. We are already well into the delivery of 12,000 dwellings. We are proud of that. Only this side of the house cares about Victorians having roofs over their heads so that they can live lives of dignity and progress. I commend the bill to the house.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (10:42): I rise to speak on the Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022. In starting off, as our lead speaker said, we will not be opposing this legislation. I think the process of actually getting to this piece of legislation, as the member for Sandringham articulated in his contribution, just shows how arrogant, how out of touch this government is and how disrespectful it is to the processes of the house. As this bill has come through there have been a number of processes that have not been followed, normal processes of this house, and as I understand it the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee has not even given a final report on this piece of legislation. SARC is supposed to actually go through legislation, make sure it is correct, make sure that the detail is right and have a report tabled in the house so that those that are making a contribution on whatever the piece of legislation is have that detail from SARC. SARC is a very important part of the legislative processes of this house, and the fact that SARC has not done a final report just goes to show, as I said, how arrogant the Andrews government is in treating the processes of this Parliament.

I take up what the member for Bentleigh was talking about with the housing part of this piece of legislation. What the member for Bentleigh did not say is the fact that, yes, there has been a lot of money invested in public housing in this state under the Big Build, but it actually has not increased the net number of public housing dwellings by very much at all. To think that there has been \$2.8 billion invested in public housing since 2018 – my understanding is there is only a net increase of 74 houses in this state.

A member: How many?

Peter WALSH: Am I dead wrong? Well, you prove it then. If I think about public housing in my own electorate, there is always an issue around people getting public housing. Particularly people who are in crisis cannot get public housing. We constantly have issues, particularly with young single mums who are fleeing abusive relationships. They cannot get public housing. They get put up in a motel. They get shunted around. They just cannot get the housing they need, and that situation is even worse for the Indigenous population. Yes, there is money being spent, but the question I would ask of the

Minister for Housing is: is it actually being spent in the right place? Is it actually delivering the right outcome for those most disadvantaged in the community?

Public housing is not a right; it is a privilege, and those that really need it are the ones that should be getting it. Whatever the net number is, there is still a huge waiting list, and my understanding is that the priority waiting list has gone up significantly since 2014 when the Andrews government was elected, and the list last year grew by 3000 people looking for priority housing. So let us be fair about this. There is money spent, but is it being spent in the right way? I also understand there have been no published waiting list figures since June 2022, so the government needs to update those figures so we actually know what is going on with those people that need public housing.

My other understanding that the member for Bentleigh did not touch on either is that prior to 2010 the then Minister for Housing regularly cleansed the list so the numbers did not get too great. So again, you can play ducks and drakes with numbers any way you like, but if people go through and actually cleanse the list because people have been on that list for too long, all of a sudden the list is a lot less than it really is. It is about having the hidden demand rather than the actual demand that is there for public housing. So the member for Bentleigh talks the big talk, but I would put forward to the house that he is not factually right. My recollection is the minister he talked about in the other place, who was the housing minister between 2010 and 2014, actually got more properties to market and changed the maintenance regime for public housing, because what you find in a lot of country towns is there is a significant number of public housing properties that need maintenance. They sit vacant for six to 12 months and you have people on the public housing waiting list who come to my office and say, 'That house in X street, X number in Y street, has actually been vacant for six months. I desperately need a house. Why can't I get into that house?' My understanding of former Minister Lovell's role in 2010–14 is that she and the department put a lot of effort into actually getting the maintenance regime functioning properly and getting more existing properties rentable so people could move into them. So the member for Bentleigh can slag off all he likes, but if he is going to rewrite history, he will be called out for that. He will be called out for rewriting history on those particular issues.

Steve McGhie interjected.

Peter WALSH: It is not an embarrassment to actually stick up for people in your electorate who want public housing. It is not an embarrassment to stick up for people in country electorates that want public housing.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I should be able to hear the member.

Peter WALSH: The member for Bentleigh has form on standing up in this house and trying to rewrite history and particularly to slag off those that went before.

Colin Brooks: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Nationals knows – he has been here quite some time – that this debate is not an opportunity to reflect on other members.

Peter WALSH: On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member for Bentleigh continually reflected on Wendy Lovell in the other place. I ask you to rule the minister at the table's point of order out of order, because all I am doing is responding to the assertions that the member for Bentleigh made on Wendy Lovell in the other place.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: On the point of order, and I think I said this about 7 minutes ago, I would ask all members to be careful about imputations on other members. The member to continue, and we should be able to hear each other.

Peter WALSH: Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker. The point I have been making, which those opposite seem to ridicule, is that as a country member – and I speak on behalf of all other country members in this place, and no doubt a lot of the suburban members as well – we would like to see that

the Big Build, the billions of dollars of money that is being spent on public housing, actually delivers for those most disadvantaged in our communities and that those young mums, people fleeing domestic violence relationships, actually could get a house at relatively short notice rather than being shunted around motels and rather than being shifted to another town.

I personally think it is very important that children in those relationships can stay in the school that they are in or the kindergarten that they are in, so they can keep their friendships rather than being put in a different town or having to move a long way away to get public housing, because that breaks up the family relationships that they have. Those on the other side of the house might think those aspirations on behalf of our constituents are not something we aspire to. Well, we do. Those on the other side of the house might say that those on this side of the house do not care about public housing tenants. We do care about them. They are the people that come through our offices day after day after day and that we spend a lot of time working to help, and despite all the interjections, the Big Build is not delivering for those people.

The member for Bentleigh wanted to make the debate on this bill about the Big Build, and I am pushing back saying it is not delivering for the people in regional Victoria who most need it. As the member for Sandringham said, while we are not opposing this legislation – but I will go back to the thing I started with as well – the processes to arrive at this legislation in the house here have shown the arrogance, how the Andrews government has a lack of respect for the processes of this house. I am appalled by the standards and the way the Andrews government has treated Parliament. Executive government should be answering to the Parliament. That is the tradition of the Westminster system, not executive government treating Parliament like a nuisance and something they just have to do so they can then go and do what they want to do anyhow. We will not be opposing this legislation.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (10:52): It is great to follow the member for Murray Plains after his contribution. He came in off the long run. He is coming down the hill at Cohuna telling us how the government is abrogating standards in this Parliament and how it is not treating the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee with due respect, and I am just going to inject a little bit of fact and truth into the debate, because as the chair of SARC –

A member interjected.

Iwan WALTERS: And Cohuna is a bit flat, but even so –

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the member.

A member interjected.

Iwan WALTERS: With the wind. As the chair of SARC, I tabled the report that that committee wrote, considered, in relation to this bill, so to suggest that SARC has not considered the Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022 is fanciful.

Peter Walsh interjected.

Iwan WALTERS: The report is here. It was tabled in the previous sitting week. The report is here, member for Murray Plains, and while the member for Sandringham has touched upon some of the internal processes of SARC, he did also rightly say that they are subject to committee processes. I am going to respect those and not talk any further about the ongoing work of the committee until the time is right and I table the next report.

But I want to come back to the purpose of my remarks today. As a member of SARC, as the chair of SARC, it has afforded me an appreciation for the extraordinary complexity of the legislative process and the nuance, the detail and the incredible care that is involved by drafting teams and by processes such as SARC that support all parliamentarians within this place and the other place. It is important that that care is involved. There should be that care. The laws that we make here have real

consequences for people in communities, and the courts of course pay very close heed to the wording of our laws in adjudicating disputes. So I want to thank the secretariat of SARC that support me, that support other SARC members and that support ultimately all members of this place to understand and interrogate the laws that are being proposed by the government and by other members through private members bills, to make sure that those bills are right and proper and that the consequences of them have been thought through.

So it is a pleasure to rise to speak on this bill, which does tidy up some oversights, some inadvertent consequences of other laws being introduced at various points and various typos as well. One of the acts that this bill seeks to make minor amendments to is the Competition Policy Reform (Victoria) Act 1995. It does not make substantive changes, but I do just want to reflect on the importance of competition and open markets, because these are critical to the prosperity of Victorians.

Competitive markets are what deliver good outcomes for consumers. They increase innovation and productivity. They lead to better outcomes for primary producers and small businesses. Competition incentivises the flow of resources away from unproductive and less productive firms towards more productive firms in a process known as dynamic reallocation.

Members interjecting.

Iwan WALTERS: The *Alert Digest* is on the table. The Australian Treasury has found that competition in Australia has deteriorated over the last decade – a decade in which those opposite were in power federally, where macroeconomic levers are of course set. That has been measured by indicators such as industry concentration, incumbency and firm mark-up. Excessive market power or the absence of competition can contribute to economic inequality by promoting the interests of the few with power over the interests of the many. It undermines trust in the operation of markets, encourages wasteful rent-seeking activities and protects monopoly profits.

In a previous generation the reforms of the Hawke–Keating governments, which led to the removal of anti-competitive regulations, contributed to an explosion in productivity growth through the 1990s and early 2000s. The average Victorian household as a consequence of those competitive reforms became \$5000 better off. By contrast, as a result of increasing market concentration and a slowdown in competition under the Libs and Nats federally across the last decade, consumers are now paying more than they should for a wider range of goods and services. And this impacts the poorest the most. Market concentration benefits those with capital and incumbent market power. Recent RBA research has examined how remarkably impervious large Australian companies –

Members interjecting.

Iwan WALTERS: I would invite the member for Nepean to contribute to this debate in due course as well. Of the top 10 largest Australian companies in 1917, five of those were still in the top 10 at the end of August 2021. By contrast, only one of the top US companies in 1917 was in the top 10 a century later. For a young market economy, we have got a remarkably old set of listed companies which still largely reflect the economic geography of the 19th century in Australia – banks and miners. Weighted by market cap, the average listed company in Australia is 105 years old, compared with 82 in the US and 95 in the UK.

As I say, market concentration benefits the owners of capital, who are allowed to become complacently profitable, and it restrains productivity. Competition policy in Australia has been perhaps overly influenced by the Chicago school approach in recent years. It suggests that it does not really matter what firms charge or how large they get, competitors will take their market share. Predatory pricing will not occur because firms would never be able to recoup their losses as new competitors enter the market. But in recent decades we have got a newer movement among economists which recognises that too much market concentration leads to a less innovative and more sluggish economy. Just take the phones that members are currently using in the chamber: 60 per cent of mobiles in Australia are on the Apple iOS, and the Apple App Store accounts for around 60 per cent of

downloads as a consequence. Google provides 95 per cent of search services in Australia. Facebook and Instagram supply 80 per cent of social media services. We think of technology as being at the cutting edge of economic change, but in reality the scope, scale and concentration in tech markets is unprecedented, at least perhaps since the break-up of monopolistic industries in the early 20th century.

Across the board it appears that market power is increasing in Australia. This trend has been observed in many advanced economies and by the IMF. Without action, market power in Australia will become further entrenched and will certainly not reduce prices for consumers. Market power is hurting Australians and Victorians across many walks of life, and a proxy for market power that is increasingly significant is the mark-up a firm attaches to its product. Fundamentally, that is its profit margin. This is a direct measure of a firm's market power, since it provides insight into a firm's own abilities to influence the price it receives for its goods and services.

In June 2022, after nine years of coalition government at a federal level, the share of national income going to profits climbed to an all-time high of 31.1 per cent. As a result, even though more of the population was in work than ever before, the share of national income going to wages sunk to a near all-time low of 49.8 per cent. Before COVID that wages share was 53 per cent. At the start of the 2000s it was 56 per cent. Of course profitable businesses matter. They employ Victorians and they underpin our economy, but the important thing for economic dynamism is that a firm's profits reflect the value they add to society, not a margin inflated by inadequate competition and monopolistic rent-seeking. When firms can charge inflated prices in the absence of effective competition from other firms, it is the poorest who wear the greatest hit as a proportion of their incomes. That is why effective competition policy is not an arcane concept but one that directly impacts the hip pockets of Victorians.

The Australian Treasury recently estimated that lower competitive pressures have led to Australian firms becoming slower to adopt the inventions and practices of frontier firms and that the associated reduction in that dynamic reallocation accounted for one-fifth of the slowdown in Australia's annual labour productivity since 2012. We need more competition, not just in the digital space but across the board. Competition boosts dynamism in the economy, it drives businesses to innovate, it creates an economy where new businesses can start up, where consumers have choice and pay less for more, where workers are empowered, where wages are higher and where workers can switch jobs more easily and find the job that works for them. We need competition, and that is why I am really glad that the Statute Law Amendment Bill today touches upon competition law and reminds us of those things.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (11:01): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

The reason why this debate should be adjourned now is that as useful as the legislative housekeeping contained in the Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022 may be, it does not hold a candle to the issue of corruption in the state of Victoria. We need to adjourn this debate because there is a far more important issue on our notice paper. Motion 14 on today's notice paper in my name is about whether we as a Parliament, we as Victorians, are prepared to sweep serious corruption allegations under the table or prepared to confront them. That is the question before us today. Let us be very clear about this. The allegations raised in the letter of the then IBAC Commissioner dated 15 December 2022 go to corruption. There is no other word for it. There is no doubt that the then IBAC Commissioner wanted us and wants us to deal with this issue. In fact his letter starts:

I am writing to you as the newly elected Parliament to bring to Parliament's attention, IBAC's concerns ...

So the limp excuse proffered by the Premier that the letter was not for him is exposed as an absolute monstrous falsehood in that very first line, because the IBAC Commissioner said:

I am writing to you as the newly elected Parliament to bring to Parliament's attention ...

The last time I looked, the Premier was a member of Parliament. You would not necessarily know it because he is very much part-time in terms of attendance in the chamber for commencements and for votes, but he is a member of this Parliament, and that letter from the honourable Robert Redlich AM

KC was directed to him just as it was directed to the other 87 of us here and the 40 members in the other place. All members of the 60th Parliament are engaged in this issue, and that is why we need to adjourn this debate now and we need to move to motion 14 now.

What does motion 14 do? It seeks to establish a select committee of members of this place to inquire into the very serious corruption allegations put in the letter from the outgoing IBAC Commissioner. We cannot sweep it under the carpet, because it is monstrous what has been alleged. What has been alleged? I will quote directly from the letter so I cannot be accused of embellishment:

IBAC first became concerned at a meeting on 14 June 2022, when Callida provided IBAC with alarming advice that they had been directed by the IOC –

that is the Integrity and Oversight Committee –

Audit Sub-committee to *'find dirt on IBAC and data that is not readily publicly available'*.

Who goes out and tries to undermine the anti-corruption watchdog by digging up the dirt on it? Who tries to nobble the organisation that is out there fighting corruption?

A member: I know the answer: Labor.

Michael O'BRIEN: Well, we do know the answer. People who are under investigation by that anti-corruption watchdog seem to have an incentive to try and nobble it, to try and dig dirt on it and to try and discredit it. Why would you want to do that if you were not guilty? It is not good enough. It is not good enough that this government may have done a deal with the Greens and a deal with the Legalise Cannabis Party to try and head off an inquiry. We are going to keep bringing this up, because it is too important to sweep under a carpet. We must get to the bottom of these allegations. Commissioner Redlich deserves an opportunity to speak to them, he deserves to speak to them before Parliament and he deserves to speak to them with parliamentary privilege, because we cannot let this slide.

If members opposite had any concern about integrity, they would want to find out what has gone on. Maybe the allegations are misplaced? It is possible, I suppose. But you are not going to know unless you ask the question. You are not going to know unless you actually hear from those people who are named in the letter as being able to provide evidence. So let us get to motion 14 on the notice paper. Let us have a debate about establishing a select committee to get to the truth. Let us have a debate about whether corruption matters in this state or not. I say it does. Members on this side say it does. We do not think Victoria should be the corruption state, but that is fast where we are heading. This government is starting to make Joh Bjelke-Petersen look like the Archangel Gabriel. How many corruption investigations are there into your government?

Peter Walsh: How many IBAC investigations?

Michael O'BRIEN: Correct. They have gone very quiet now, haven't they? They have gone very quiet now. They all want to sweep it under the carpet. They would rather cover it up, look after their mates and look after themselves. Well, we say it is not good enough. Corruption is too important and integrity is too important, and that is why this debate should be adjourned. We should move directly to the motion 14 and establish a select committee to find out what really went on and start cleaning up the stench of this government in Victoria.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (11:07): What a time-wasting exercise this is by the member for Malvern. What is really at play here is that he has got a little bit of relevance deprivation. Everyone is talking about the current Leader of the Opposition and his dismal performance this week in calling out absolutely outrageous conduct, and we have got here an adjournment motion that is just wasting the time of the Parliament. This is not part of the conventions of the house. This has not been moved forward as well. Then we have got the member for Malvern putting forward a grandstanding exercise. He has got a bit of relevance deprivation because he was the 11 per cent person in this Parliament, wasn't he? Oh, they do not like this. They do not like being reminded of this.

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member full well knows that this is not an opportunity for him to slag off at the opposition. This is narrow. He needs to get on to integrity, because is not showing any. He does not understand. I ask you to bring him back to the motion.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Hamer): That is not a point of order.

Tim RICHARDSON: If only your contribution was so inspiring when you were Deputy Leader. Anyway, here we go. We step forward – oh, it is like, ‘Get on the hook here.’ Here we go.

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I would ask you to ask the member to withdraw. He cannot say that. He is well out of his place, and he knows it. I would actually caution you to counsel him, because his behaviour is appalling.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Hamer): I ask the member for Mordialloc to withdraw.

Tim RICHARDSON: I withdraw. This is the kind of tactic that we see from those opposite, who do not have depth in their bill speeches. We have seen their contributions. I talked about this in the government business program. They do not want to contribute to the legislation of this place. They did not want to contribute to the Suburban Rail Loop motion or speak up on behalf of their local communities or contribute to the speeches. What we see as well – when you look through the 60th Parliament you would not have seen a coalition group who have had a slower start on their bill contributions on behalf of their community. The second-reading speech record through there – there are some that have not even got on the list yet, there are some that have not even spoken up for their local communities and they are begging for time to elapse throughout the week.

This diversion tactic is more about giving time to the coalition to think about the numbers that they are trying to craft right now about what they do about Moira Deeming in the upper house. This is what this really is about: to get on the phones, to not have to do the preparation on statute bills –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I would ask you to bring the member back to the question. The question is about a very important matter. It is about the integrity of our state. What the member is doing is disturbing; it is an outrageous abuse of this house both in the way that he spoke to a member previously and also the way he is speaking now. I would ask him to return back to this important issue of integrity – a tight debate – that we are considering.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Hamer): The member for Mordialloc to continue. He should bring it back to the motion that is being discussed.

Tim RICHARDSON: I will tell you what an outrageous abuse is: standing with people who demonise trans and gender diverse people within our community. That is an outrageous abuse. If only the member for Brighton had that much courage to step up and stand up and defend those people rather than grandstanding, as he is doing now.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, you have already ruled on this matter. You have ruled that the member should return to the question at hand. What he is doing now is outrageous. It is a flagrant breach of numerous standing orders. I would ask you to counsel him and return him to the question.

Tim RICHARDSON: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, we are free to talk about the motivations for adjourning the debate and wasting the time of this Parliament and blocking time that could be spent on this bill. That is an important point around motivations and the fact that they do not have contributors on this bill. This is why it is being adjourned. It is not actually about what has been put forward. They do not have the depth and the contribution to make contributions on this bill – that has been clear over the last few weeks of Parliament.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Hamer): The member for Mordialloc to continue and keep his reflections to the motion.

Tim RICHARDSON: We have here now more time wasting from the opposition. We have seen it consistently throughout as well. Maybe they should be looking at how they contribute for their communities.

Members interjecting.

Tim RICHARDSON: The member for Malvern can interject and rant and rave. If only he had that much passion when he was Leader of the Opposition, when no-one believed in any contribution that he was making. No-one had any thought –

Members interjecting.

Tim RICHARDSON: And he can make personal attacks and slights as he likes. He talked about factions, in his interjection, in the Liberal Party. If only he had the support of his party room at that time. This time-wasting exercise right now is a diversion from getting on with the important work of this Parliament. We have seen this time and time again from those opposite. It is disappointing. Let us get on with the work on the bill and let us stop wasting the time of the Parliament and the Victorian people.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (11:12): I am just amazed – it is the only word I can say – at the audacity of the member for Mordialloc and what he said: that it is actually time wasting to want to talk about integrity, to want to talk about rooting out corruption in this state. For the member for Mordialloc to say it is a waste of this house's time to talk about rooting out corruption in this state, whether it be soft corruption, whether it be hard corruption, whether it be nepotism, whether it be jobs for mates or whether it be having 90 ministerial staffers buried into the public sector here so they can have their tentacles everywhere – it is an absolute audacity to say that that is not something that is important to this house. It is absolutely critical for this state.

One of the things that I took personal pride in Victoria for throughout my parliamentary career was that we used to be better than New South Wales and Queensland. Victoria used to have a reputation for having integrity, for having honesty in this state. Particularly over the last four years of the eight years of the Andrews government we have seen Victoria slide down the scale in Australia of the standards that we actually accept in this state. So for the member for Mordialloc to say we are wasting time talking about these issues, he could not be more wrong about it.

I support the motion from the member for Malvern that we should adjourn and that we should go on to debate item 14 on the notice paper. There is no more important issue on the greens, on the notice paper, than item 14, and we should spend time on that. And if those on the other side had nothing to hide, they would actually support the motion. What have the Andrews government got to hide that they are so frightened of motion 14 on the notice paper? If they believed that they were as clean as they say they are, if they believed they are doing the right thing in this state, they would welcome this motion, they would allow this motion to go through, they would allow a select committee of this house to be set up: a house where we can get quite a few senior ministers of the government to appear before it –

Members interjecting.

Peter WALSH: and the Premier – where they cannot hide behind the issues between houses. It would be a committee of the lower house that could actually have lower house ministers appear before it to be questioned under oath.

If the government have not got something to hide, they should support this motion. I think Victorians want the lid lifted on corruption in this state. They want a process that can actually cleanse this state of any accusations of corruption. If people are doing things wrong, they need to be called out, they need to be found out and they need to be punished accordingly. Having honesty and integrity in government is the most important tenet of the Westminster system of government. We do not want to be like Third World banana republics where governments just do everything they want and they are not accountable for what happens in a particular state.

We know the Ombudsman is having an inquiry at the moment into politicisation of the public sector in this state. But before that is handed down it is even more important that motion 14 is passed by this house, as the member for Malvern has moved, and that we actually have a committee that does not have a majority of government members on it. Everything we see that happens has a majority of government members, where they cover up for each other all the time. It is just a game: 'We'll have an inquiry, but we've stacked it with government members and they'll find that nothing has gone wrong.' This actually puts in place an investigative committee that has two government members, two opposition members and one from the other parties and is chaired by a non-government member. That is what we need in this state so that we can get to the bottom of corruption.

Former Commissioner Redlich did Victorians a favour when he wrote to the Speaker and wrote to the President with his letter. I think the only mistake Commissioner Redlich made was he did not personally write to every member of Parliament, including the Premier. Because the Premier hiding behind the fact that 'Well, it wasn't addressed to me, so why would I read it?' is just absolutely fanciful. As someone said, it is effectively the Sergeant Schultz defence, and it is wrong.

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (11:17): Yes, I absolutely agree that integrity and transparency is absolutely crucial in government, which is why we will absolutely be opposing this motion for what it is. This is a political stunt by those opposite. It is the Andrews Labor government that has delivered stronger powers and record funding to IBAC, because we have always said that integrity and transparency in government is crucial. We will be opposing this motion. I ask those opposite: why was this motion adjourned off in the Council yesterday? It was adjourned off because you did not have the support of the Greens. And if the member for Murray Plains is here –

The SPEAKER: Order! Minister for Planning, through the Chair.

Sonya KILKENNY: If the member for Murray Plains is here to talk about standards, let us talk about standards. Let us talk about what happened on the weekend on the steps of Parliament. That is talking about standards. So we will be opposing –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is a tight procedural debate. This is the second government speaker who has abused this house in the way they are speaking to this motion. This is not an opportunity to slag the opposition and avoid any discussion about integrity. What the speaker is doing is an outrageous abuse of this house.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would ask members to be succinct when they are making their points of order. I understand what you are implying through your point of order. This is a narrow debate, and members should be respectful of each other and particularly the members who are on their feet.

Sonya KILKENNY: Thank you, Speaker. As I was speaking about integrity and standards, I think it is entirely relevant to be talking about what members in this place might be doing on the steps of Parliament House. So the government will be opposing this motion. We recognise this as a complete political stunt.

John Pesutto interjected.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition is warned.

Sonya KILKENNY: We will be opposing this motion today. As I said, it is the Andrews Labor government that has invested –

Members interjecting.

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

Sonya KILKENNY: record amounts into IBAC to support the functions of IBAC. We oppose this motion today.

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (11:20): I support the member for Malvern in regard to the motion on the notice paper. I am a bit surprised by the member for Mordialloc, who I have a lot of time for, accusing the opposition of time wasting. I know it has probably wrecked his preselection, but time wasting, when one of the fundamentals of government should be integrity. The cornerstones of any government should be governance and integrity and honesty. To say 'We should be able to shut this down' or 'We don't want to talk about it' I think shows the quality of the government and that they have no interest in integrity.

Let us remind everyone in the chamber that it was the Baillieu government that brought in the IBAC legislation. For years and years, the mushrooms over there were never going to have anything to do with integrity and honesty. But it was the Baillieu government that brought it in, and they had to be dragged kicking and screaming to support the legislation in the end. Even when they were in opposition you could see that there was that resistance to supporting anything to do with integrity.

Former Commissioner Robert Redlich, out of absolute frustration, wrote to the Speaker and to the President to outline his concerns that the system in this state is being corrupted. Can you believe it? The system to investigate corruption is being corrupted, and it all gets back to the running of the Integrity and Oversight Committee. With the IOC, there is no question that it was being directed by the Premier's private office. The Premier's private office was dictating what had to happen in that committee, because there is no way known that the IOC was going to have a breakout and start investigating the Premier. The classic example, as we have said in this house a couple of times, is that issue where we had the Commissioner come before the committee in a public hearing to talk about different issues. He was asked the questions: why was the Premier being questioned or investigated in private? Why wasn't it being done in public? He wanted to answer that question, but guess what, he was gagged by the Labor members. And guess what, they were all looking at their phones checking the text messages for what the Premier's private office was saying.

We have got the situation now where there has been a deal done between the Greens and some bloke from the marijuana party, so we are going to have a new composition that is going to be set up. We are going to have a member from the Greens, the guy from the marijuana party, one Liberal, one National Party, but there are going to be four from Labor on that committee. All it is going to take is for the guy from the marijuana party to side with Labor and nothing is going to get done, even though the member from the Greens is going to be the chair, which is all predetermined. Nothing is going to get done. There might be the Greens, there might be the National Party, there might be the Liberal Party, but if the person from the marijuana party sides with Labor it all gets shut down. So even the investigation into the letters that have been sent through to the Speaker will not be investigated. There will be nothing about integrity or corruption that will be investigated because it is all going to be shut down. So I really struggle with the deal that has been done –

Jackson Taylor interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Bayswater is warned.

Kim WELLS: He should be thrown out.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Rowville will not be disrespectful to the Chair.

Kim WELLS: The issue is quite clear. The concern that Robert Redlich raised about the composition of the committee should have shown that there was a need to favour members from opposition parties or a respectful situation where all investigations would be conducted properly, and that is not the case.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (11:25): Just to provide some clarity on the situation, in this particular context the appointment of the Integrity and Oversight Committee members in the Legislative Council was unanimous. You might want to pay bit of attention to what happens in that

other chamber, instead of just making it up on the spot. They talk a big game in the lower house and are pretty quiet in the upper house when they can actually do something, hey? Why don't you do something when you have the chance? It is all very well to whinge, whinge, whinge now. You had the chance; you didn't take it. Too bad, too late. Talk about integrity –

Brad Rowswell: On a point of order, Speaker, I know the member on her feet is at the start of her contribution, but she must not reflect on the Chair. She used the words 'you' and 'your' several times. I would ask you to bring her to order.

The SPEAKER: Member for Albert Park, through the Chair.

Nina TAYLOR: Yes, and respectfully, I meant no disrespect whatsoever. Let us see this for what it is: it is just a desperate stunt. It is a stunt. They are a shambles. Their leadership is a revolving door. Each week on the phones: 'Who is it this week? Who are we going for? Ooh, we don't want to be talking about that, quick, quick, quick, find something. Oh, let's jump on –

Members interjecting.

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

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I am not sure what that was, but it certainly was not a narrow debate on a narrow procedural question, and I would ask you to bring the member back to that question.

The SPEAKER: The member for Albert Park will come back to the motion before the house.

Nina TAYLOR: Absolutely. Absolutely, I will speak as loudly as I want. I am a female. I have every right in this chamber to be forthright. On this side of the house we want to speak to issues that matter to the people of Victoria, and that is why we want to continue on the Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022. Let us continue on the statute law bill as is on the notice paper instead of these ridiculous distractions – completely disingenuous; they know very well we have put record funding into IBAC so what is this nonsense? We are wasting the time of Parliament, and if they really, genuinely cared about the issues that matter to Victoria they would actually put up a steady flow of speakers.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Nationals!

Nina TAYLOR: Sorry, I got distracted myself. But in any case, if they actually cared about the issues that matter to the people of Victoria, then show it. Put up proper speakers, debate the bills, debate the issues that matter to the people of Victoria and maybe think about the people that you put up for preselection. They knew very well that the member for Western Victoria was going to deliver something pretty terrible and pretty damaging, but they still let her run, and that has been very embarrassing for those opposite.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would ask members to be a little more respectful.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I again ask you to bring the member back to the motion.

The SPEAKER: I ask the member for Albert Park to come back to the motion before the house.

Nina TAYLOR: I should clarify, Western Metro. That is a very good point; I should have said Western Metro. I said Western Victoria. No disrespect to Bev. Moira Deeming was the member that I was referring to, so thank you very much for making that clarification. So –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, as much as it pains me, I am not sure the member heard your direction when you ruled on that point of order.

The SPEAKER: The member for Albert Park was clarifying, but she will come back now to the motion before the house.

Nina TAYLOR: We were very much in the depths of this very serious debate on the statute law bill. We know that these kinds of changes and amendments are customary and required from time to time in Parliament. They are a very important part of parliamentary processes, and we would very much appreciate if those opposite would take the processes of Parliament seriously and actually work here on behalf of their constituents and do the right thing, put up speakers on the bills and debate as we work through the parliamentary sitting week, instead of these ridiculous stunts that are trying to take away the attention from their revolving door of leadership and, frankly, members of Parliament who are disrespecting some of the most vulnerable people in our community. That is what this is really about.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (11:30): (*By leave*) I will just speak briefly to clarify that the Greens will support this motion from the member for Malvern because it is a motion to suspend debate on the Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022 to discuss something far more important, and I do not mean to disparage the Statute Law Amendment Bill, which is obviously quite a page-turner and a controversial piece of legislation indeed. But I feel that the issues raised on the notice paper in this motion from the member for Malvern are critical, and they refer to the non-receipt of the letter by the Parliament and to the adequacy particularly of the legislation governing IBAC, the state's anti-corruption agency.

Now, I will not go through the entire motion, which is very detailed. Part of the motion, however, refers to appointing a select committee, and this part of the motion has obviously been overtaken by events. Nevertheless the content of the motion, the subject matter that the select committee would have been inquiring into, is critical, is important and should remain on Parliament's agenda. I would think that, whether it is a select committee or indeed a newly reconstituted Integrity and Oversight Committee, whichever committee looks into these matters would benefit from Parliament's direction as to which of all these matters should be looked at. In my view there is nothing here in this motion that should not be discussed, and all of it seems more important than the unfortunate Statute Law Amendment Bill. So we will support this motion because we think it is important to debate the questions of government interference in IBAC.

Assembly divided on Michael O'Brien's motion:

Ayes (32): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Gabrielle de Vietri, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, Sam Hibbins, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Tim Read, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Ellen Sandell, Ryan Smith, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Jess Wilson

Noes (50): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Daniel Andrews, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Jordan Crugnale, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, 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, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Motion defeated.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, I would ask that you take some time perhaps to review *Hansard* in relation to these debates on adjournments that have been moved by the opposition. As you well know, these are very narrow procedural debates, and I would ask that you have a look and reflect on whether or not that is the way in which procedural motions are being used in this house. They are not, as you well know, an opportunity for the opposition to get up and make a

series of unfounded allegations and to slander the government. So once again I ask that you take this point of order on notice and perhaps, as I said, have a look at *Hansard* and make a suggestion to the house on how we might proceed into the future.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Berwick is being very amusing this morning. However, this is a serious point of order.

James Newbury: On the point of order, Speaker, to assist the Leader of the House, who was not here during the debate, there were several occasions when members did need to be drawn back to the debate, and on each of those occasions I did raise that point of order. So I think that the issues have been dealt with and were dealt with at the time.

The SPEAKER: Order! Any motion on the notice paper can be brought forward at adjournment of debate; that is without question. I will take on notice the Leader of the House's point of order and come back to the house later today. The house will now move back to the Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (11:40): In the words of the member for Brunswick, I too am pleased to resume debate on this scintillating piece of important statute reform. I specifically refer to the sections where we are going to tighten up the Housing Act 1983. Of course as the Shadow Minister for Housing I am absolutely in favour of tightening up anything we can about housing here in the once great state of Victoria.

Members of the government in the last session before the adjournment debate spoke about the importance of what the Labor government calls the Big Build. Victorians are slowly waking up to the fact that this is not a big build, it is a big rip-off. What they are finding is that with their hard-earned taxes that this government has collected it has managed to spend \$2.8 billion in five years to create 74 new homes for Victorians. While the opposition is not opposing this legislation, we would support it hand over fist if reform to the Housing Act put in criteria to say that when we are going to spend taxpayers money and do a big build, we are actually going to do a big build and not a big evaporation. That is what this has amounted to over the last five years. In some magical twist of disappearing money and houses, this government has absolutely, fundamentally failed in its obligation to the homeless here in Victoria to create new homes. It really is of epic proportions. Just think about that: 74 homes in five years with the use of \$2.8 billion. In fact it works out to something like \$35 million per home, and that is something that no Victorian could be happy with.

We would absolutely fall over ourselves to support this bill even further if there was some reform to the way Homes Victoria actually measures its success. Because press release after press release, one shiny white construction helmet photo after another shiny white construction helmet photo after another, this government has lined up to talk about its dollar spend, but it never mentions how many homes it has actually added to the list here in Victoria.

Why do we need to add to the social and affordable housing list here in Victoria – because of the priority homeless rate. I am glad there are a few government members left in the chamber today, and I hope they are listening, because I do not know how they front up to their constituents with such an appalling outcome. Since this government has been in power, they have been adding in excess of 3000 families a year to the homeless priority waiting list.

We are not talking about the people that are in aggregate unhappy with the housing the government is providing. That list had grown to nearly 64,000, but because we have not seen it for a year – and that is another whole issue – we can only imagine it is probably north of 70,000-odd families. But let us just talk about the families that are sleeping in cars, sleeping in parks, sleeping under tents, sleeping on people's couches – families that do not have a place to call home. Three thousand of them have been added to the most recent figures, which are now almost 12 months old, mind you. Because this

government is so afraid to release the figures, we are having to run blind off 12-month-old figures. That list is growing, and what has this government been able to do for the nearly 15,000 families that have found themselves homeless over the last five years? This government has created 74 new homes for them to go to. Seventy-four out of 15,000 are the only families looking to get any benefit from the \$2.8 billion this government says it is going to spend. The Minister for Housing went on ABC radio on Friday and tried to defend these appalling figures, and he could not, because they just do not have the figures. They do not have the understanding.

They have gone rampantly spending and wasting billions of taxpayers dollars on a problem they have no way of solving – they are incapable of solving in fact. They have allowed their departments to run rampant with demolitions, with asset sales and with private sector joint ventures, and they have forgotten about why they exist. Homes Victoria exists to help people get a roof over their head, to have somewhere to call home, a space that they can feel safe and comfortable in, so that they need no longer call an awning in the main streets of Melbourne or a park down on the Mornington Peninsula home. The member for Nepean is here; that is a constant issue in his electorate. Or there are the people in my own electorate that are finding that they are having to sleep in cars out the front of police stations in country towns because there is nowhere to live. The waiting list for people: there are at least 3000 people being added annually to the homeless list. Eight years ago you would wait about six months to get a home allocation. That is now in excess of two years; more than two years people are waiting before they have any hope of having a home. And that is simply because this government has not put its eye to the outcome of its spend but on the cheap media announcements and photo opportunities.

We heard the Premier himself telling us that the reason he has been absent from Parliament all morning is that he was down doing a photo shoot – probably with some make-up and cameras and his extensive social media team, down making an issue of it, just like they do with their Big Housing Build. It was appalling to hear on Friday the minister say on ABC *Drive* that there must be more houses than 74. He could not tell us how many, he could not tell us where we could refer to any published document about where the extra homes are, but he said, ‘There must be homes because I go to the openings and cut ribbons all the time.’ I mean, fancy that being the measure of success of this government: ‘We must have more homes because we cut the ribbons.’ Well, yes, Minister, you have in fact cut ribbons on many developments, I have no doubt about that, but it is not the ribbons you cut, it is the net increase in homes: how many extra homes, how many extra beds, how many extra roofs? I can tell you that the people sleeping in the parks down on the Mornington Peninsula, the people living in caravans, the people living in single-bed motel units with their three children and the women escaping domestic violence that have nowhere to go except back to a dangerous and inhospitable roof – those people do not care how many ribbons the minister has cut, they do not care how many press releases the government has put out that say ‘We’re going to spend \$5.5 billion on a Big Housing Build’.

Sonya Kilkenny: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I have sat here for some time and I have let the member opposite continue on, but I would suggest that the Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022, which sets out to make some minor amendments to the Competition Policy Reform (Victoria) Act 1995, is a relatively narrow bill. I am sure many members of this place would like to talk to the record investment that we are putting forward on the Big Housing Build to deliver 12,000 new and upgraded social and affordable homes for all Victorians, but in this case I would suggest that you remind the member to come back to speaking on the bill before us.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Hamer): The debate has been fairly wideranging, but I do remind the member for Polwarth to keep his comments within the confines of the bill.

Richard RIORDAN: Yes. Thanks, Acting Speaker. We did hear many speakers from the government side trumpet their Big Housing Build. I think it is only right, in keeping with that wideranging debate, that we continue on. But I guess the desire of government ministers and government members to shut down any form of criticism is the theme of the day, and we have seen that continuing on, I guess, in this debate. The minute a scintilla of light, a speck of light, shines upon the actual performance and outcomes of this government we always see them being quick to leap to

shut it down. Even if it is a corruption letter by the most eminent jurists in the state sent to the Parliament to say, 'Look, there's something going wrong. It's not right,' they want to shut it down.

When we finally get to the work that the government should be doing, which is figuring out how many homes we actually have for Victorians, only to discover that they have not got them at all and they have vanished, then I can understand why the government seeks to push that down.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (11:50): I rise to speak on the Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022, a bill which, while not the most high profile in terms of media and publicity, certainly is, despite what those opposite attempted to do earlier with the attempt to suspend standing orders, critically important in terms of public policy substance and outcomes in many ways, particularly around the safety of women and children, which I will turn to in the substance of my contribution. As I said in my first speech, I am committed to building a better and fairer Victoria, and underpinning this aspiration is ensuring that we always strive for better and fairer legislation that accurately reflects and responds to the needs of the community.

When legislation is drafted, it is done with the utmost care and to the highest possible standards. However, despite the best endeavours of all involved, occasionally minor errors and omissions arise as new legislation commences or as further reforms are implemented which, as identified, need to be ironed out and updated accordingly. The bill therefore is required as a matter of good legislative practice and housekeeping to ensure that the clarity, relevance and accuracy of statute law in Victoria is maintained. The bill seeks to rectify a collection of minor errors contained within a number of acts. It is an omnibus-type bill to ensure Victoria's legislation across respective policy areas continues to remain robust and fit for purpose as we strive and work to respond to community needs through the work of this chamber. The bill seeks to update, modernise and correct minor ambiguities across a number of acts, including the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, the Domestic Animals Act 1994, the Housing Act 1983, the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003, the Competition Policy Reform (Victoria) Act 1995 and the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Act 2022.

However, it is one of the amendments contained in this bill that I would like to focus my contribution on and which I believe is of particular importance in helping to keep our communities safe, particularly women and children. This relates to the amendments being made to the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004. The bill amends and updates the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004, an act which supports Victoria Police to actively monitor registered sex offenders to reduce the risk of reoffending. It requires offenders to report to Victoria Police at the commencement of their registration period and periodically over that time allows Victoria Police to record the personal details of an offender.

These amendments complement a wider multilevel tapestry of state and federal legislation all aimed at cracking down on sexual offences and on child sexual exploitation. The focus of state and federal government legislation and policing practices in response to these issues has increasingly sought to align with the realities and evolving risks emerging from advances in communication and technology. One key step in this regard was in 2019, when the Commonwealth amended the term 'child pornography material' to 'child abuse material' to more accurately reflect the harm and seriousness of such material, in that it does in fact depict the abuse of a child rather than the sexualisation of that abuse.

The Andrews Labor government is committed to preventing and reducing sexual offending in all its forms and also improving the experiences of victim-survivors through the justice system. However, despite growing efforts at the federal and state levels, sexual harm remains a significant issue faced by too many Victorians, particularly women. According to the ABS, 2.2 million women – that is 23 per cent of women aged 18 years and over – have experienced some form of sexual violence in their lifetime, including childhood sexual abuse or sexual assault since the age of 15. In this regard I draw the house's attention to the Victorian Law Reform Commission's review into Victoria's laws relating to rape, sexual assault and associated adult and child sexual offences, which was tabled in Parliament in November 2021. The Victorian Law Reform Commission's report *Improving the Justice System*

Response to Sexual Offences highlights the need for ongoing and wideranging reforms, including improving police and justice system responses to victim-survivors of offending.

Following the report, the Victorian Labor government progressed some landmark reforms that overhauled the way sexual offences are reported and dealt with in Victoria. As announced in August 2022, the Victorian Labor government passed historic laws through this Parliament through the Justice Legislation Amendment (Sexual Offences and Other Matters) Act 2022, which saw Victoria adopt an affirmative consent model – a model that makes it clear that everyone has a responsibility to get consent before engaging in sexual activity. For their belief in consent to be reasonable, a person must have taken active steps by saying or doing something to find out if the other person consents. Simply, there must be a clear and enthusiastic go-ahead. The reforms also clarify the circumstances where there is no consent to an act, including that the removal of, the non-use of or tampering with a condom – commonly referred to as stealthing – without the other person’s consent is a crime. The reforms also include stronger laws to target image-based sexual abuse, which includes taking intimate videos of someone without their consent and distributing or threatening to distribute these images, including deepfake porn.

The reforms also include new jury directions to address misconceptions in sexual offence trials and reforms to better protect the confidential health information of sexual offence complainants. Combined with the reforms contained in this Statute Law Amendment Bill, the Victorian government will continue to ensure we are doing what we can to keep the community safe, particularly women, by preventing and deterring sexual offending from taking place whilst also strengthening legislation around the active monitoring of convicted offenders by Victoria Police.

All women should have the fundamental right to feel safe living in their own homes and walking the streets of local communities, regardless of the hour of the day. However, sadly even today, despite the progress we have made as a community in raising awareness about violence against women, the truth is we still have so much more to do not only in terms of legal reforms but through community awareness, particularly by men, who need to increasingly be the ones to step up and speak up to prevent and reduce men’s violence against women and children. As a male member of Parliament but also as a husband and a father of two daughters I will be making a concerted effort through every opportunity I have both in public and in private to raise awareness about these issues as I strive to help build a better, fairer and safer community for all.

My electorate in Melbourne’s north, like many other parts of the state, has sadly experienced some extremely tragic events with respect to men’s violence against women. September 2022 marked the 10-year anniversary since Jill Meagher was brutally raped and murdered on Hope Street in Brunswick by the most evil of men, and to her family and former ABC colleagues I say we stand with you and will never forget. I vividly recall these events of 2012, which occurred almost a month out from when Anna, my wife, and I were due to marry. We were still local residents back then. I recall the pain, the anger and the mourning felt by our community at that time, as we joined literally thousands who marched down Sydney Road to stand in love with Jill Meagher and her family and to stand against everything the evil male perpetrator stood for and did. Despite the progress we have made in raising awareness since then, the sad truth is that women’s safety today continues to be compromised by and large by men with misogyny in their hearts and in their minds.

In this respect I would like to draw the house’s attention to another distressing event which sadly occurred in December 2019 along the banks of the Merri Creek in Coburg, a matter which is being heard by the courts this week. The attack was described in the media as appalling, degrading and terrifying, as the female victim was simply jogging during the late afternoon and evening along the Merri Creek when she was allegedly attacked from behind by the male perpetrator and sexually assaulted in what went on to become a prolonged assault, described in the media as horrifying. I am sure that I speak for all of us in this chamber in saying that our thoughts and support stand with the female survivor, who has reportedly experienced anxiety, depression and PTSD since this incident.

While this bill cannot, sadly, change what happened to this courageous local female survivor back in December 2019, it certainly can help become part of the legislative architecture we need to continue building as a Parliament as we strive to prevent such incidents in future and to build safer communities for all women. However, along with these reforms around strengthening the sexual offenders register, it is also the ongoing advancements through online and internet-based communications technology which require us as a state to remain ever vigilant in deterring and preventing online sexual crimes, particularly to protect under-age young people and children. Sadly, as we know, while the internet has continued to evolve it has increasingly created another environment and platform for sexual predators and the exploitation of young people, whether through paedophiles connecting with and grooming innocent young victims or whether through young people obtaining and distributing or threatening to distribute images and material amongst their own age brackets, which have also gone on to have devastating consequences.

That is why I welcome the measures contained in this Statute Law Amendment Bill which seek to establish a new class 2 offence under schedule 2 of the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 to include preparatory offences such as grooming for sexual conduct, loitering near a school by a sexual offender and preparing for or planning an offence against the Criminal Code Act 1995. It is the position of the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management and Standing Council of Attorneys-General that states and territories should expand registration and supervision schemes to apply to Commonwealth child sex offenders as soon as practicable. This amendment does precisely that.

Reports of online child exploitation to the Australian Federal Police have more than doubled since the AFP-led Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation was launched in 2018. According to the AFP, after four years of operation there have been, sadly, increasing levels of reporting in this regard, and since its inception in 2018 the ACCCE has been instrumental in the AFP's fight to combat exploitation of children and contributed to significant outcomes, including removing 517 children from harm, identifying 429 victims, receiving nearly 100,000 reports that have resulted in more than 2000 referrals to law enforcement and developing key relationships with stakeholders.

I am absolutely committed to and commend this bill to the house. It is all about women and children's safety in many respects, something that I will always stand up and fight for in this chamber and outside this chamber.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (12:00): I rise to make a brief contribution to the Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022, and I thank the member for Polwarth for his contribution. I want to speak about the item relating to the Housing Act 1983. The member for Polwarth raised some points that are very, very crucial to my electorate as well and for the whole Mornington Peninsula. We know across the state the government is investing \$2.8 billion, but we still have more than 36,000 families with no roof over their heads. The current numbers, from speaking to groups who do this work on the Mornington Peninsula – and there are any number of them, including a group I met with last week, Vinnies Kitchen, who feed a lot of the people who live rough and are homeless down there – are that there are more than a thousand rough sleepers right across the Mornington Peninsula. When you add the number of families across the state with inadequate housing – and that number goes up over 64,000 – you would hope that the \$2.8 billion this government is spending would lead to more than the two completed houses that have currently been delivered. With, as I said, the thousand people sleeping rough, two houses completed on the Mornington Peninsula under the Big Build is not going to quite cut it for those members of my community.

The government wants to spruik how many houses they are building, how much they are spending and how many ribbons they are cutting. It has actually got to lead to real solutions for those people, and at the moment – we are seeing it across the state but especially on the Mornington Peninsula – those houses are not being delivered where they are needed. There is no accommodation for women trying to escape domestic violence. Currently they have to head to Frankston or across to Dandenong. You know, we are seeing people choose – as the winter months come now, and this happened last winter – to clean out wheelie bins and sleep in those with the lid closed to escape the winter elements.

So in my brief contribution I urge the government, while we are not opposing this bill, to continue with their Big Build but to do it in a way that is actually going to benefit those in the community that need it most. And I hope that we see that number start to come down. Instead of 3000 people being added to that housing waitlist every year across the state, that the number starts to reduce, that we start to see real solutions for the people that need the houses, that the thousand-odd people sleeping rough in my part of the world actually start to have some suitable accommodation for them and that through the winter period we do not once again see those people left without something. We do not want to see people having to live in tents on the Rosebud beach. That is not suitable accommodation for people. So instead of skirting around the edges of the legislation like they have done here in the Statute Law Amendment Bill relating to the Housing Act, I want to see them really deep dive and get things done and start to deliver for those people that are the most vulnerable in my community.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (12:03): I do think it is intriguing being lectured by the Liberal Party about social housing and the needs of the most vulnerable in our community, but I will come back to that point shortly. I just want to correct a couple of issues. Due to a copy-and-paste error the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing is aware of figures that were not updated in the 2021–22 annual report and confirms they will be correct in the 2022–23 report. I am coming back to a point that was made earlier about the number of homes built. The correct data was provided on page 49 of the 2021–22 annual report. The copy-and-paste error is in table 9 on page 94 of the 2021–22 annual report. Anyway, let us get to the point.

The Big Housing Build is delivering exactly what was intended: more homes for more Victorians. Across the two-year period of 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2022 when the Big Housing Build got underway, in 2021 social housing in Victoria increased by 1776, and we are continuing to do what matters through completing more homes in the Big Housing Build this year. We will have even more stock available for renters at Dunlop Avenue at Ascot Vale and the Markham estate in Ashburton in the coming weeks. Everyone in this place will recall the objections from those opposite to the Markham estate, because as far as they are concerned they do not want it in their backyard. So they talk the big talk here, but when it comes to actually being in their electorates, ‘Oh no, no, keep that away.’

The member for Mornington recently had the bright idea of replacing public housing in Mornington with the Mornington aquatics centre. The Shadow Minister for Housing tried to block a women’s housing project in his own electorate, making the claim that residents who would call the development home should be ‘spread across the shire’. This is an attack on the skills and expertise of a community housing provider that knows and understands the benefit of creating community for older women.

I should say also – and there is more that I could say in a moment – that I do recall, because I used to be in the Legislative Council, the day when member for Northern Victoria Wendy Lovell was making very strange comments about where you should place social housing. You should not put it in Brighton – and I am paraphrasing – because they might not be able to have the right sneakers or otherwise. And let me tell you, there is a fantastic new rebuild going on there courtesy of our government – because actually there has been social housing there I think since the 1960s; it is well established. And guess what? The kids went to Elsternwick Primary School and they mixed with all the local kids there and it worked. Funny that – mixing of kids, all different socio-economic situations, did not matter because I guess they knew how to talk to each other, they got along, they played and they learned together.

On our side of the house we know that there is no reason why you should not build social housing in Brighton. Why wouldn’t you? I mean, it just goes against the grain of who we are and our values, but it speaks to the values of those opposite, doesn’t it, when you reflect on the incredibly offensive comments that were made at that time? And as I say, I was in the upper house at that time so I can attest to those comments being made, and that is why I could not understand why there was such opposition from those opposite to factual events that had taken place. So I think they might just want to tone it down a little bit when they are trying to build their street cred in here and maybe actually translate it out there where it matters on the ground.

I should say that under the Big Housing Build we have 7600 houses either delivered or underway, okay? And the Big Housing Build only started –

Sam Groth interjected.

Nina TAYLOR: I said it at the outset, but you were not listening, were you? You can read back *Hansard* and see what I said there.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Through the Chair, member for Albert Park.

Nina TAYLOR: Sorry. In any case, I was just making a point that if the learned member had actually listened to me from the outset when I did make my comment, he would have known that I clarified that point as well. It was 1776, so you can read *Hansard*, or actually, I am repeating it for the member. On my behalf I am doing it – for the benefit of the learned member, I should say. I hope that satisfies that question, because I know there have been some extraordinary claims that have been made here that grossly underestimate the enormous and extensive investment that our government is making in our wonderful state of Victoria for the most vulnerable Victorians. We know that the Big Housing Build will deliver more than 12,000 homes, including 2400 affordable homes for the Victorians who need them most.

I think I did mention before the Markham estate and others. It is par for the course that when social housing is being built in their area – in the area of the Liberal opposition – that is when they jack up, but they are happy to talk about it in the chamber. Talk the big talk until it is in their neighbourhood – but it is not only the Liberal–National opposition. Can I also flag there are some members of the Greens who take many opportunities to jack up to just about every new housing build that we have. What I cannot understand is they claim to be the party that reflects the environment, biodiversity and otherwise, but guess what, they are opposing us having energy-efficient homes and disability access. Why would they oppose this time and time again? They come in here with their big talk – ‘Yeah, yeah, yeah, we love social housing; it’s great, but just keep it out of our area’ or ‘We don’t want energy efficiency’. I have even seen the suggestion that people should refurb while they are living there. Who wants to live in a building site? I mean, it just does not make any sense. Why would you do that? This is the point, why people get relocated for the period of the build – so they do not have to live in a building site. I think that makes perfect sense – and with the right of return as well. What is wrong with that? It happens over and over, and it is completely disingenuous, because I am well known for having a deep passion for sustainability and for making sure that –

A member interjected.

Nina TAYLOR: Well, yes, I can’t help myself. I am a rabid environmentalist. I think that is very well known. But for those Victorians who are arguably least able to afford heating and cooling bills, surely building homes that are energy efficient makes really good sense, because that means in the future they are not going to have to pay the same amount that they would have to pay in buildings which we know were built back in the 1950s and 60s when we did not have the same consciousness of the impact of weather and making sure that we were not pumping out coal and other things. We have obviously shifted the focus now to being much more energy efficient, and it starts with the actual properties themselves because in that way you can actually prevent the blowouts. I know that our government has instituted many significant reforms in terms of being able to support the most vulnerable Victorians. I know even when I was doorknocking through the election period – it was really exciting – I was doorknocking on some of the social housing, and some of the residents were pointing out, ‘Oh, look, there is the energy-efficient heater up on the wall. We are no longer using the gas heater, we are actually using the new two-way aircon heating and cooling –

Sam Groth: Split system.

Nina TAYLOR: split system.’ Thank you very much. I like that. See, we are sharing and caring. This is good. That really buoyed my spirits, because this is actually on-the-ground, grassroots reform

you can see right there, helping the people who need it most. This is how we will transform our energy sector – it is house by house, unit by unit. You could see it there physically on the wall, and this is what it is all about because that is also our government's aim. Well, here are the people who are arguably the least able to afford upgrading their appliances to the most energy efficient. Yes, we are going to help them. That is why we have got the grants, that is why we are there supporting them every step of the way, because that is who we are. I know I have got a little bit emotional on this subject, but I know it is very close to –

Juliana Addison: Passion!

Nina TAYLOR: Well, passion, yes. I am not short of passion. This speaks to our values, and that is why I get so deeply offended and insulted with some of the aspersions that are cast when in fact this is coming from an absolutely authentic and genuine space. We want to on the one hand rebuild some of the very tired, very outdated old social housing properties that very much need upgrades in terms of energy efficiency and disability access, but also specifically target and support some of the most vulnerable in our community, like people with mental health challenges and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. So you can see that this really is coming from a very authentic space, and just a little respect in that regard would be much appreciated.

Darren CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (12:13): It is with some pleasure this afternoon that I rise to speak on the Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022. On reflecting on all of the various elements to this bill I must say that it certainly provides a vehicle to tidying up a whole lot of different legislative provisions in the Victorian statute book. Before I go there I want to very much put on the record that I was expecting to make this contribution much earlier this morning, but indeed the Victorian Liberals in this place chose to hijack the Parliament for a period of time with a whole lot of procedural debates that took place particularly around the make-up of various committees of this Parliament and, to be frank, wasted a whole lot of our time. I think the backdrop to those procedural debates –

Sam Groth: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, obviously it has been a wideranging debate, but it is not an opportunity to bring up a procedural motion that was debated earlier. It is not a part of this current debate, and I ask you to bring the member back to the current topic.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It has been a very wideranging debate, and I have been here for a bit of it. If the member could come back to the bill, that would be nice.

Darren CHEESEMAN: Indeed. As I was indicating, I was anticipating my contribution on this matter to have been made much earlier in today's debate, but of course the Parliament's time was occupied by other parliamentary business, which I would argue was very unnecessary and indeed was very much put in place as I think a distraction to the media because of the various leadership conversations that have been happening.

Sam Groth: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, you have asked the member once to come back to the bill at hand, and I ask you to remind him that he is here to speak on the current bill, not the state of our leadership.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Could the member come back to the bill and its surrounds.

Darren CHEESEMAN: Indeed. Of course leadership is indeed very, very important in bringing any legislative reform process to this place, and indeed I have wondered very clearly through the course of the last few days what the previous Leader of the Opposition Matthew Guy –

Sam Groth: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member has been going for coming up to 4 minutes now and has not even slightly touched on the bill at hand. I ask you to bring him back to the bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have asked the member twice now. If the member could come to the bill, it would assist the house.

Darren CHEESEMAN: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. With fluid movements in the Parliament, I wondered whether the position that the Liberal Party might take on these particular important provisions might change over the course of this bill moving from this chamber to the other chamber. Of course people quite rightly might take a different position on this bill depending on who is leading the coalition on these things, and I think we have seen through the course of this week there having been all sorts of different, flexible positions taken by people –

Members interjecting.

Darren CHEESEMAN: Fluid.

Sam Groth: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I may be giving the member more time to come up with more ways to try to avoid speaking about this bill, but it is now three or four times that you have had to bring the member at least to the bill – not even back to the bill – for the first time. Halfway through his contribution, I think three warnings is probably enough, and I ask you to bring him to the bill, please.

Ros Spence: On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, to be fair, the member for Nepean may have liked getting up to make points of order on this bill, because he has probably spent more time talking on points of order than he did speaking to the bill. However, the member for South Barwon did actually refer to the bill in his most recent contribution, so I would rule the most current point of order by the member for Nepean out of order.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: On the point of order, I suggest the member comes to the bill. Given previous rulings, he is coming close to a warning, and I would appreciate him assisting the house by coming to the bill at hand.

Darren CHEESEMAN: Thank you. Part 3 of the bill goes to competition policy – and there are of course lots of competitions that happen around the place. But in all seriousness, this particular bill is exceptionally important, and indeed it deals with a whole lot of very, very important provisions.

The Andrews Labor government indeed does have a very, very significant reform agenda, and if you broadly reflect on that reform agenda since we were first elected in 2014, you can certainly see that reform agenda very clearly spelt out in the Victorian statute book in a whole lot of different areas. The point that I want to make is that we have had very, very clear leadership from Daniel Andrews as the Premier of this state in terms of the rights and responsibilities of Victorians, and we of course have set out a very, very clear plan for Victoria.

This particular bill has a whole lot of different provisions within it and does provide all of us a very broad opportunity to contribute. I think the important thing to recognise with this particular debate is that we will, as the Andrews Labor government, continue to bring important reform to this place. We have a very clear plan. That clear plan was set out for the people of Victoria in 2014, it was set out in 2018 and indeed it was set out in 2022. I have no doubt we will go to the people of Victoria in four years time again with a very, very clear plan.

This bill is important in terms of tidying up and inserting a whole lot of new provisions in a number of different acts of Parliament and providing very, very clear rights and responsibilities in the statute book for every single Victorian. Competition law is important, because consumers have a right to understand what their rights and responsibilities are, as do those that sell services in this state, and I commend those elements to this place. Years ago as a young union official I had the opportunity to represent workers who worked in Consumer Affairs Victoria. I had the opportunity to see firsthand the work that they undertook, and I very much appreciate the work that they do on behalf of all Victorians.

This week in this chamber we have seen a rabble on the other side. We have seen them all over the place with respect to leadership, and the point that I wanted to make in my contribution is that we have had very clear leadership. We have offered that to the people of Victoria, and we will continue to offer that to the people of Victoria going forward.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (12:23): It is an absolute pleasure to rise to speak on this Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022. What a day this is. It is a day that we have finally learned in this place that the member for Nepean has a voice – absolutely fantastic – although I would echo the comments of the minister that he may have contributed more on points of order than he has on debate in this place.

But no, on a serious note it is absolutely fantastic to rise to speak on this bill. It is some of the more stimulating work that we are able to do in this Parliament. This Statute Law Amendment Bill is obviously a time for reflection on statute law in Victoria, and it corrects some of the minor errors, some of the anomalies, throughout our legislation to make sure that it is fit for purpose and working to its current time. This bill covers a whole bunch of different areas in Victoria, and it is incredibly important that we revise statute law as we go along in this place. One of the acts that this bill covers is the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006. Obviously when addressing the Aboriginal Heritage Act it is only right to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, and I would like to pay my respects to the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation and also their elders past, present and emerging, but also the Bunurong and Wadawurrung people, who are the traditional owners of the land of Tarneit and Hoppers Crossing.

How absolutely appropriate that we do this when later in the year we will consider a referendum for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament – a referendum and a yes vote that those on this side of the house will most certainly be supporting, and I would urge our colleagues on the other side of the house to do the same, to be on the right side of history for a referendum that plays such an important role in reconciliation in this country.

The Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 addresses the ownership and custody of Aboriginal cultural heritage, and the bill will act to make minor language changes but will not have a substantive effect on the act itself. From ancestral remains and sacred objects to land protection, this works to ensure ongoing protections for places and objects of cultural significance and empowers the traditional owners as protectors of their cultural heritage as the world's oldest continuing culture. This government is dedicated to ensuring ongoing support for our Indigenous communities through acts like this.

The government has also recently provided further support to traditional owners by empowering them to study Aboriginal cultural heritage management. Just last September the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples welcomed 18 new graduates for this course. The year-long program offers on-country classroom and skills-based learning by fusing formal traditional and industry knowledge with hands-on experience in culturally appropriate ways. It is always fantastic to see the government pursuing ways to further empower traditional landowners, and this bill will make sure that our implemented acts continue to work effectively.

Another really important and major part of this bill is the Housing Act 1983, and there have been several contributions in respect to this during this debate. I will point out that it is odd to come into this place and to listen to those opposite lecture us on social and affordable housing. Others have reflected on contributions from the opposition in previous governments, particularly in the other place, on this issue. For those opposite to come in and lecture us on this issue is nothing more than disingenuous. They are all for affordable housing, they are all for social housing – unless it is in their own patch. Those on this side of the house are most certainly on the right side of history when we speak about social and affordable housing.

This act aims to ensure that every person in Victoria has adequate, appropriate and affordable housing, and it encourages the provision of quality public and social housing and the distribution of housing

assistance. It also promotes the orderly planning, assembly and development of land. As I said, those on this side of the house walk the walk when it comes to social and affordable housing.

The Andrews Labor government is delivering more homes for people who need them, because we know that a safe and secure home is the foundation to a good life. That is why this government has committed \$5.3 billion to the Big Housing Build, which is not just the biggest single investment in Victoria's history but the biggest single investment of any jurisdiction in Australia. The Big Housing Build will deliver more than 12,000 homes, with 2400 of those homes being affordable homes for those in our community that need them most. This will boost Victoria's social housing supply by 10 per cent and provide a stable foundation for thousands of Victorians that need affordable housing. So these benefits are not just for the city of Melbourne. They will flow on to regional Victoria as well, and we know how important that is. We understand that the needs of regional Victoria can at times be complex and different from those of Melbourne, so 25 per cent of these social and affordable houses will be located in regional Victoria.

The Big Housing Build will create an average of 10,000 new jobs each year, which is a significant component of this program, and will create new employment opportunities for local communities, including Aboriginal Victorians, people with disabilities, social housing renters and people from diverse backgrounds. This fantastic project has been a major benefit to my community in Tarneit and Hoppers Crossing, helping to keep low-income families in affordable homes. \$49 million was provided across the Wyndham area to help build more than 100 new social and affordable homes – really transformational stuff for my community. It is acts like this one that help our local communities thrive.

Another important aspect to this bill is the Domestic Animals Act 1994. The Domestic Animals Act aims to protect domestic animals and pets as well as their owners by putting into place regulations for the sale, ownership and breeding of domestic animals. The amendments discussed in the proposed bill seek to clarify section 84M(1) but do not substantially change the act, as we spoke about before. The Andrews Labor government has been committed to improving the wellbeing of people and animals by modernising the way that we care for animals in this state. The most recent round of the individual pet rehoming grant offered \$1.25 million to pet rescue and rehoming organisations to support the rehoming of cats and dogs. This means that rehoming organisations were able to be reimbursed for things such as veterinary treatment, including desexing, microchipping, vaccinations and other medical treatments, making it easier for these organisations that are rehoming cats and dogs but also easier for those people in the community who are going to do the really important work of adopting these animals. In its first round this grant provided 464 grants to contribute to the rehoming of more than 4000 cats and 1400 dogs. Last year the *Taskforce on Rehoming Pets* report also came out with 17 different recommendations, all of which the government has supported. It is acts like this and grants programs like the individual rehoming grant that have been working towards the goal of giving our rehomed animals and pets all the necessary care to lead a healthy and happy life.

It is for all the reasons that I have put forward through the different acts that are included in this Statute Law Amendment Bill that I commend the bill to the house.

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Suburban Development) (12:33): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023*Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Sonya Kilkenny:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

David HODGETT (Croydon) (12:34): It is a pleasure to rise to lead the debate and make a contribution on the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. There are quite a few elements to this bill. It comes out of the work of the expert panel on building reform – work that Anna Cronin has overseen. Having had a look at that report and examined that report, there are some terrific elements to it, and certainly when it comes to regulation or regulators Anna Cronin is second to none. We welcome her work and the work of the expert panel and understand its role in setting the scene for this bill, and I am sure from my discussions with the Minister for Planning that there is more to come in the planning space as this term of office proceeds. I am sure we will see a lot more in the planning space, and we look forward to having a look at what comes out of that report.

In terms of our position on the bill we actually think there is a lot of good stuff in the bill. We are supporting the bill, but we think the bill could be improved and go a lot further. It is for that reason that I wish to move a reasoned amendment to the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, and I move:

That all the words after ‘That’ be omitted and replaced with the words ‘this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the minister consults further with stakeholders, including the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors, about options to require building surveyors practising in Victoria to be members of a professional standards scheme, allowing AIBS to assist the government to regulate practitioners and strengthen the building permit process’.

I will come back to talk further about that in my contribution. I will just put on record, though, that from my discussions with the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors and certainly from my discussions with the minister’s office there are no surprises here. There will be nothing new. I understand that the AIBS has written to the minister, to the department, and anything that they have provided to me in terms of their views on this bill they have also provided the exact same information to the minister and the minister’s office. So I expect there will be no surprises, and who knows, we might get bipartisan support on this to actually improve the bill and take it further. But, as is the custom, I might just go through and outline the purpose of the bill, the main provisions, a bit of background and history, and then I will come to discussing the elements of it that we think could be improved. The bill will:

... amend the Building Act 1993, 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.

These legislative amendments will create reforms that were outlined in the minister’s second-reading speech and in the bill. The amendments will create the following reforms: formalise and strengthen the role of the state building surveyor, establish a building monitor, expand the categories of building practitioner that will be required to be registered, enhance the building approvals process by introducing further safeguards to better inform consumers, strengthen information sharing between statutory entities with a role in the building regulatory framework, amend the distribution of the cladding rectification levy and strengthen and improve the governance arrangements of the Architects Registration Board of Victoria under the Architects Act.

Then coming to the main purpose of the bill, the purpose of this bill is to amend a number of acts and make a number of changes, and I might just put on record and outline those for the benefit of the house. The purposes of this bill are:

- (a) to amend the **Building Act 1993**–
 - (i) to provide for the appointment of a State Building Surveyor; and

- (ii) to provide for the appointment of a Building Monitor; and
- (iii) to provide further in relation to the sharing of information and data; and
- (iv) to provide for changes to categories of building practitioner; and
- (v) to insert an offence relating to building practitioners; and
- (vi) to require that relevant building surveyors give certain information to persons to whom building permits are issued; and
- (vii) to provide for building manuals to be prepared and updated by owners and updated by owners corporations in respect of certain buildings; and
- (viii) to provide for additional purposes for which money may be paid out of the Cladding Safety Victoria account; and
- (ix) to make changes to the delegation powers of the Victorian Building Authority; and
- (x) to make other consequential and miscellaneous amendments ...

There are a number of acts that get amended by this bill, which I will just outline:

- (b) to amend the **Architects Act 1991** to make changes to the governance and procedures of the Architects Registration Board of Victoria; and
- (c) to amend the **Domestic Building Contracts Act 1995** in relation to the disclosure and sharing of information and data by conciliation officers under that Act; and
- (d) to amend the **Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Act 2002** in relation to the disclosure of information under that Act; and
- (e) to amend the **Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998** in relation to the disclosure and sharing of information and data under that Act; and
- (f) to amend the **Sale of Land Act 1962** to insert an offence relating to the provision of an approved building manual to a purchaser of land ...

I will come back to that. That is a very important change and one that we support. Then:

- (g) to amend the **Owners Corporations Act 2006** in relation to the provision of an approved building manual at the first meeting of an owners corporation; and
- (h) to amend the **Cladding Safety Victoria Act 2020** to make consequential amendments.

A number of acts are being changed there, and as I said at the outset, this bill has quite a few elements. By way of background, just to set the scene a bit here, the bill replaces a previous bill that expired at the table in the Legislative Council last Parliament, and in the previous bill the government were proposing changes to the architects accreditation board, removing accredited architects from the board. Part 5 of this bill outlines the amendments to the Architects Act 1991, and clause 60, which is right at the back of the bill, deals with the membership of the board. The Australian Institute of Architects have informed me now that they are okay with the latest changes and are comfortable supporting these amendments. I think that bill last year, 2022, was proposing removing any registered architects or qualified architects from the board, which clearly they took issue with. Now the government, the minister, have made appropriate changes there to include up to three, the clause says, which they are more comfortable with. Make no mistake, I have certainly had some discussions with the Australian Institute of Architects and relevant people to that. They are all for a good skill mix on the board, qualified people that are in the position to deliver the best outcomes, so no-one is arguing against that. But I know they are pleased with those changes that were made to that previous bill in 2022.

The 2022 bill also included provision for local councils to undertake pre-occupation inspections for high-risk buildings. This has not made it into the 2023 bill, so I am suggesting the government may be doing some further work there. I would be interested in what their thoughts are about those changes. They have obviously had second thoughts about the changes to the building approvals process, and I look forward to perhaps what might come in that space down the track. We know there are a few issues around that, so we will work with the government to see where that takes us down the track.

In terms of the main provisions, as I keep saying, there are quite a few elements to the bill. Fundamentally the bill is around greater consumer protection within the building industry, and it links into the work, as I said, that the building system review expert panel has been doing around broader building reform. All these components, except for the cladding levy, are related to implementing recommendations from the stage 1 report of the expert panel. That is all about oversight and improving the regulator, who – it depends on who you talk to – the industry might suggest has been asleep at the wheel, but I will leave that for others to form views around. But it is about oversight, about improving the regulation and about more accountability into the system and protection for consumers, and I do not think anyone could argue with that. Again, as I said at the outset, I commend the work the building system expert review panel has been doing around that broader building reform.

The first change will be to formalise and strengthen the role of the state building surveyor. That is already a role established in the Victorian Building Authority (VBA), but this will give it a statutory role as the primary source of expertise and technical guidance for the building and plumbing industries. That includes the power to issue binding determinations relating to the technical interpretation of building and plumbing regulations, codes and standards. The second component is establishing a building monitor to represent domestic building consumer interest in the system. Part of the rationale for this is looking at systemic issues. At the bill briefing I think it was explained to me it is not just a person having one particular issue with their property, but what issues are occurring more broadly across the system. I am informed that we do not really have an advocacy role for that at the moment, so this is looking at filling that gap.

The bill will expand the categories of building practitioners required to be registered to enable the regulation of building designers, project managers, site supervisors and building consultants. This is about ensuring practitioners have the necessary skills or qualifications to carry out complex or high-risk work. This includes things like overseeing OH&S on sites and ensuring compliance with the NCC, the National Construction Code.

The bill will enhance the building approvals process, including by requiring relevant building surveyors to provide their clients with an information statement and requiring building manuals to be prepared for certain classes of buildings. The information statement aims to address the lack of consumer understanding about the role and functions of building surveyors and the building permit process, and the building manuals are intended to be a single repository of all relevant information relating to the construction and subsequent building works on the building and any relevant maintenance work. It is really creating a one-stop shop for all that information, and it should be noted this only applies to new buildings. It will not apply retrospectively to existing buildings, and I think that is sensible; it would be quite a task to do that.

Incidentally, I was talking to someone in industry that had purchased a new building – or their company or whatever had purchased a new building – and was the recipient of that information about the building on a USB stick, and they said the process worked quite well. I think the information given to me was that it was quite simple to pull that information together. The builder had it all on their computer, and it was quite a simple process. I make that point because this is not going to make it onerous or create additional problems in being able to provide those building manuals. On the ground out in the world it seems that this works well, so we support that.

The final component, which is separate to the expert panel's work, is amending the distribution of the cladding rectification levy, to provide financial or other support to owners who are not eligible to receive funding under the current program, which is administered by Cladding Safety Victoria. The arrangement at the moment cannot authorise the cladding levy to be used to fund activities where full rectification solutions are not funded by the state. The amendments will provide greater flexibility in how the cladding levy is used, including enabling the use of the levy to provide financial or other support to address buildings that CSV have determined will not be eligible to receive funding under the current program. This is about giving greater discretion, obviously within the purposes of funding cladding rectification works or trying to fix the cladding issues, to do out-of-scope things that might

not be eligible for full funding, as the funding at the moment obviously looks at high-risk buildings. Again, we think this change makes sense.

Moving on now, not so much to the areas of concern but to the ones that are the reasons for me moving a reasoned amendment and the areas we think could be taken further or addressed. I am using the reasoned amendment to put these on the record. As I said, I think the minister is aware of these because most of them have come from the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors, and they have informed me that there are no surprises and no secrets here. They have advised the minister's office that it is a good way forward and they are encouraging that, so I wanted to put them on record in support of that.

As discussed above, the 2002 bill included provision for local councils to undertake pre-occupation inspections for high-risk buildings. That has not made it into the 2023 bill, suggesting that the government might be doing some more work around that. That is fine. They might be thinking more about any changes to the building approvals process there. I am led to believe the above provisions may have been omitted because we know there is a chronic shortage of building surveyors, both in the municipal and private sectors, and the shortage means that most councils do not have the capacity or are struggling with capacity, as I am informed, to undertake their core building control functions. It has been suggested to me that over the last 20 years building control has probably not been at the forefront of focus. 'Neglected' may be too strong a word, but it has been neglected by most councils, and as a result many councils are without appropriately registered building surveyors and inspectors and lack the staffing numbers to discharge their building control functions. Any additional burden of mandated responsibility would not see any benefits to consumers and industry, so that has been removed.

We look forward to where the government might go on that and to receiving a briefing around that area, but we will watch this space and we will respect the department and the minister's opportunity to go and explore that further and come back with further legislation as needed.

Industry stakeholders stated that they would be pleased if the government – certainly with bipartisan support for the legislation – strengthened it by including the requirement for building surveyors practising in Victoria to be members of a professional standards scheme. The AIBS are very big on this and provide solid arguments for building surveyors practising in Victoria to be members of a professional standards scheme. AIBS also want to be allowed to assist in regulating the practitioners who carry out a role that was created by government to assist government in the building process. For example, the AIBS scheme mandates the need for practitioners to undertake continued professional development training as required for registration. The workforce shortage of building surveyors in Victoria certainly needs to be urgently addressed, so we would support any measures that would address and strengthen that.

The bill we think could be further strengthened in other areas. There was an example; I will not go into it here. Other contributions might touch on this, but I know the issue of waterproofing defects is back on the agenda or certainly back being talked about in the construction industry; I think there were some media reports on it in recent times. So the bill may be able to be further strengthened in areas such as that. The example of waterproofing defects is one which has been, as I understand it, among the highest percentages of defects for the last 15 years. So again there are ideas that the AIBS have in terms of addressing that issue, proposing a registered trade category. As I said, I perhaps will not go into that now. I know it is not in the scope of this bill, but it might be something that the government wishes to consider and we would be happy to have further discussions around that.

The Australian Institute of Building Surveyors also submits that the role of the state building surveyor should be an independent statutory office, not a position under the influence of the VBA, and certainly not an employee of the VBA, as the proposed legislation prompts. The role in its current form is obviously heavily influenced by the VBA and certainly not sufficiently independent. Furthermore, the proposal suggests that binding decisions cannot be appealed via the Building Appeals Board, a denial of procedural fairness and natural justice. That on the surface I think makes sense. It is certainly

worthwhile further exploring, but it is always a good measure to have independence and a review process as needed.

There is one other. I will not attribute this to the AIBS but another industry stakeholder, when looking at the final report to the government expert panel on building reform. Their suggestion – and it was constructive – was that rather than take a piecemeal approach to planning reforms, whilst the industry was supportive of those reforms, the preference of industry is that they would rather see all the reforms together with an overall strategy and future direction to be considered. We understand that. I also think it is reasonable to accept that the department and the minister's office will bring pieces of legislation to this place for debate and consideration as they see fit, but industry obviously like to have the broader detail and an overall look at the entire strategy, as opposed to piece by piece.

I notice he has left the chamber, but I put on record my thanks to the member for Narracan. He has a background in the construction industry, and certainly the member for Narracan has been very helpful in scrutinising this bill and assisting us to form a position on the bill. Again we were very appreciative of the minister's office organising the bill briefing, and that allowed the member for Narracan and indeed other members to participate in that process and raise concerns and questions. I again just put my thanks on record to Aidan Wright, Ada Young and Andrew Grear, who were helpful; it is a good example of the process working. The member for Narracan raised a number of matters. It was – simple is probably not the word, but it was a better process for the member for Narracan to put those concerns in writing, and we were able to then provide them to the minister's office.

I am pleased to report that we got a very, very thorough, detailed response on those, which then helped the member for Narracan to form a view across a range of issues. Time probably does not permit me to go into them all, but certainly we received detailed information around binding determinations, building practitioner registration, expert panel new practitioner site supervisor, expert panel new practitioner consultants, definitions and the process for building practitioner registration. So again, credit where credit is due, I do want to give my thanks to all those involved that provided that information. It makes it much easier for us to scrutinise the bill, assess it and form a view on it. As I said at the outset, we are supporting the bill, but we believe a reasoned amendment is the way for us to put a number of points in the debate for the government to consider.

I thank again all the stakeholders. It is a short period of time between legislation getting dropped into this place and in effect being debated two weeks later. It is a challenging process at times to get out to stakeholders, seek views, scrutinise views, form views, get a bill briefing and get a bit of back and forth in on getting information, but I am most pleased that again that process worked smoothly.

In summary, from the information provided in meetings, discussions and feedback, there is recognition of the need for reform. It is well overdue and absolutely necessary; that is the view of industry. Many stakeholders urged support for the bill. There is some great stuff in it. There are some really good reforms around that oversight regulator being more active and about more accountability in the system, consumer protections, information and that sort of thing. The industry basically are very supportive of the bill and suggest that in some areas it does not go far enough. Therefore there is that opportunity for us to put on record areas where we think we could strengthen the reforms, and I urge the government to take those on board.

It is without doubt that stakeholders support these reforms that provide for a modern building system which delivers safe, quality buildings. They believe the reforms will deliver significant improvements to the building system that will place safety and consumers at the heart of it, and as such, after all our ongoing assessment and feedback, we formed a view that we would support the bill but would move a reasoned amendment first so that we could put those things on record.

I think I have covered everything. Again, I will just take a moment to thank the work of the expert panel. Their report is an excellent read. For those that might be interested in looking at planning over the break of the next five or so weeks before we come back in May, it is a good read – a good bedtime read for

people that might want to know where we are heading in the state, certainly on building reform. Good work. I commend the work of Anna Cronin, again one of the best, if not the best, regulators in the system. Her work is outstanding and first class, and I look forward to seeing what else comes out of that.

Again, I just place my thanks on record to everyone involved in providing information, providing the stakeholder feedback, and to the member for Narracan, who was most useful and most helpful with his background in construction to help us assess this bill, get our heads around some of the more technical components and be able to form a position to come and make a contribution on the bill and support it, but first move a reasoned amendment.

Sitting suspended 12:59 pm until 2:01 pm.

Business interrupted under standing orders.

Members

Treasurer

Absence

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:01): I rise to inform the house that the Minister for Government Services will answer questions today for the portfolios of Treasurer, industrial relations and trade and investment.

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge the former member for Mildura Peter Crisp in the gallery.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Member conduct

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): My question is to the Minister for Consumer Affairs. It has been revealed today that each one of the minister's commercial properties is rented to real estate agents. As the minister responsible for the Estate Agents Act, did the minister detail to the secretary of the department this latest conflict of interest?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I had hoped to not be on my feet this early into question time. The Minister for Consumer Affairs, without assistance.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:02): I reject the premise of the question. I own no commercial properties whatsoever. The Leader of the Opposition clearly does not understand how to read the register of members interests. I own residential properties which are managed on my behalf by real estate agents. I have always declared my interests, and I have always acted appropriately. I think the real question here though is: what is the Leader of the Opposition actually suggesting – that the Minister for Agriculture cannot own a farm and that the minister for innovation cannot own an iPhone? I mean, it is just a ridiculous proposition. I have always declared my interests. I have always acted appropriately. Now, I know this is the last question time for a while. I want to advise the house I will be here when the house resumes on 2 May. The question is: will the member for Hawthorn be there, or is he going to languish on the backbench?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Manager of Opposition Business will come to order.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:03): On a supplementary, section 8.4 of the ministerial code of conduct states that where a conflict or potential conflict of interest could arise, the minister should divest themselves, relinquish control, put in place appropriate arrangements

or take such other action. What did the minister do to manage the conflict of interest with respect to each one of his commercial properties?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:04): Well, the Leader of the Opposition clearly did not listen to the answer I gave him. I own no commercial properties. I have always acted appropriately. I have always declared my interests.

Ministers statements: health infrastructure

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:04): I am delighted to rise to update the house on the government’s record investment in health services, particularly those that relate to catching up on different procedures and different parts of our health system that for the best of reasons and based on public health advice had to be interrupted and sometimes cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last week I was out in Werribee at the Werribee Mercy Hospital to thank personally staff and administrators there. They do a fantastic job right across their network of service provision, not just in the west but of course in the north as well. They are outstanding Victorians who work very hard. What we were celebrating and marking was one of the eight new fit-for-purpose rapid access hubs. This is all about concentration of effort. It is all about not having planned surgery or elective surgery competing with emergency surgery. It is all about making sure we have the size, the scale, the equipment and the workforce so we can have the throughput and the efficiencies, or to put it another way, people getting the surgery they need faster and closer to home. We are rolling this out not just at Werribee, where there is a focus on endoscopy procedures; there will be some 800 additional endoscopies performed at Werribee Mercy, and it will mean less people have to travel out of their community, the community they have helped to build, in order to get the care that they need. Beyond that there are of course other hubs that are to open at Broadmeadows and Sandringham Hospital and indeed five theatres in operation already at St Vincent’s on the park. In addition to that, the next iteration, the next step forward on this, will be University Hospital Geelong, the Heidelberg Repat and the Royal Women’s Hospital. This is all part of a \$1.5 billion investment to make sure that we can catch up, recover and be stronger for this pandemic event – not a blitz, not a one-off, but going from 200,000 procedures to 240,000 procedures each and every year.

Member conduct

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:06): My question is to the Minister for Consumer Affairs. Has the minister received any briefings, recommendations or advice from the Estate Agents Council that could be considered market sensitive?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for South Barwon can leave the chamber for 1 hour.

Member for South Barwon withdrew from chamber.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:07): I am not quite sure what the member for Kew is suggesting or alleging. I have always acted appropriately. I have always declared my interests.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, I am sure you would like the member for Kew to be heard in silence.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:07): Minister, how is it appropriate for the minister to be responsible for regulating the real estate industry whilst at the same time receiving an income from various real estate investments across Victoria?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:08): It is just a ridiculous –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I would like to hear the answer.

Danny PEARSON: It is just a ridiculous proposition being put forward by the member for Kew. I have always acted appropriately. I have always disclosed my interests. I mean, this is like saying if you are the Minister for Public Transport, you cannot catch the train. It is just ridiculous.

Ministers statements: Smile Squad

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (14:08): I rise to update the house on how every Victorian government school has been invited to participate in the Andrews Labor government's transformational Smile Squad program. This includes of course students from Glenroy Central Primary School, who the member for Broadmeadows and I had the pleasure of visiting earlier this week. Good dental health should be available for all Victorians, not just those who can afford it, and we know that dental conditions are the highest cause of preventable hospital admissions in zero to nine-year-olds. That is why in the biggest commitment ever to preventative oral health care in our state's history we have invested \$321.9 million into our Smile Squad program.

Smile Squad delivers free check-ups and treatment, including oral health education, teeth cleaning, fluoride application, fillings and root canals, as well as toothbrushes, toothpaste and a drink bottle to support drinking tap water at home. This program is not only good for the health of our children; it is also great news for family budgets, with estimates that Smile Squad will save families around \$400 for every child every year. I am proud of our track record on delivering free dental care for our 632,000 Victorian government students who have each been offered the opportunity to participate in the program. In further good news work is already underway to deliver on our commitment to make Smile Squad available in low-fee independent and Catholic schools across the state. Smile Squad will also free up 100,000 public dental places that will drive down our waiting list for important oral health care.

Member conduct

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:11): My question is to the Minister for Consumer Affairs. Last month the minister committed to this place that he would put his shareholdings in a blind trust following revelations that he awarded a banking contract to the Commonwealth Bank whilst a shareholder in the Commonwealth Bank. The Premier stated that this was the appropriate thing to do. Will the minister now do the appropriate thing and divest himself of the four properties from which he receives a rental income from real state agencies?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:11): It is just a ridiculous proposition being put by the member for Kew. I do not accept the proposition being put forward by the member for Kew, and the answer is no.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:11): Over the past month it has been revealed that the minister has awarded the Commonwealth Bank a contract to provide banking services to the Victorian government whilst a shareholder of the Commonwealth Bank, approved the opening of bank accounts with the Commonwealth Bank whilst a shareholder of the Commonwealth Bank, approved new leases on government property with Telstra whilst a shareholder of Telstra and received rental income from real estate agencies whilst being the minister responsible for the sector. How many more times will the minister refer to his previous answer before he simply does the right thing and resigns?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:12): I would have thought if that was

your crescendo, you would have finished with a bit of oomph and pizzazz, but clearly that is lacking. I am not going anywhere. I will see you off the field, mate.

Ministers statements: mental health support

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples) (14:13): Today I rise to update the house on the Andrews Labor government’s commitment to supporting families, carers and supporters of Victorians experiencing mental health challenges. There are currently more than 60,000 Victorians providing care to family and loved ones, often unpaid and so sadly often without support as well. The Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System recognised that families, carers and supporters are an undervalued part of our mental health workforce. Every day Victoria’s carers make a huge difference to the life of the person that they care for – sometimes the multiple people that they care for.

That is why we are investing \$54.5 million to open eight family- and carer-led centres across the state this year. This service will be freely available to the widest definition of families, whether that be family of origin, family of choice, friends, children or kin, and it will provide integrated support and guidance, acknowledging the many cultures, backgrounds, relationships and identities that each of us hold. The centres will be co-led by families and carers in partnership with the peak body Tandem, a trusted voice for carers, families and supporters in mental health. They do incredible work. While Victorian families, carers and supporters look after their loved ones, our eight family- and carer-led centres across this great state will look after them. This is all part of our ongoing commitment to rebuilding Victoria’s mental health system, with work underway on more than 90 per cent of those royal commission recommendations, backed of course by some \$6 billion, the highest of any jurisdiction in this country, and we should be very proud of that indeed. While those opposite wanted to cut funding to our mental health system, on this side of the house we will invest in Victorian families and carers and those people that they care for.

Housing affordability

Tim READ (Brunswick) (14:15): My question is for the Premier. There are an estimated 70,000 empty homes in Victoria, and we have a rental crisis. We could implement policies that would encourage their owners to put them on the long-term rental market. Will the government do this?

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:15): I thank the member for Brunswick for his question and his interest in these matters. I think it is fair to say that we have put in place a number of different measures over our time in government – for instance, taxing at a differential rate vacant properties. I think that is a pretty good incentive. You know, if you do not use it, then you will be paying a higher tax rate and you will be helping to fund the construction of social housing and other important programs.

A member: 74 houses.

Daniel ANDREWS: Oh, here we go.

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

Daniel ANDREWS: It is a shame none of you were that loud about social housing in the cabinet room during the four miserable years that you were in office and did not do a thing – not a stick of furniture, let alone any extra houses. We have got the Big Housing Build and they had a big waste of four years – four wasted years. But we should not be distracted by the appalling record of those opposite. The Greens have asked a question. The member for Brunswick has asked a question.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Polwarth can leave the chamber for 1 hour.

Member for Polwarth withdrew from the chamber.

Daniel ANDREWS: There are a number of different measures we have taken, a number of different policies that we have put in place that are precisely targeted at the issue that the member references. I am the first to say that there is always more that we can do, always. As part of an ongoing process, not just in the budget, but an ongoing process, we are always looking for ways in which we can be innovative, ways in which we can be creative to provide the best solutions to often some of the most vulnerable people in the Victorian community. Whilst today is not the day to make announcements – I am sure the member would like me to but today is not the day to make such announcements – I think our record is one where we have moved in these sorts of spaces and done things that are directly about getting more stock to the market and more roofs over more vulnerable people’s heads.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (14:17): Specifically, regulation of the short-stay market, including platforms like Airbnb, has been used in a number of cities around the world such as New York, Dublin, Berlin and in New South Wales. Given a large number of these empty homes are on similar short-stay platforms, there is a ready source of available and already built accommodation that could be used. While I appreciate the Premier may not want the timetable rushed on making an announcement, it would be great to know if there is going to be any light at the end of the tunnel in terms of making those homes available in the near future.

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:18): I was down at the Metro Tunnel this morning, and it is coming along very nicely. So we will not confuse things by mentioning tunnels. What I would say is that –

Members interjecting.

Daniel ANDREWS: Well, if –

The SPEAKER: Order! Through the Chair, Premier.

Daniel ANDREWS: I would be happy to just inform the member that the budget will be delivered on budget day. Other announcements will be made from time to time. Today is not the day for me to make announcements about housing policy. I do not necessarily think that it is the best way to go to suddenly say to that Airbnb sector, which often people who, I think particularly with rising interest rates, may well need and have come onto that Airbnb system or other short-stay system – platforms if you like – we have got to be careful when it comes to making big decisions like that. It is a pretty sweeping reform, and I have got no announcements to make about it today.

Ministers statements: student mental health

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (14:19): I rise to update the house on the government’s rollout of mental health support in our primary schools. We know that good mental health and wellbeing is essential to the development of our children in order for them to succeed. When kids are happy and engaged, they do well. And at the heart of this program we are delivering those supports. I am sure that when we look back in 20 years time we will see that this is one of the big game changers of reform, where we are supporting students’ wellbeing and lifting their educational outcomes as a result. The Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System certainly told us that primary schools can play a key role in identifying the needs that children have and also help with the challenges that they may be having in regard to needing to refer them to treatment, care and support.

That is why we are investing \$200 million over the next four years and \$93 million ongoing to ensure that the mental health in primary schools program is rolled out in every government school and low fee paying non-government schools across the state. This has started in Barwon, Brimbank, Melton, Goulburn, Hume, Merri-bek and outer Gippsland. They are all now receiving funding to employ a mental health and wellbeing leader, and by 2026 every primary school will have someone leading this work.

On Monday of this week I was at Debney Meadows Primary School in the electorate of the member for Essendon, who I know is working really hard to improve student outcomes for kids in his area.

This school is rich with inclusivity and diversity. I did manage to get to see the mental health and wellbeing leader in action calming down kids, working with kids and implementing real change. Can I thank the Murdoch Children's Research Institute and Melbourne Graduate School of Education for their partnership in delivering these initiatives that are changing our schools for the better.

Government integrity

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:21): My question is to the Premier. Has the Premier or anyone in his office been interviewed by Professor McMillan into his investigation of Labor's politicisation of the public service?

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:21): I have not spoken to the professor. I do not know that I have ever met the professor. As for anyone else, I would not know. The reason I am hesitating is I am not sure what if any obligations might be on anybody who had been interviewed by the Ombudsman. The member for Bulleen would know all about the Ombudsman because he was interviewed by him. You might have been interviewed by him over your water rorts, over the office of living it up.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, under standing order 58 the Premier knows better than to debate the question. I ask you to bring him back to order on this very important question.

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

Daniel ANDREWS: As I said, I have not met the professor so named by the Leader of the Opposition. I do not believe I have met the guy ever. I certainly have not spoken to him about any work he might be doing for the Ombudsman. As for anybody else, I think the best thing to do would be to have a conversation with the Ombudsman about what she is doing or getting other people to do for her.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:22): With more than 90 Andrews government ministerial advisers parachuted into the VPS executive, can the Premier rule out that his private office has played any role in the politicisation of the public service by supporting appointments of former ministerial staff to executive positions?

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:23): I would have probably liked to finish stronger than that because this might be your last one, mate. This might be your last one. Depending on how Monday goes, it may be the Leader of the Opposition's last one. You seem to be confusing –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, again, I would ask you to bring the Premier back to the question.

The SPEAKER: I ask the Premier to come back to answering the question.

Daniel ANDREWS: The Leader of the Opposition seems to be confusing the Victorian public service with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal in Canberra, where –

A member interjected.

Daniel ANDREWS: Well, quite a few of your mates got appointed – quite a few – thoroughly unqualified, might I add. Appointments made by this government are made on merit. If in the future you happen to need a job and an appointment, come and see me.

Ministers statements: health infrastructure

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:24): I am delighted to rise to add to my earlier ministers statement in relation to the government's record investment in providing the very best health infrastructure so that our dedicated nurses and ambos, our doctors, our allied health professionals – the whole team to whom we are all so grateful and so, so proud – can provide the best care with that best equipment. Just recently I was up with the outstanding member for Ripon opening the new

multimillion-dollar accommodation hub for healthcare workers at the Maryborough and district hospital. We are also essentially rebuilding the Maryborough and district hospital with more than \$100 million of investment – great for local jobs, great for patients and great for staff as well. But it is not just in Ripon, as important as that community is.

I was very recently out with the member for Footscray at what is one of the biggest health infrastructure projects in the history of our state. It had more permanent cranes on that site than any other construction site in the Southern Hemisphere – absolutely outstanding in size and scale. The best for the west – that is what we are delivering. I spoke about Werribee Mercy just a little bit earlier. Not only is it about rapid access hubs and more surgery, there is a \$100 million upgrade of the Werribee Mercy emergency department as well to be able to provide care and treatment for another 25,000 patients per year.

John Pesutto: I'm over here. I'm waiting.

Daniel ANDREWS: This is about health infrastructure, so it has got nothing to do with you – nothing to do with you at all. This is about building hospitals. The only way that this one would be relevant is if I was talking –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on standing order 108, 'this one' is not a title, and I ask the Premier to refer to people by their titles.

The SPEAKER: I ask the Premier to come back to his statement.

Daniel ANDREWS: He is always worth the wait, the member for Brighton, isn't he? He is always worth the wait. As I was saying, the Leader of the Opposition wondered why I had not mentioned him. If I was talking about closing hospitals, he would get a mention. I am talking about building hospitals, and that is what we are doing – whether it is Wonthaggi –

John Pesutto: Like Melton. Like Warragul – how about Warragul? People can't get health care with a media release. They need a hospital.

Daniel ANDREWS: Leader of the Opposition, all the best for Monday. I expect you will need it.

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge in the gallery former member for Brunswick Carlo Carli.

Annabelle Cleeland: On a point of order, Speaker, I have several outstanding questions that are now overdue: questions 53, 54 and 55 to the Treasurer, which were due on 10 March, and constituency question 24 to the Minister for Education, which is due today, so I am just pre-empting it might not come. I would appreciate you following these up with the ministers.

The SPEAKER: Those matters will be followed up.

Constituency questions

Evelyn electorate

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:29): (100) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety: when will Maroondah Highway, Coldstream, be duplicated and the dangerous intersection at Killara Road and Station Street be fixed – or have the state and federal Labor governments cut the \$20 million in funding for Coldstream and stopped this vital road safety project? Twenty million dollars in Commonwealth funding was provided to the Andrews government's Department of Transport back in 2019 expressly to fix the Maroondah Highway at Killara Road and Station Street, Coldstream. Why has the government sat on this funding for four years, further putting the safety of pedestrians and motorists in my community at risk? Are Premier Andrews and his Labor government waiting for another tragic death to occur on this road? In March 2022 the project was at planning stage with scoping underway, but in August 2022 the Labor government suddenly flipped and put this status 'under review'. Why is this under review? Can you guarantee this project will proceed?

Bass electorate

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (14:30): (101) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety: what is the latest update on our \$15.4 million upgrade of the South Gippy highway–Clyde-Five Ways Road intersection, which has been so overwhelmingly positively received by our community in Clyde, Devon Meadows, Tooradin and Cranbourne, all the way through to Bass Coast? After it was announced in our May 2022 budget, my subsequent Facebook post received 122 comments and over 250 likes. It was described as:

... a Deadly Intersection ...

... most overdue ...

About time ...

And they said:

As a member of the local CFA, I cannot agree more, been to more accidents ... than I care to remember

... Thank you ... that intersection terrifies me ...

Fisheries, Manks and Clyde-Five Ways roads all meet at the South Gippy highway. It is awkward to navigate and dangerous, and I am so relieved we are going to fix it by creating one intersection, installing traffic lights and realigning Fisheries Road, all to reduce the risk of accidents, improve safety and cater for future growth. Thank you, Minister. I look forward to this update and then relaying it to my community.

Euroa electorate

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (14:31): (102) My question is for the Treasurer, and I ask: will the May budget include funding to build a new co-located CFA and SES site in Heathcote? The CFA and SES in Heathcote have a great relationship, but both of their stations have serious problems. For the CFA there are concerns around diesel particulates and incredibly outdated facilities that see female members changing down the road at the bowls club and hoses being cleaned on the main road. The SES shed sits within a flood zone, and they are often battling water at their door during storms when they are turning out and trying to support our community. This was evident when Heathcote was substantially impacted during the October floods.

Their local upper house MP the Minister for Emergency Services had official correspondence on her desk in March of last year outlining the CFA team's concerns, but it was never responded to. The Nationals made a commitment to fund a co-located site for the CFA and SES, which finally kicked the government into action, and the commitment was matched. Treasurer, their facilities are simply not up to scratch, and they need – *(Time expired)*

Ripon electorate

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (14:32): (103) My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport. Cheaper V/Line fares are due to come into effect from 31 March, eight days from now. This means V/Line fares will be on par with metro Melbourne, where fares are currently \$9.20 a day or \$4.60 for concession holders. It will drive up tourism to regional communities and make it even more attractive to visit towns in my electorate of Ripon like Beaufort, Ararat, Maryborough, Talbot, Creswick and Clunes. It will also mean rural and regional Victorians have better access to work and study opportunities. A day fare will now cost the same for families travelling by public transport on the Ararat and Maryborough line as it will for travellers in Melbourne, which is only fair. The information that I seek from the minister relates to the impact on concession card holders. Can the minister advise me how many concession card holders in my electorate will now only pay \$4.60 for each return trip from 31 March?

Brighton electorate

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:33): (104) My question is to the Minister for Education, and I ask: when will the government provide Berendale Specialist School in Hampton East the support they need? Berendale Specialist School in Hampton East is a wonderful school for my community, and it is getting bigger. Katandra in North Road, Bentleigh, is closing, and the kids at the school are moving across to Berendale. It is a wonderful opportunity to create a big school community in our Hampton East area. The government has committed some funding to the first part of the junior school upgrade so that 40 kids coming into the school will have a space, but the hundred kids that are already there have what would probably be most kindly described as quite outdated spaces, and throughout the enormous works process there will not be any space for those kids. For example, the basketball space and the oval will both be taken offline, and so kids have nowhere to go. *(Time expired)*

Ringwood electorate

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (14:34): (105) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Health: what is the status of the Maroondah Priority Primary Care Centre, and how will it benefit residents in my electorate of Ringwood? We know that almost a decade of a federal Liberal government has inflicted a world of damage on local GPs and it is becoming harder than ever for Victorians to find the free extended-hours care they need. Increasingly, Ringwood residents have had no choice but to present to an emergency department with non-life-threatening health issues, but we know that EDs should be reserved for genuinely life-threatening situations, and that is why the Andrews government is rolling out 25 priority primary care centres right across the state, providing free extended hours care for the urgent cases that do not need to go to an ED – cases like sprains, broken bones and minor burns. Importantly, this \$70 million investment by the Andrews Labor government will take pressure off our EDs, because we are doing what matters for the people of my electorate. I look forward to hearing from the minister about the status of the Maroondah Priority Primary Care Centre.

Mildura electorate

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (14:35): (106) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads. My question is: when will the government execute a plan to fix and adequately maintain the roads through the state's north-west that are carrying billions of dollars worth of product and tens of thousands of families? My region is responsible for around \$10 billion annually in economic output, according to REMPLAN. That is a lot of taxes to the state's coffers. So why has the Robinvale-Sea Lake Road, after being allocated \$10 million in the 2020 budget, still not been completed and, in places where work has occurred, melted in our Mallee summer – when it gets over 30 degrees – and washed away in spring rains? Why has there been no action on the Birchip-Rainbow Road, the Boort-Wycheproof Road, the Hattah-Robinvale Road, the Donald-Murtoa Road and the Donald-Stawell Road? These roads are classed as C-class roads, and that is clearly how the government views our citizens, those who are producing your food – as C-class citizens. If that is not the case, when can we see works to fix our regional roads?

Bayswater electorate

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (14:36): (107) It is fair to say that I love getting around the Boronia Hawks Football Netball Club and Boronia Cricket Club. They are a passionate bunch and a great group of people who run fantastic sporting clubs. But you need the best facilities to match. That is why I was over the moon, after much advocacy over the previous term, that I secured \$1.2 million as a commitment to help deliver the new pavilion they so desperately need. My constituency question is to the Minister for Community Sport: what are the next steps for the promise we made to help deliver a new pavilion at Tormore Reserve in Boronia? It is no secret that I spent a lot of time with these clubs trying to secure funding for their dream of having the facilities to match the amazing people. We tried for some planning funding, but we could not quite get there, and in short it was quite the journey. I am proud of the Andrews Labor government's record when it comes to backing grassroots sports across

the state and of course locally. The \$1.2 million commitment here is going to help get the job done, and I cannot wait to keep the community updated on its progress, with the council ultimately delivering this project.

Nepean electorate

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (14:37): (108) Residents in Nepean already face enormous public transport challenges due to the issue of insufficient services, unreliable schedules and now totally inaccurate timetables. I have received reports from several residents who have been seriously inconvenienced by timetables at bus stops in my electorate. The issue has been caused by the bus stops displaying only the nine-month timetable and not the summer timetable, which is often the one used when my electorate is at its busiest. Indeed one elderly resident raised the issue with Public Transport Victoria and was told she needed to use the app, which is not a practical solution for everyone, especially those who are elderly. My question is for the Minister for Public Transport: will the bus stops across my electorate be updated to include accurate timetables for the whole year?

Laverton electorate

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (14:38): (109) My question is for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Late last year the Premier announced that \$3 million would be spent over the next few years to create and run an awareness campaign against Islamophobia in Victoria. This news was greatly welcomed by my local community in the Laverton electorate, where among many other communities we have a strong and very vibrant Muslim community, with schools like Al-Taqwa and Sirius colleges as well as centres like the Sunshine Mosque and the Australian Light Foundation in the Sunshine area.

The commitment to this campaign resulted from the Legislative Assembly's Legal and Social Issues Committee and its inquiry into anti-vilification protections, which looked at how we could better protect Victorians from discrimination – because despite what some people in this place would like to think and say here, the greatest issue facing religious minorities in Australia is not the equal opportunity act or bans on conversion therapy, it is real discrimination and vilification on the streets and out in the local community. That is why I ask the minister this: how will this \$3 million campaign help Muslim communities like mine?

Bills

Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (14:39): I am pleased to be able to rise today to speak on the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I must say I have been looking forward to this bill coming on for debate this week, because whenever we debate bills on planning or building policy we always get a really unique insight into the diverse suburbs and the regions and the communities that make up our glorious state. So I look forward to hearing the contributions from all sides of the chamber on this as we detail the particulars of the bill and link them to the characteristics and circumstances of our districts.

In the inner north we are facing some significant growth challenges that necessitate a robust building and planning system. With the population of Melbourne expected to overtake Sydney by 2030 and be over 6 million people, there is a very pressing imperative to carefully balance the need for more homes with the impact on our environment, on open space, on heritage features and on local amenities. It also means carefully planning for more services like health and education, more infrastructure like roads and cycling connections, and more opportunities to create local jobs and unique local economies. All of this growth and planning must be buttressed by a building system that has quality, safety and equity at its core. That is the intent of this bill as we incrementally work to update and reform Victoria's building system.

As you will know, the building regulatory system has not been really comprehensively examined since the early 1990s. In this time there have been significant changes not only to design and construction practices but in the very way we live and interact. Right now two out of five people living in the Northcote electorate are renting and a quarter of people are living in a flat or apartment. While we still maintain many beautiful low-rise streetscapes, which we cherish greatly, there is no denying that densification has changed the face of the north as we have absorbed and welcomed new families. Three decades ago suburbs like Northcote, Thornbury and Preston were heavy with factories and warehouses, and while some of that still remains, nowadays many of these have been transformed into medium- and high-density residential and mixed-use developments. Some of this has been quite confronting to my community. It has been confronting to me, having grown up in leafy Alphington, which is now seeing some pretty dramatic infill development, especially along Heidelberg Road. Thankfully, as we grow, there has also been a concerted effort to revitalise our suburbs with things like new parks and better schools, stronger public transport links and more community facilities. At the same time that all this has gone on there have also been significant leaps forward in terms of disability accessibility standards, energy efficiency and our understanding of urban design.

All this has meant a growing disconnect between the regulatory framework, the way the industry operates and the expectations of consumers. On the ground it means that major defects in residential buildings cost Victoria \$675 million each year, with residential apartments making up two-thirds of this cost. For renters, who often have little control over the buildings they live in, these defects can mean homes that are uncomfortable, unworkable and sometimes unsafe. I have been really pleased to see the good work going on to update the National Construction Code and the advocacy from our government to ensure there are significant improvements to building standards that will come online later this year. They include things like mandatory accessibility standards and enhancements to energy efficiency requirements, something my community is extremely keen to see.

To augment this broader work we have also brought forward this bill, and our government is working to reform the building system into one that has safe, compliant and durable housing and buildings at its core. We want to strengthen consumer protections, give builders and industry more confidence and reduce the need for costly rectification works. To that end the bill will formalise and strengthen the role of Victoria's first state building surveyor. The state building surveyor will have a statutory role as the primary source of expertise and technical guidance for the building and plumbing industries, but beyond advice the surveyor will have the power to issue building determinations relating to standards and requirements in these industries, translating to greater certainty within the industry and better building outcomes.

I cannot count the number of conversations that I have had with residents in my community about issues ranging from housing affordability to rental standards to building disputes and, distressingly, combustible cladding. At present there is no overarching peak body which gives voice to these people, which translates their frustrations and experiences into tangible and coordinated reform. So I am very happy to see this role created through the bill in the form of a dedicated building monitor. It is really important. The building monitor will represent Victorian domestic building consumers, advocating for them on systemic issues in the building industry. It will advise the Minister for Planning, giving that direct line into government, and will publish an annual building monitor issues report with its key findings and recommendations to government. This is a critical avenue for the needs, experiences and voices of residents to be heard and form part of the decision-making of government.

Now, the bill also brings into effect several other reforms, which I will not go into much detail on because I want to specifically address the challenges of combustible cladding and I am mindful of the time. But just very, very briefly, the bill expands the categories of building practitioners that will be required to be registered, giving consumers more confidence that practitioners have the appropriate experience, skills and qualifications to perform their roles. There will be a building manual which will be a single repository of all the relevant information relating to the design, construction and ongoing maintenance of a building, and that will address a significant hurdle for owners and owners

corporations in accessing information about their building. They will be able to readily access information about the design, construction and maintenance of a building, which as we know can be really vital, especially if something goes wrong and needs to be fixed. There are also improvements around information sharing and improvements to the Architects Registration Board of Victoria.

I want to turn now to the parts of the bill which relate to combustible cladding, because this is an issue which unfortunately has deep impact for the lives of many residents in the inner north. Across my community there are still home owners and renters living in buildings constructed with flammable, combustible cladding. Not only does this cladding pose a significant health risk, but the cost of remediation can be overwhelming, with some home owners facing bills of tens of thousands of dollars to remove and replace the cladding from these buildings. For renters this can also mean that they are forced to vacate their homes while remediation works takes place, causing significant disruption and anxiety. The Andrews Labor government has of course established the world-first program to tackle high-risk cladding, with a \$600 million package to fix buildings with combustible cladding and establish Cladding Safety Victoria. So far CSV has removed enough dangerous cladding to cover almost nine MCGs. Over 12,000 homes have been made safer from fire risk, protecting more than 22,000 Victorians, but the work is not done.

Just this month I received an email from a resident grappling with a notice that their building in Northcote has been identified as having combustible cladding. The resident detailed the financial and mental distress of these circumstances, explaining how difficult this unforeseen financial burden has been and the sense of injustice that the cost is incurred through no fault of their own. In this case the cladding has not been considered a high enough risk to qualify for our scheme, but this bill amends the Building Act 1993 to allow the government greater flexibility to determine how the cladding levy should be directed to support rectification of buildings found to have non-compliant combustible cladding. It will enable buildings that fall outside of the funded cladding rectification activity to be supported with funding. The process of remediation is ongoing, and many home owners and renters are still facing uncertainty, but these amendments will make it easier to get support to where it is needed.

As we look to reform our building systems, we need to ensure that our regulations are fit for purpose, that they strike the right balance and that they actively work to build equity into our suburbs. And not just that, they need to encourage innovation and excellence so that our buildings are not just safe and compliant but also beautiful and sustainable. In Northcote we really care about that. We want to create livable, sustainable and prosperous communities, and this bill goes towards doing that. I particularly commend the combustible cladding aspects of this bill, and I commend the whole bill to the house.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (14:49): I am delighted to rise and speak on the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, because the Ovens Valley up in my patch is a place of booming growth from private investment in housing, and Yarrawonga is one of those towns that is absolutely going ahead in leaps and bounds with the building industry. In fact Yarrawonga is the fastest growing town in regional Victoria, and for good reason too. It is a lovely town, great people, but the private investment that is coming to Yarrawonga is outstanding.

On the bill, we have heard from the member for Croydon, who put forward a reasoned amendment, and I do hope that the government considers those thoughts as we move closer to the guillotine. These legislative amendments will create various reforms. Firstly, it will formalise and strengthen the role of the state building surveyor, which is important as Victorians continue to want to secure the great Australian dream – to own your own home. It is critically important, particularly in this day and age when the cost of land and the build costs are through the roof, and we need to be sure that consumers get what they have paid for and that both the builder and the purchaser are satisfied with the final product and the final payment as well. Too often we see on shows like *A Current Affair* or other types of programs where the end result does not match the agreed outcomes, and that gets very messy. So further regulation of the building industry – an industry that is absolutely booming – is certainly called for.

It will also establish a building monitor, which again will give great assurance to the industry. It will expand the categories of building practitioner that will be required to be registered, enhance the building approvals process by introducing further safeguards to better inform consumers and strengthen information sharing between the statutory entities with a role in the building regulatory framework.

While I am on this building aspect, in the Ovens Valley there is the town of Bright, the beautiful town of Bright, which many people in this house would know. In fact nearly everybody in the other place does, because we held a regional sitting there in the 59th Parliament. It was a great success up in Bright. Everybody loves Bright. Bright is in the early stages of a 350-home subdivision in the building sector. Now, 350 homes is not big when you look at somewhere like Melbourne or a suburb of Melbourne, but it is quite significant for a town the size of Bright, which has a population of only 2600, so 350 extra homes, extra families, is a significant increase. You can imagine the details that need to be considered: the entries to and the exits from the subdivision, the extra schools, the drain on resources and the extra infrastructure that is needed in these towns as a result of this booming building industry.

The first obstacle that has been encountered is the turn off the Great Alpine Road. Some may have already heard about this building dilemma that we have in Bright. Everybody, as I say, who has been to Bright sees that vista when they drive into Bright, the beautiful elm trees that welcome them. I mean, there is a sign that says 'Welcome to Bright', but really –

Richard Riordan: Is it a bright sign?

Tim McCURDY: It is a bright sign, member for Polwarth. But you do not need to see the sign, because when you enter those trees, whether it is in the autumn and they are changing colour or whether it is at this time of the year and they are just beautifully green, as some of them are evergreens, it is sight to behold. Obviously, with this new development there are concerns that some of those trees will be going, and this has been a major issue in Bright. I spoke with many in the community last week and even with the developer this week, and I was very pleased to see that it has gone from what was going to be the removal of eight, seven, five, four trees to one tree being removed, two others being relocated and the developer making some changes and filling some gaps, because as we know with this gateway to Bright, it is not an avenue of honour per se but it is just like an avenue of honour, and there are gaps –

Richard Riordan: It's iconic.

Tim McCURDY: It is iconic, and it is known Victoria-wide, Australia-wide. When trees are 70 years old some of them die from time to time and there are gaps, and the developer is going to fill those gaps, which are substantial. I would like to see no trees removed, but coming back to only one being removed and the relocation of a couple more and filling in those gaps, I think there is a real opportunity for the developer and the residents of Bright, the community, to come to an agreement. We might get there after what I have seen this week and having spoken to the community. I mean, it is not my decision at the end of the day – it is a council decision and a community decision whether they want to go further into that – but certainly from what I have seen, it is a satisfactory outcome. Hopefully that is a win-win, and hopefully the mock-up that I saw will really encourage people to think a little bit laterally, because Bright really needs this development.

Our smaller community towns and towns like Bright are so full of tourists and Airbnbs; we have lost so many houses to Airbnb. There are no houses for staff. I talked to the manager of the Bright Brewery, who has got many, many staff. It is a very successful brewery and it is the number one employer in Bright, and they need this development to go ahead. So these changes that are coming in are important changes to make sure that we continue to keep a good, solid building program in front of us, because the Bright Brewery have to get people out of Yackandandah, from Wodonga and from further beyond, and they just cannot keep staff in many instances because they are travelling from so far. On the one hand, the Airbnbs are terrific for tourism, but at the end of the day it certainly reduces our stock when

it comes to staff. When you look at the big picture in this building sector, it really is important that we get this building sector right, and that is what this bill tries to do, I believe.

Now, the bill also replaces a previous bill that expired in the Legislative Council in the last Parliament, I believe. In this previous bill the government was proposing changes to the architects accreditation board, removing accredited architects from the board. Part 5 of the bill outlines the amendments to the Architects Act 1991 to do with the membership of the board. The Australian Institute of Architects has informed me that it is okay with the latest changes and comfortable to support these amendments, so it is always good when industry is on side or partly on side. The 2022 bill also included provisions for local councils to undertake pre-occupation inspections for high-risk buildings, and this has not made it into the 2023 bill. That suggests that maybe the government has had second thoughts about changes to the building approvals process. I am not sure, but it does not appear to be in the latest version, the 2023 bill.

One criticism I do have is that the government still appears to be running an old agenda. Even after an election there do not appear to be a heap of new ideas. Despite us being four months into this new Parliament, we are still running a bit of an old agenda, but I suppose we have got to make these changes and get through them quickly. I have noticed there have not been a lot of new bills introduced, but no doubt the government will get more bills introduced so that when we return to this place there will be plenty more things to debate and legislation to get through.

They have also made some changes, as I said, from the 2022 bill, suggesting they have had that change of heart. While the building boom goes on, in a couple of my regional towns councils are still struggling to get properly trained surveyors, and they are neglecting the building controls and core building functions of local governments. Again hopefully this bill will improve some of those things, because it is a battle when people wait for not just weeks, not just months but years to get permits approved so that we can keep progress going.

Industry stakeholders have encouraged us to support the legislation; however, they have also suggested that it be strengthened by requiring the inclusion of a requirement that building surveyors practising in Victoria be members of a professional standards scheme. That would then allow the industry to assist with the regulation of practitioners. They have also stated that changes in the bill are long overdue and absolutely necessary, so we are all singing from a similar hymn sheet, I am sure.

Builder shortages are also impacting our industry, leading to delays in new houses being built. As I said, local government planning departments are slowing things up – not by choice, it is just they do not have the staff as well, and certainly that would help to alleviate the housing crisis that we have.

House prices in the Ovens Valley are booming, with some towns seeing the median house price double in the past three years, not dissimilar to what we are seeing here in metropolitan Melbourne and other places, but as I said earlier, there is a building boom going on in Yarrowonga, Cobram, Bright and Wangaratta. This is designed to help combat the increase in prices and get more local residents into homes. Proper regulation and standards are important to ensure that new houses being built are of good quality and will not come back and cause issues for owners later on. We do see that down the track: sometimes the bigger the boom, the quicker the job gets done and the more shortcuts get taken. I am not saying that happens in every case, but we need to regulate to ensure that this does not happen.

As I mentioned, the member for Croydon has submitted a reasoned amendment that I do hope the government takes into consideration as we go towards the guillotine later today. With those comments I will commend the bill to the house.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (14:59): I am pleased to rise to speak in support of the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The Andrews Labor government is committed to delivering a building industry that provides safe, compliant and durable buildings and houses. Strengthening our building system will benefit consumers, give builders and industry more confidence and certainty, and reduce the need for costly rectification work. This bill will provide greater certainty

for industry and help to put consumers – the people who live, work and use these buildings – at the very heart of the building system, where they belong.

The bill's legislative amendments have a key focus on consumer protection and will implement reforms that will reshape and strengthen the system of regulations that enforce compliance in Victoria. The Victorian building sector is made up of a number of agencies, each with an important role to play in maintaining a safe and well-regulated industry. A number of reviews, including the building system review stage 1, have highlighted that a lack of coordination, information sharing and data collection is a central issue for regulating the building industry. Consumers are often frustrated at the duplication of processes or requirements to provide information to different entities within the building system. There is an expectation that building system entities should work together to support how consumers interact with the system.

The building regulatory system in Victoria has not been comprehensively examined since the early 1990s. This bill will begin that very important work. It will implement key improvements identified by the building system review expert panel, with further reform to follow as this panel continues its work. The legislation will formalise and strengthen the role of the state building surveyor within the Victorian Building Authority. This is a role which is already established, but the legislation will give it a statutory role as the primary source of expertise and technical guidance for the building and plumbing industries. This includes the power to issue binding determinations relating to the technical interpretation of building and plumbing regulations, codes and standards.

This bill will further establish the role of a building monitor to represent domestic building consumer interests in the building system, with a key focus on systemic issues. At present there is no overarching peak body or dedicated organisation representing Victorian domestic building consumers. The building system is designed in a way that does not sufficiently consider the needs, abilities or experiences of domestic building consumers, and their voices are absent from the key decision-making bodies. The building monitor aims to address this gap, with the responsibility of representing and advocating for consumers on systemic issues within the building industry. The monitor will advise the Minister for Planning on systemic issues and risks facing domestic building consumers, and they will publish an annual building monitor issues report with key findings and recommendations to the government.

The bill expands the categories of building practitioners required to be registered to enable the regulation of building designers, project managers, site supervisors and of course building consultants. Fundamentally this is about ensuring that practitioners have the necessary skills or qualifications to carry out complex and high-risk work. The regulation of these categories of practitioner will depend on the types of work that they carry out, first being prescribed in regulations, and the public will be consulted on the regulations before they are made.

The legislation takes further steps to ensure that consumers in the building industry are protected, with the best possible access to all information. It introduces a requirement that a draft building manual be prepared by the applicant for an occupancy permit and provided to the relevant building surveyor for approval. Building manuals are intended to be a single source of all relevant information relating to the design, construction and ongoing maintenance of a building. The building manual will address a significant hurdle for owners and owners corporations in accessing information about their building. By making information about the design, the construction and the maintenance of the building more readily accessible, the building manual will assist not only owners and owners corporations but also other parties such as building practitioners and regulators in the future. Once the draft building manual has been approved by the relevant building surveyor, the manual will be provided to the owners and the owners corporation, who will be responsible for maintaining and keeping the documentation current and up to date. This bill will also require the relevant building surveyor to provide at the time of issuing a building permit a document that clearly details their roles and their responsibilities. This will improve consumer understanding about the role and functions of building surveyors in the building permit process. All of this will enable better transparency and reporting on the health of the building system.

Equally important is that the legislation amends the distribution of the cladding rectification levy. This will allow government greater flexibility to determine how the levy should be directed to support rectification of buildings found to have non-compliant combustible cladding. Several high-profile building failures in Australia and also around the world have rightly shaken the public's confidence in the building regulatory system. This especially includes the use of combustible cladding, which led to the tragic Grenfell Tower fire in London in 2017 – this claimed 72 lives, tragically – as well as fires here in Melbourne at the Lacrosse apartment building in Docklands in 2014 and the Neo200 building in the CBD in 2019. I can remember in 2019 around the time of that fire at the Neo200 there was fear in the community, especially for those who lived in apartment buildings. We had a residents meeting at the apartment block which I lived in at the time and absolutely everyone wanted to know about cladding and the issues that could potentially arise. The concern and anxiety of tenants was understandably palpable. The financial cost alone of the combustible cladding crisis has been substantial, with many owners facing significant rectification costs to ensure that their homes are safe to live in, to say nothing of the stress on home owners and risks to health and safety.

This is why the Andrews Labor government launched a \$600 million package in 2019 to fix buildings with high-risk combustible cladding. The bill will now enable buildings that fall outside of the funded cladding rectification activity to be supported with funding made available to deliver relevant programs to facilitate cladding rectification. A strong and viable system of regulation to enforce compliance is vital in the building industry, and an experienced and skilled workforce is absolutely indispensable to enforce that this compliance is upheld.

It goes without saying that safety is and always should be a main priority in the building industry. That is why unions which represent workers in the building industry and associated industries, including the mighty CFMEU, the plumbers union, the Electrical Trades Union and of course the manufacturing workers union, and their armies of organisers, shop stewards, OH&S delegates and the thousands of members that they represent, deserve a special mention and to be commended for upholding the health and safety of workers and consumers alike in this very hazardous industry. Safety is paramount, and no-one goes to work wanting to be in harm's way. I know that these unions and their members will continue to contribute to a best practice building regulatory framework and uphold the health and safety of their workforce, consumers and residents alike in and around the building industry.

I am pleased that the Labor Andrews government is establishing a parliamentary inquiry into bosses who refuse to pay their subcontractors in the building and plumbing industries, as well as preparing a new registration and licensing scheme for building trade subcontractors and of course workers. The state government is also preparing for the commencement of the new edition of the National Construction Code this year, delivering significant improvements to building standards that improve occupant access, health, safety and amenity outcomes, and will apply to most new Australian residential and commercial buildings. This bill delivers much-needed reform to Victoria's building system, placing consumer protection as central to these changes, and that is why I am very pleased to support this bill.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (15:08): Today I rise to speak on the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. As many in this chamber know, up until a few months ago I was a self-employed builder. I worked in the industry for about 30 years, so I am glad to speak on this bill because it is actually my wheelhouse. It is something I am passionate about. I will congratulate the government. Most of the bill I accept – I will not congratulate you too much; you are already up and about, so just calm down, but most of the bill is in pretty good nick. But I do have concerns, and I will just go through a few things. The things that will have a positive impact on the construction industry are things like formalising and strengthening the role of the state building surveyor. That is a good idea. Establishing a state building monitor is very good for consumers. Enhancing a range of building approvals and processes, strengthening information sharing between different bodies and strengthening the governance arrangements of the Architects Registration Board of Victoria – all those are very positive aspects of the bill, but I do have some concerns.

The minister has said that the intent of the bill is to protect consumers, but in doing that there is a lot of new red tape here, and that might create new costs when building a new home. I think as a Parliament, when we talk about consumer protection, we need to be careful about creating new red tape that in the end hikes up the price for consumers looking to build their family home.

In the bill briefing we were told that the intent of the bill is for high-risk construction only. In the bill there is no mention of 'high risk' or a description of what 'high-risk construction' is. On that point I would ask the minister or the government to narrow the definition of 'high risk' or actually define what 'high risk' is. My fear is if we do not narrow that description, the unintended consequence of this bill will be that that will filter down into the domestic industry. If that happens, that will make housing less affordable than it already is. So I would call on the government to put that definition in the bill, so we all understand what 'high risk' is.

The other thing I have concerns about in the bill is the new categories for registration. Some of these new categories set out in the bill are 'building designer', 'project manager', 'building consultant' and 'site supervisor'. The two categories I am most concerned about are building consultant and site supervisor. I will start with the consultant category. The category creates registration requirements for building consultants to be able to undertake activities like prepurchase due diligence inspection work, monitoring essential safety measures and maintenance work, disability access work and energy efficiency work. I will just touch on this for a minute. The problem I have with the description of 'building consultant' is that part of that description overlaps with a building surveyor. What the government has not given me here is what the qualifications are for a consultant. There are no qualifications; it just says 'building consultant'. Where we get the overlap is where we talk about things like disability access and energy efficiency. When you get an occupancy permit on a building, it is only a building surveyor that can sign off on those two particular issues. Where I see the overlap in here I think there is going to be a conflict, and the government needs to think about that and sharpen that up a little bit.

When we talk about energy efficiency – and I will touch on this because nowadays it is very important for cost of living, and we all know the cost of living is going up – we have a problem, because at no point in the process of building is wall insulation inspected. What happens is your building surveyor comes in and looks at the frame. The installation cannot be in the frame at that point in time, because the building surveyor cannot see the connections and the hold-down points that are required for the inspection. He does not see the insulation go in the walls. Maybe if we are going to talk about energy efficiency and improving that and having a stock check for that, that is at frame stage. A building surveyor can come in and actually inspect that the right insulation is in the walls, because essentially once the plasterwork is on the walls it is too late. No-one can see it. You cannot see through plaster – you are not Superman. It is as simple as that. So I would like the government to work on that aspect of the bill.

When we go to the site supervisor category, I have concerns here as well because of the lack of a description of a qualification for a site supervisor. This comes back to my point previously about being very accurate in the determination of 'high risk'. The unintended consequence of this is if you do not define 'high risk' and this does filter down into the domestic construction industry, you could possibly lose, by their qualifications, a lot of site supervisors. A lot of site supervisors in the domestic construction industry, it may shock you to know, are not carpenters. You can have ex-bricklayers, plasterers, pavers and electricians. Metricon Homes, for example, Australia's biggest home builder, train their site supervisors, but they are not necessarily carpenters. So I can see an unintended consequence if we do not define exactly what 'high risk' is. This will filter down into the domestic construction market, and then we could have probably up to 60 per cent of domestic site supervisors not being able to work because they do not have adequate qualifications. A site supervisor on a 30-storey building in Melbourne has completely different qualifications to a site supervisor building a slab-on-ground construction in metro Melbourne somewhere.

So the government really needs to tighten up on those two aspects of the bill. As I said previously, most of the bill I do not have a problem with. I am more than happy to sit down with the minister and

their team and point them in the right direction in these categories, where we can get to an agreement on the bill and the bill can get passed through. Essentially I like the bill, but there is this unintended consequence, and I am very, very concerned that it will filter down into the domestic construction industry. You need to take into account that in Victoria you have about 310,000 to 330,000 construction workers, and over two-thirds of those work in the domestic construction industry. The other third is either in commercial or in civil construction, so there is a very big portion of this where we have got to be very careful when we are putting this bill through.

In closing on this, I am not going to repeat everything my colleagues have said through the day, but I would like the government to take on board my comments. I do not know how many builders there are in this chamber – I might be the only one – but I do have a fair bit of experience in this section and, as I said previously, I am more than happy to help the government to redefine this and get it to a place where it will pass through both houses. I am giving the government too many compliments here, but I actually think it was well thought out –

Members interjecting.

Wayne FARNHAM: You see, this is what we can do with bipartisan work; okay. We can create good bills and they can move forward. It is a beautiful thing. That is how this chamber should work. It is not always that bloke up the back yelling at me, which he does all the time. I do congratulate the government because most of the bodies that have seen this bill like this bill and think it is a step in the right direction. I believe it is a step in the right direction except for those points I have brought up, and that is what I want the government to focus on. Adjust that and bring it back to the house so we can get it through the house.

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (15:17): I rise today to express my support for the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. It delivers on a number of recommendations of the building system review expert panel stage 1 report. These recommendations have been informed through extensive consultation, as mentioned, with stakeholders, including consumers, industry, unions and professional associations. We have a broader program of reform in the building industry. In the last budget we invested almost \$28 million to provide greater protections for consumers, strengthen building standards, cut red tape and address building workforce shortages. We are bolstering the construction workforce of the future through significant investment in training people with the skills required. In 2023 in construction courses alone there are 6300 fee-free TAFE places available. This is a significant figure indeed.

Importantly, for so many people who are aspiring to build their own home but are struggling with the rising costs of construction, we are working closely with industry and unions to identify measures to mitigate this impact, and well we should, especially given Victoria leads the nation in the supply of new homes. In the 12 months to January 2023 nearly 62,000 new homes were approved for construction in Victoria. Contrast that to New South Wales, which during the same period saw only about 52,000 approvals and Queensland about 37,000.

In regard to my district of Monbulk I make note of some important data gathered at the 2021 census. Close to 20,000 dwellings were recorded across Monbulk as owner occupied, either owned outright or mortgaged. This bill will give these domestic building owners greater protections for future works they may undertake on their dwellings. Those protections will provide for people who will build their home in the future too. 1619 people across Monbulk listed themselves as working within the construction trades. This bill will provide greater systemic support for those working within the industry. This much-needed reform to our state's building system, which this bill will deliver, will have a direct impact on these people across my district and Victoria as a whole by placing consumer protection as central to these changes. The government is well aware that major defects in residential buildings cost Victoria a whopping \$675 million a year, with residential apartments making up two-thirds of this cost. One of the key effects of these changes proposed throughout the bill will be the

enhancement of consumer protection, which I am sure each and every one of us in this place can agree is an important measure indeed.

Key improvements identified by the building system review expert panel will be implemented via this bill, and as the panel continues its work further reform will follow, because this government knows that learning is perpetual and seeking improvements must always be an ongoing pursuit. This bill is a very substantial document which will address a range of matters that require improvement.

Firstly, it will formalise and strengthen the role of the state building surveyor. This role already exists within the Victorian Building Authority, but the effect of this legislation will give it a statutory role as a primary source of expertise and technical guidance for the building and plumbing industries. The power to issue binding determinations relating to technical interpretations of building and plumbing regulations, codes and standards will be endowed upon the state building surveyor through this bill.

Secondly, this bill will establish a building monitor to represent domestic building consumer interests in the building system with a focus on systemic issues. We do not have an overarching peak body or dedicated organisation representing Victorian domestic building consumers. Thankfully, this bill will remedy the gap. In the previous budget the government provided \$2 million to establish the role. We are serious about getting this done. Until now the building system has been designed in a way that does not sufficiently consider the needs, abilities or experiences of domestic building consumers. Key decisions made about the building industry simply do not include them. The building monitor aims to address this gap with the responsibility of representing and advocating for consumers on systemic issues within the building industry.

The monitor will advise the Minister for Planning on systemic issues and risks which domestic building consumers may face. This will include engaging with domestic building consumers to understand their experience in the industry better. They will be required to publish an annual building monitor issues report with key findings and recommendations to government. The establishment of the building monitor is a great step forward for our state and for all those within the domestic building industry.

One of the functions of the new role that I would like to highlight will be the development and promotion of education materials and strategies in order to reduce consequences for domestic building affected parties. I think this is an incredibly important inclusion. The better educated all parties are in terms of their rights and responsibilities, the better compliance is certain to be. I am sure it is no surprise to anyone in this place that I am a strong advocate for education at all ages and stages of life. We simply do not know what we do not know. Sometimes, poor decisions are made because parties to an agreement do not understand their rights and responsibilities. In the case of consumers this is very much the case.

A close friend of mine went through the process of extending her house as her family expanded. What should have been a four- to six-month job turned into a three-year drama. It caused high levels of stress and anxiety for my friend, for her husband and for their children. Dodgy works were undertaken by subcontractors, plans had not been accurately drafted, walls were placed in the wrong spot, windows were wonky and the registered builder decided not to return calls and emails for weeks at length or to even attend the worksite when promised. Every few weeks a new contractor would show up and do maybe a day or two of work, never to be seen again. Unfortunately, examples like this are not as rare as they should be. Part of the issue for my friend was not knowing from the start where she and her husband stood as consumers. I suspect this may have even been part of the issue for the builder as well, so I welcome this focus on education as a function of the building monitor. This will assist consumers with knowing where they stand, but it will also make it abundantly clear to practitioners within the building industry their obligations and rights.

A third aspect of this bill will be the enhancement of the building approvals process, including by requiring relevant building surveyors to provide their clients with an information statement and requiring building manuals to be prepared for certain classes of building. Building manuals are

intended to be a one-stop shop of all relevant information relating to the design, construction and ongoing maintenance of a building. This is an absolute win for owners and owners corporations. It will facilitate their access to information about their building, and other parties such as building practitioners and regulators will benefit from these manuals in the future. Once a draft building manual has been approved by the relevant building surveyor, the manual will be provided to the owner or the owners corporation. It will then be their responsibility for maintaining and keeping the documentation within the manual current.

A fourth aspect of this bill is the expansion of the categories of building practitioners required to be registered to enable the regulation of building designers, project managers, site supervisors and building consultants. This is about ensuring that practitioners within the building industry have the necessary skills and qualifications to carry out complex or high-risk work. Of course the regulation of these different categories of practitioner will depend on the types of work they do, and the public will be consulted on the regulations before they are made.

This bill will create several other reforms, which include strengthening information sharing arrangements between the Victorian Building Authority and other building system entities, strengthening and improving governance arrangements for the Architects Registration Board of Victoria to reflect best practice governance standards and amending the distribution of the cladding rectification levy to allow the government greater flexibility to determine how the cladding levy should be directed to support rectification of buildings found to have non-compliant combustible cladding. Provisions relating to the composition of the Architects Registration Board of Victoria require a minimum of three members to be registered architects while appointed to the board and also to have leadership experience in the building industry. This means the board will continue to benefit from the professional expertise of registered architects.

Strengthening our building system will benefit consumers. It will give builders and industry more broadly confidence and certainty and reduce the need for costly rectification work. This is part of the Andrews Labor government's commitment to delivering a building system that provides safe, compliant and durable housing and buildings. Wherever we can avoid situations where consumers expect an extension to be completed in four months but three years later they are still waiting for their certificate of completion and compliance, that is a fine thing. This piece of legislation is incredibly important to protecting consumers in all ways. It is not just about a stick, it is also about carrots, it is about education. I commend it the house.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (15:27): I am pleased to stand here today and talk on the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I would like to congratulate the member for Croydon, who led us off today. He articulated everything well. I do notice that he has put in a Building Legislation Amendment Bill reasoned amendment. I think there are a few little bits and pieces through here where we can actually make the bill, which is a very good bill, an even better bill. The crux of it is that the government has committed to delivering a building system that provides safe, compliant and durable housing and buildings. This requires a workforce of skilled and experienced practitioners and a strong and viable system of regulation to enforce compliance. The bill makes a series of legislative amendments that will implement reforms and reshape the regulatory landscape in Victoria with a key focus on consumer protection, and we all know we need that consumer protection.

So with the legislative changes – and I will just actually list them while I am standing here – the bill will primarily amend the Building Act 1993 and the Architects Act 1991 and make minor or consequential amendments to the Cladding Safety Victoria Act 2020, the Owners Corporations Act 2006, the Sale of Land Act 1962, the Domestic Building Contracts Act 1995, the Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Act 2002 and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998. These amendments will create the following reforms, as other members have spoken about: formalise and strengthen the role of the state building surveyor, which is important; establish a building monitor; expand the categories of building practitioner that will be required to be registered; enhance the building approvals process by introducing further safeguards to better inform

consumers; strengthen information sharing between statutory entities with a role in the building regulatory framework; amend the distribution of the cladding rectification levy; and finally, strengthen and improve the governance arrangements for the Architects Registration Board of Victoria under the Architects Act.

In establishing a statutory role for the state building surveyor, when it did happen, it was established by the government as an executive staff member of the Victorian Building Authority. That was to provide compliance advice, technical guidance and interpretation of relevant building standards. The government now seeks to strengthen the role through recognising it in legislation. Under this bill the SBS will be positioned as the primary source of technical expertise and guidance for the building and plumbing industries, which I think is fantastic, being a former plumber; it is great.

Just touching on that, when I was plumbing, if I was doing domestic plumbing, the way it would work was – I was a licensed and registered plumber – we would come onsite if we were building a domestic house, and the only requirement of us was when we were laying a sewer, and we would put in our forms and book in for a sewer inspection. That sewer inspection might be booked in for a Wednesday or Thursday, so we would get there early and we would put the drains in and make sure they complied, and then we would all wait for the inspector to show up and check our drains and that the work was okay. A lot of the time, probably 95 per cent of the time as the years rolled on, we would not get an inspection, so it was virtually up to self-certification by the plumber. As soon as the time ran out and the inspector was not there – and sometimes it was a Friday – we would start backfilling the drain a little bit early. We would actually have it all done, so the underground works which then went under a slab would not have been checked; they were just relying on the plumber to self-certify the actual drainage works.

Then it continued with the building of the house. We had the hot- and cold-water supply, the roof, the gutters and the downpipes, and we self-certified them too. Then at the end of the work on the house we put in our compliance. If we were lucky enough, or unlucky enough, whichever way you want to look at it, the inspector would then come out and assess the whole job. So there is that connection with a plumber, and it is all right if they are reputable – there are a few cowboys out there – but if it did not get inspected, that is when things could go wrong. That is just a little bit on how we self-certified.

On the changes which the member for Narracan spoke about, we need to know that ‘high-risk’ area, because I also have concerns with high-risk building and plumbing practitioners: does it filter down to domestic plumbers? We need to get clarification on what some of these amendments are actually going to cover. We do not want to make more work for the people that are building domestic houses, because all that does is get put onto the new home owners, who are struggling now to be able to afford housing. There are roughly 300,000-plus registered workers in Victoria, but up to 200,000 of those work in the domestic area. These are the people that we want to get that clarification on to make sure that something that is going to be used on high-rise buildings in Melbourne does not necessarily affect people that are building houses out in the suburbs and out in country Victoria.

One of the biggest issues – and it got mentioned by the member for Croydon, who briefly touched on it – we have is the rectification of bathrooms and ensuites in new houses, and that comes back to them not being waterproofed properly. We used to get phone calls from owners of houses, and they would say they had a bad wet patch which they needed us to come and check. Luckily the wet patch was only in the ceilings of double-storey houses. We would go out there, and it was that the actual waterproofing of these particular bathrooms was faulty. I am not sure whether people had been watching *The Block* and thought we can waterproof our house very, very quickly or if it was other people that were actually meant to be doing the job of waterproofing not doing it properly. They do not get inspected – no-one comes out and inspects the waterproofing in properties. That might be one part that this legislation can actually regulate a little bit better, because if you talk to insurance companies and also home owners, they move into their new house and within a month they are ripping plaster down to perform these rectifications. That is just one thing that I think may be able to be done there.

The local builds around my part of the state down in the seat of Morwell out around towns like Churchill – they are absolutely booming with the amount of houses that are being built out there. In Glengarry there are brand new subdivisions out there, with a lot of houses being built. Tyers is the same, and Yallourn North. In Moe, which is one of our major towns, there are a lot of houses under construction. But with surveyors, the councils have not got the quality of surveyors. They are very, very hard to get at the moment because with the industry booming they are one of these commodities that other regions try to poach, and it makes the process of getting planning done and also getting your permits and everything through council very, very hard. So to have an avenue to have more surveyors and also the building monitor is just going to make that process flow a little bit easier, which is terrific.

In my home town of Traralgon there is a lot of building going on, both commercially and domestically, so it is great that that is happening. Also in Morwell where my office is there are some major housing developments going on around there, so I feel this bill here is probably more important for the seat of Morwell because in the next little bit we are going to have the athletes village starting, according to the government, and they are going to be built without any garages or kitchens, supposedly. We would love these amendments to be pushed through so on the flip side when the athletes village is turned into housing everything is above board, all the checks are done and the buildings are purpose-built for people to move into. But all in all, I commend these changes and I commend the bill to the house.

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (15:37): It is my pleasure to join the debate this afternoon on the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. Before the member for Warrandyte was unceremoniously dumped from the front bench in the previous Parliament, he gave his second-reading speech on a nearly identical bill and outlined in very great detail the opposition's then view that the bill would not be supported. I can only assume that with the member for Croydon now occupying that august role common sense has prevailed, because we find ourselves in a position today where the opposition are in fact supporting the bill, but they have nonetheless moved a reasoned amendment. That reasoned amendment is one of those classic kick the can down the road reasoned amendments, saying that we should refuse to read the bill until the minister consults further with stakeholders, including the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors, about options to require building surveyors practising in Victoria to be members of a professional standards scheme and a few other things.

I have to say, the work of a typical electorate office obviously deals with constituents who are having difficulties, perhaps in dealing with the Department of Education or schools or raising issues regarding health, but one of the issues that crosses my desk the most is when people are suffering at the hands of builders or building surveyors who are acting unethically. In many cases the single biggest transaction that anyone will enter into over the course of their life is for the purchase of their home or for the building of a new home. There is a real power imbalance between the consumer and the builder in this situation, and it is just so important that you have consumer protection at the heart of any scheme seeking to regulate this industry, because when you have that power imbalance you do see and you certainly hear, in my case in my electorate, plenty of examples of people being on the rough end of decisions by builders and building surveyors. It is not in fact just the person contracting the builder or the building surveyor; it can ultimately be the neighbours when you have building surveyors signing off on stuff that is not actually built to the plans. I know that local councils suffer and are frequently frustrated by the fact that privately retained building surveyors – a scheme, incidentally, brought in by the Kennett government – are certifying that a dwelling is fit for habitation and has been built in accordance with the plans, when in fact it just has not.

One of the recent examples I have seen is where building surveyors are happy to sign off on a building in circumstances where they have done so much earthmoving on the site that the actual height of the building relative to the original ground level is significantly higher than proposed under the plans. They would say of course, 'The building is still the same height off the ground; it's just the ground moved.' It is that sort of gameplaying that drives many of my constituents spare, that drives local councils spare and that drives the member for Ashwood's constituents spare, and it is exactly the sort of thing where you need a regime and legislation like this to make sure it simply does not occur. So I

am pleased that the opposition have changed their view on aspects of this bill. But what we do not need is this sort of kicking the can down the road scenario under the reasoned amendment, so I do urge members to vote down the reasoned amendment a little bit later this afternoon and to support this bill and its passage through to the other place.

To the bill proper, it is a bill that is about delivering that reform to Victoria's building system and it is about consumer protection, because as I have outlined, in terms of a contract for services, in almost all cases it will be the single biggest contract that people enter into over the course of their lifetime. Building a house is 10 times bigger than buying a car and many orders of magnitude bigger than almost every other transaction most people would undertake over the course of their lives, and it is absolutely critical that, when you have got a transaction that is so large that it can make or break a family and where the power imbalance is so substantial, you have the appropriate regulation around that to ensure that people are treated fairly.

This government is alive to the fact that major defects cost \$675 million every year, and most of those defects are in residential apartments. I was with some constituents recently looking at a building that is under seven years old to which they have some remedies, and I have assisted them in taking the steps necessary to pursue some of these remedies. But you have got cracking, you have got infrastructure failure in terms of the water management in this building and you have got a developer who has done a number of other buildings in the street that are all exhibiting similar faults. It is really, really difficult for those owners to take action. It is really, really difficult for them to seek a remedy from the practitioners who ultimately signed off on these buildings when in fact the buildings have not been built in accordance with the plans or shortcuts have been taken.

I appreciate that there are all sorts of supply-side pressures in building at the moment, and materials costs have risen 50 per cent over the course of the last two years. There is enormous pressure in this industry at the moment, and I do not resile from that in any way. But unfortunately it is the unethical operators who ultimately are doing the damage here, meaning that people cannot take action to get their homes sorted. Some of the faults I saw in this particular development in Ringwood were absolutely extraordinary. People had cupboard doors falling off cupboards spontaneously in the middle of the night. They were very lucky not to be injured by it. They had water running down inside walls in what is, effectively, a brand new building. So it is extraordinary that these things can be signed off on, and it is extraordinary that it is so hard to go after builders in those circumstances.

This bill is about responding to those very issues. Strengthening the building system is about benefiting consumers, giving builders themselves and the industry more broadly confidence and certainty and really just trying to take this whole expensive rectification process out of the mix. It is far better always to build it once and build it right. This bill also forms part of our commitment to delivering a building system that provides safe, compliant and durable housing and buildings. What we do not want is the sort of pseudo disposable housing, the really low-quality stuff, which has been seen from time to time in Victoria and has been seen in plenty of other jurisdictions around the world. It is all value driven and all value managed to within an inch of its life, and as a result you end up with substantial defects.

So how do you go about doing it? You formalise and strengthen the role of the state building surveyor, you establish a building monitor and you expand the categories of practitioner that can be brought into this. That will include things like building designers, project managers, site supervisors and building consultants, because as building becomes increasingly complex and as the professions supporting it become increasingly specialised, they develop, naturally, different names. You need to make sure you capture every one of those new professions or even sub-professions. The other thing you have got to do is strengthen the information sharing – we do that with these rules – and improve the governance arrangements of the Architects Registration Board of Victoria under the Architects Act 1991. We have responded fairly I think to those matters raised by the former shadow minister regarding that and have made sure that a minimum of a third of the architects board will be licensed architects.

The state building surveyor – we first provided money for that in last year’s budget – is established as a statutory role, as the primary source of expertise and technical guidance for the building and plumbing industries. That is really important. It is always really important to have a voice in government that has that subject-matter expertise, has the ability to say authoritatively whether a mistake has been made on a technical basis or an ethical basis and can help inform decision-makers at the Victorian Building Authority. The VBA deals with a very high volume of complaints, but there is some sort of seasonality to that. There are some structural elements to the cyclicity of it. They do very important work, and it is great to have that work now supported by a state building surveyor. It is for that reason and many more that I commend this bill to the house.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (15:47): I rise to contribute today on the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The member for Ringwood spent a bit of time talking about some of the errors that there are at the moment under current building frameworks, and I too would agree that there are significant issues around the way surveyors and planning and other issues dish up some pretty poor outcomes for home owners and new home builders. I would say that there is a view from both sides of the house that we need to as a Parliament always do what we can to strengthen consumer protections and make sure people are getting the best value they can out of one of their largest investments.

I would refer specifically, for example, to quite a bizarre situation going on in my own electorate at the moment in the Surf Coast shire. It is an area under quite a bit of pressure from growth and development, and we have seen over the last 10 years land released. It came as quite a shock to me as the local member, because certainly for the last couple of years Labor representation has covered that area, but you would think, when you allow a new housing subdivision of many streets and many first homes for young families and others who have moved in, that someone would have noticed that they built the housing estate across a natural waterway. So it came as a great shock to me in November, literally days into my new representation of that area, that families in about 10 houses were knee-deep in water through the middle of a residential subdivision because somebody forgot that they had gone and allowed the subdivision to go right across a natural waterway.

I must say in my past life before Parliament I spent time on a catchment management authority. I am well aware that there are a huge amount of government and public resources going into identifying these types of places and spaces. Allowing good planning and good surveying and allowing things to be built in the right spots is not new to us, yet we have allowed this to happen. In fact in the middle of the night, when these families woke to find a good foot of water rushing through their homes, they were rightly shocked. But what comes as a great surprise to me, and a great disappointment of course, is that in order to solve this problem we are requiring government agencies to come together and work for the best outcome for the community. What I am sadly finding is that agencies like Southern Rural Water and others are more excited, agitated and energised by fighting amongst themselves and blaming each other, other departments and other agencies as to why the mistakes happen than by working with the local home owners and the farmer adjacent to fix the problem and how we make it move forward. I guess that is one example of why our reasoned amendment is a good one, which is why we are saying to the government: you do not listen enough – you do not listen enough to the people at the coalface, those that actually know what the weaknesses are and the problems are.

So while we are keen to support this legislation, we also want the government to look at the reasoned amendment, because this government is creating a very, very strong track record of not being able to get the nuances of their decisions right. They are not able to actively understand how things work to get the good outcomes. Of course I have already mentioned today, and I will mention again because it is a classic example, that as Shadow Minister for Housing I know only too well how much this government says it cares about providing homes and houses for people. You would think, ‘Well, that’s a good priority. All governments should have it near the top of their list’ – Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, the understanding and the desire to make sure all their citizens have somewhere to sleep at night. This government have made much of it because they have not done anything for eight years and they have suddenly woken up to the fact. They are slowly starting to read their reports and are saying, ‘Oh heavens,

we've been here for eight years and we're adding 3000 families a year – 3000 families a year – to the homeless list', which is not something that they should be at all proud of, not at all proud of that.

Then they have said, 'Well, we're going to spend \$5.6 billion.' The Premier was on about it. In fact he got me thrown out of question time. He was on about the fact that he is spending \$5.6 billion. His Minister for Housing was on the radio the other day talking about how much money they are spending. But guess what? None of them – not the Premier, not the housing minister, no-one on the government side – wants to tell us how many houses they have actually built. When we did the research, when we did the analysis, when we did what this government should do, which is to look at what they are actually achieving, lo and behold, we discovered they have created 74 extra homes – 74 extra homes in five years with \$3 billion. That is actually a monumental effort, to achieve so little with so much. It is sort of akin I guess to sending shiploads of resources to another country to help them in a time of famine but then not being able to feed anybody. You know, it is grossly incompetent.

So when we, as a party, are keen to see housing and providing homes to people as real priorities of any responsible government, it is no wonder that we want to bring in a reasoned amendment and we want to say to the government, 'Look, we know what you are trying to do, but your track record on actually getting something done that is important is not real flash.'

I think also back to well before the election last year in 2022. For most of 2016, 2017 and 2018, as I used to drive back down the Princes Highway, back to my wonderful electorate of Polwarth, I would drive past these big elaborate signs down the West Gate Freeway that said, 'Tunnel opening in 2022. Look at us, we are building this tunnel. Opening in 2022'. Lo and behold, the signs sort of gradually started to be peeled off the highway signage. They started to roll them up and pop them back into the top cupboard, and why? It is because despite the fact this government talks about doing things, they could not achieve it. We now know that by 2022 not only did they not actually finish the tunnel, they had not even started the tunnel. That is once again a pretty monumental thing to be able to achieve. And why hadn't they started the tunnel? Because they had not even figured out where they were going to put the dirt from the tunnel. That is sort of engineering 101: dig a hole, put dirt somewhere. That is a common sort of thing.

When you see these sorts of absolutely catastrophically stupid oversights by this government, it comes as no wonder that we would want to bring a reasoned amendment to something as important as developing homes. So we are saying that the reasoned amendment is important because we do not have a lot of faith in dealing with this. The industry has come back to us, and the industry has said, 'Well, look. A lot of the bill's not bad.' There is general agreement about some of the improvements we could make, but one of the big things holding us back is we do not have the building surveyors, we do not have the skills and expertise in the area. Despite your rhetoric, government, on TAFE and TAFE training and extra qualifications, we have heard a lot about it for the last eight years, but it has not delivered any results. I guess that is sort of the point of my contribution today – this government loves to talk a big story, particularly if it involves a Facebook post with the Premier with a white hat on. They love those, but they do not like looking at the outcomes and what they have actually achieved with those announcements.

Just in conclusion, providing homes for Victorians is important. We know today in a tragic way this government refuses to tell us how many people need a home. We know that the last time the government fessed up with a figure of people waiting desperately for a home in Victoria was June last year, well before the election. It is now well after the election, and they are still too embarrassed to tell us what the list is, but we know that it was 36,223 families as of June last year who did not have somewhere to call home. We can probably extrapolate that, and on the current trajectory it is probably closing in on 40,000 families now desperate for a home, an aggregate of 64,000 people the last time the government was prepared to tell us how many it was – 64,000 people who do not have a proper home to live in. So developing bills and policies and legislation that make getting into a home better, quicker and more affordable is a good thing, but we want to see this government put a genuine attempt into getting an outcome, and my wish for this bill is that it in fact helps increase supply of homes and

it helps get homes developed more quickly and more affordably so that Victorian families and Victorian individuals can actually achieve their dream and their hope of a home to live in that is safe, that is fit for purpose and that is going to be that lifelong investment that that family and household need. We will see later today whether the government members will have the strength and courage to hold their team more to account; I suspect not. I commend the bill to the house.

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (15:57): I rise to speak in support of the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, a significant piece of legislation that will impact the safety, quality and sustainability of buildings in Victoria. Unlike the member for Polwarth, I will stick to the facts. Victoria is home to a growing and aspiring population. Over 6.5 million people call our state home. Victoria has a diverse economy, excellent health care and education systems, and our story of multicultural success is the envy of the world. Our people's contributions are the cornerstone of our economic and social success. As our population continues to grow it is essential that we have safe, sustainable and high-quality buildings to not only accommodate the needs of our people but also provide them with the infrastructure they need to innovate and thrive in modern Australia.

This government has undertaken some of the biggest infrastructure projects in our state's history. As Victoria proudly continues its Big Build we need to make sure that our systems are equipped to prioritise safety and sustainability at the core of our government's work. Over 350,000 Victorians are employed in the building industry across more than 125,000 businesses. Approximately 99 per cent of those are small businesses employing less than 20 people. The building and construction industry is an essential sector in Victoria's economy, contributing significantly to economic growth and job creation. It creates the places where Victorians live, work and build shared experiences together. It contributes around \$40 billion per annum to the Victorian economy, and Victoria leads the nation in the supply of new homes. In the 12 months to January 2023 nearly 62,000 new homes were approved for construction in Victoria. Having affordable housing and transport, education, health, entertainment and other infrastructure is essential, and a productive and efficient building industry is vital to achieving these outcomes.

This government has undertaken the most comprehensive review ever into Victoria's building system, involving experts from Victoria and around the world. This bill is a response to this review and the challenges that Victorians have faced, including flammable cladding, structural defects and non-complying building products. It has been almost 30 years since the Kennett government deregulated the building industry in Victoria with the alleged aim of modernising it. Instead in some parts it has become the wild west, with some developers and builders feeling they have been given carte blanche with standards and safety and leaving many home owners with defects and poor building quality. Under current law building designers, project managers, building consultants and site supervisors are not necessarily registered with a statutory body, and often when they make a mistake the problems are mostly found years after the mandatory six-year structural defects insurance has ended, adding additional cost and financial stress for home owners.

The Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 will deliver much-needed reform to Victoria's building system and give consumers the confidence and protection they need. These reforms were recommendations of the building system review expert panel and will deliver great confidence in the industry by ensuring it provides safe, compliant and durable housing and buildings. It has been drafted after extensive consultation with key stakeholders, including consumers, practitioners, unions, industry groups and local government. The Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 reflects the government's commitment to putting the safety and wellbeing of Victorians first and strengthening the regulatory framework for building and construction in our state. This government continues to invest in the infrastructure and regulation that our growing and aspiring population needs.

This bill will make improvements across the entire building system, from ensuring the competence of building practitioners to supporting professional participants in the system, cultivating a more informed end consumer and strengthening the regulations that oversee the architecture, plumbing and building industries. It is a multifaceted approach to improving a complex system. The bill also

progresses the goal of national harmonisation of the building system, agreed by building ministers in all jurisdictions to remove red tape and enable smooth processes for the construction sector.

Defects in residential buildings cost Victoria \$675 million each year, with residential apartments making up two-thirds of this cost. I cannot tell you how many friends I have heard of having to move out of their apartments due to internal pipe problems and flooding, causing much distress, upheaval and the loss of many treasures, let alone the many weeks of extra work and worry. This legislation will not only protect consumers better but also give builders and the industry more confidence and certainty and reduce the need for costly rectification works. I am proud that our government is taking the necessary steps to address the gaps in the current system. The bill includes several key measures that will help improve building quality, ensure accountability and provide greater transparency in the building and construction industry.

The bill will also help us move towards much-needed new requirements for builders and building practitioners to disclose any relevant information about their work history, including any past disciplinary action or legal proceedings. This information in the public domain will provide greater transparency in the industry and help consumers make informed decisions about who they choose to engage for building work. The legislation will positively impact the safety, quality and sustainability of the buildings we live and work in. The bill provides for a new registration and licensing system for builders and building practitioners and will replace the current system and go a long way to ensuring that only qualified and experienced builders and building practitioners are allowed to undertake building work in Victoria. It will also ensure that individuals who are not qualified or competent are not permitted to engage in building work, which will reduce the risk of unscrupulous operators working in the building industry. Under this new system builders and building practitioners will be required to demonstrate their competence, experience and qualifications before being granted a licence.

The new building product safety scheme is another important component of the bill. The scheme will require manufacturers and suppliers of building products to demonstrate that their products are safe and compliant with relevant standards, helping to prevent the use of non-compliant and unsafe building products, such as flammable cladding, which have caused so much harm in the past. It also provides assurances to the public that the building products used in their homes and workplaces are safe and compliant with the relevant standards.

The bill will also establish a new regulatory body to oversee the building and construction industry in Victoria. This body will be responsible for ensuring that all buildings in the state meet the required safety and quality standards and will have the power to investigate any instances where these standards are not being met. The Victorian Building Authority will have powers to monitor and enforce compliance with building regulators and to investigate and prosecute non-compliance, helping to ensure that builders, building surveyors and other practitioners are held accountable for their work and that the public can have confidence in the safety and quality of the buildings they inhabit. The VBA will have the power to suspend or cancel a practitioner's registration if they are found to have engaged in non-compliant or unsafe building work. Under these new rules all builders and developers will be required to undergo regular training and education on the latest building techniques and safety standards. This will help ensure that they are up to date with the latest best practices and are able to provide the highest quality service to their clients.

One of the key benefits of this legislation is that it will help to ensure that all buildings in Victoria are safe and fit for purpose. These reforms are essential not only for the individuals who live and work in these buildings, but also for the wider community as a whole. Safe and reliable buildings are essential for economic growth as they provide a stable foundation for businesses to operate in and for individuals to live and work in. Greater transparency and accountability in the sector will ensure that consumers have access to the information they need to make informed choices about the buildings they work and live in. Through this legislation the government is encouraging greater innovation and creativity in the building and construction industry, and it is only part of what we are doing to improve building in Victoria.

The 2023 budget invested almost \$28 million to provide greater protections for consumers, strengthen building standards, cut red tape and address the building workforce shortage. We are introducing continued professional development for building and plumbing professionals and a new registration and licensing scheme for building trades, subcontractors and employees and establishing a parliamentary inquiry into bosses and contractors who refuse to pay their subcontractors. I am also really excited that we are preparing for the commencement of the new edition of the National Construction Code this year, delivering significant improvements to building standards that improve occupant access, health, safety and amenity outcomes, which will include the new mandatory accessibility standards for homes and apartments, ensuring these homes are suitable for occupants across all stages of life. I have been working towards accessible building design for many years, even before my dad became a paraplegic, and him not being able to get into some rooms or buildings due to inadequate door width or other inaccessible measures is unacceptable and makes my blood boil.

I urge all members of the Victorian state Parliament to support this important piece of legislation and to help create a safer and more prosperous future for all Victorians.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (16:07): I rise to speak on the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I was talking just a minute ago with the member for Kew about the great movie *The Castle* with Darryl Kerrigan: 'It's not a house, it's a home.' A home is so important to everyone's life. It is the great Australian dream to own a home, and for many it will be the largest single purchase that they make in their life. Whether it is a house or whether it is an apartment, it is certainly such a big decision to make. When you are investing so much money and so much of your livelihood you want and hope to get it right. So I support the intention of this bill, what it is trying to do, but with the amendment of the member for Croydon to improve the bill, because the amendment that the member for Croydon is suggesting is that we have more stakeholder consultation with the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors about options to require building surveyors practising in Victoria to be members of the professional standards scheme, allowing them to assist the government to regulate practitioners and strengthen the permit process.

One of the things we always hear about when it comes to Victorians dealing with government is red tape. It is probably the single biggest frustration that anyone has when they deal with government, because everything takes time. Even, we know, back in the COVID days, when you were trying to navigate your way through things – everything takes time. You might be directed to a website or waiting for information back. Certainly when you are building a house there are so many stages, there are so many agencies: the planner, the builder, the council, there are so many agencies that are involved – the surveyor – in the actual building that it gets quite complex. One of the biggest issues when building a home or purchasing a home, particularly off the plan, is when there are faults.

Today I happen to have a group from our Chinese community in Caulfield with us – we were walking around the building, and I was telling them about what we are talking about today – many newly arrived Victorians, soon to be Victorian citizens, and they are looking forward to actually purchasing the great Australian dream. One of them, Cherie, has recently purchased an apartment. I was talking to Cherie about her issues, and she mentioned the problems with the townhouse that she had purchased – the leaks and the issues in terms of the defects with that townhouse – and the difficulties of having to deal with those whether it be with council or whether it be with the person she purchased the townhouse from. It gets very, very difficult. We all know that when you are buying something the person you are buying it from is the best in the world. The real estate agent will promise you the most, the best thing. The builder will show you the fantastic product that they are going to deliver. But we have got too many examples here in Victoria where midway through a project, whether it is the surveyor, the planner, the builder, they have gone broke.

Tim Richardson interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: I thought you were taking a point of order, member for Mordialloc.

Tim Richardson: No, no – you’re doing well.

David SOUTHWICK: Thanks, mate. I am not often on the bill – today I am.

So you have got the issue, which is taken up, and as part of that issue the person that has invested so much money is trying to get it resolved. There are so many circumstances, and in Cherie’s case we hope that will be fixed, but there are so many instances. There was a recent report that one of my constituents sent to me when we were talking about this bill:

Building industry fears around waterproofing as leaks reach crisis point in Victoria

It talks about a couple:

Ms Alexander had moved into the brand-new apartment a few months earlier with her husband Sean and their newborn son.

She said they called the construction company, who did some works including replacing the carpet and told the couple the issue was fixed.

But Ms Alexander said a few months later, it happened again.

Under the carpet, the couple ... found mould and rusted fixings.

A building report, seen by the ABC, detailed issues with waterproofing between the ... doors ...

This couple went to VCAT. They were told by the building inspectors report that the cost of waterproofing would be \$116,000. The bulk of that, \$87,000, would be just for the external doors. They went to VCAT and spent thousands of dollars and much time just to seek that hearing to try to deal with it. The insurance did not cover it, and this is a common situation. With some of these issues people can be waiting five or 10 years to have them fixed.

It is very, very important – and I know that I have spoken to the building committee of the Law Institute of Victoria, and they are very supportive of part of this bill that appeared in the last formation of the bill but not in this one, that they would have, for councils, the surveying being enshrined at the highest level. The bill has removed that provision from its 2022 form, which would have allowed councils to have pre-occupation inspections of high-risk buildings. That is very important when you have issues like Cherie’s, like that of the Alexanders, and there is not someone to go to, because a surveyor has done the work but a council will turn around and say, ‘It’s not our problem; it’s the surveyor’s problem.’ Then you end up in VCAT. So with complex problems you cannot have the councils pass the buck. We have got to have protections and we have got to ensure that happens.

I am sorry. I know that I have well and truly gone on and the member for Mildura was all ready to go, but I will just say this: one of the most important things we do need to do with all of this is to get more stock, get more product on the market and get more product to get more housing affordability. It is a key issue. We have got to get the opportunity for more people to own their own home. As the Kerrigans said: ‘It’s not a house, it’s a home.’ Let us ensure that, and to do that let us streamline the building process, let us ensure the costs are reduced and let us hold people to account so that when they do purchase it, there are protections if things should eventuate.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (16:14): I rise to contribute on the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. Of course this is a very important piece of legislation which will action key improvements identified by the building system review expert panel to ensure that Victorian consumers are protected and at the heart of our building system. I will commend the member for Caulfield for his comments about making people accountable, and I will come to some incidents out in my area in Melton shortly, but they are very similar to some of the facts that the member for Caulfield raised.

We do need to make builders, building surveyors and, even more so, developers accountable for their actions, or lack of actions in some of these situations, that leave people either without a home or with a home with many faults that take many tens of thousands to repair – or developers cancelling contracts a couple of years later. I know that we got rid of sunset clauses in legislation passed in this chamber; I think it was last year. But we are still seeing these actions by some developers unilaterally cancelling

contracts and people being left with nothing – no home. They have got their deposit on their land, and then the developers are trying to reoffer that block of land to them at current market rates. There is nothing that those poor individuals can do apart from take it to court, and of course they cannot afford to take that legal action. So we, and councils, through legislation like this need to keep builders, building surveyors and developers accountable. My electorate of Melton is one of the fastest growing electorates or areas of Melbourne. It is projected to grow to 250,000 people by 2030 and 450,000 by 2050, so there is an enormous amount of building going on in that area, that LGA.

This bill will primarily amend the Building Act 1993 and the Architects Act 1991, and it additionally will amend the Sale of Land Act 1962, the Domestic Building Contracts Act 1995, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998, the Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Act 2002, the Owners Corporations Act 2006 and the Cladding Safety Victoria Act 2020. These legislative amendments will create the following reforms, and I will read them out as they are recorded here. It will formalise and strengthen the role of the state building surveyor, it will establish a building monitor that expands the categories of building practitioners that will be required to be registered, it will enhance the building approvals process by introducing further safeguards to better inform consumers, it will also strengthen information sharing between statutory entities with a role in the building regulatory framework, it will amend the distribution of the cladding rectification levy and it will strengthen and improve the governance arrangements of the Architects Registration Board of Victoria under the Architects Act.

Few things do anger me, but the irresponsibility of property developers, as I alluded to earlier, is a real major concern. I would have between 150 and 200 landowners that I think have been conned by developers promising many, many things in their residential estate that were not delivered. They need to be held accountable, and I have raised this with local council also. But there are many good honest developers too and many good honest workers, in particular in the Melton area there are many fine builders, plumbers, electricians and architects. It is typical, isn't it, that we have to change the law to cater for the minority when you have plenty of great builders and tradies that do great jobs. But of course the small number of I will call them crooks means that we have to bring in legislation and toughen legislation to try and protect the average punter out there.

There is an estate called Robinsons Rise in Cobblebank in Melton, and again I will come back to what I said earlier, where people purchased land and house packages, some of them quite some years ago – four, five, six years ago. As I said, there were about 150 to 200 of these landowners, and this particular developer decided to unilaterally cancel the contracts. Unless the punter agrees and signs off on that, they cannot cancel the contract. The problem is they are sitting idle with a block of land they effectively do not own and they cannot build on, and the developer is telling them they have cancelled their contract. Of course, as I said before, the only way it can be rectified for these people is by taking it to court. They cannot afford to take it to court. I have tried to get legal firms to take it up as a class action, but do you think we can get that done?

So you have got about 150 to 250 people out there hoping that they were going to have a new home. Some people were moving into the area because they worked in emergency services and they wanted to be close to their workplace because they did shift work – 14-hour night shifts as an ambulance paramedic. This particular paramedic wanted to have a home close to where she worked so she did not have to drive too far after 14-hour night shifts. Guess what? She has not got anything. She ends up, I think, doing a deal by just getting her deposit back. So she does not end up with the land. She does not end up with a land and house package. She gets intimidated and harassed to the point that she cannot take legal action and she ends up doing a deal to retrieve her money. It is a disgrace – an absolute disgrace. It is life changing for people, and it should not happen and it should not be allowed to happen.

I have had people come to me who have had houses built and have faults in the houses. I have been out and visited these places, and the faults in the houses – how they were signed off astounds me. Stevie Wonder could have seen the faults. It is just ridiculous. Cracks in walls, water coming up

through the slab, mould – just unbelievable. Someone – I think it might have been the member for Caulfield – talked about how it was going to cost the person that had the apartment \$116,000. Well, for this particular couple in my electorate it is in excess of \$200,000 in faults. They ended up going to VCAT. A deal was done at VCAT. The builder offered to buy the house back but then reneged only a few weeks out from these people moving into or purchasing another house, so then the battle went on again. And of course it has cost them \$50,000 to \$60,000 in legal costs. Now, people should not have to go through that. This is a retired couple. They were using all their retirement funds to justify trying to amend the problems with their house. They had to move out of the house.

Those sorts of things just should not happen, but they are happening. I am hoping that this legislation will rectify those sorts of things against developers and some of those shonky builders. Again, I know a lot of tradies and I know a lot of builders. They are not all bad. I will say it is a minority that makes it bad for the majority, and it is a shame that that happens. As I said before, the member for Ringwood referred to the power imbalance between the builders, the developers, the building surveyors and the purchasers, and there is a power imbalance and there is not a lot that they can do unless they do take legal action, and it is a shame that they have to go to that.

The state building surveyor acts as an authoritative industry leader for building surveyors and practitioners across the state. This is an executive role in the Victorian Building Authority which was recommended by the Victorian Cladding Taskforce, and this bill will give further responsibility to the state building surveyor, giving them a statutory role as the primary source of expertise and technical guidance for the building and plumbing industries. I have a bit of a bugbear with regulators – if our regulators regulated, we would not have issues such as these – so I am hopeful that this particular situation and the state building surveyor will regulate appropriately and keep the pressure on, as I said before, those shonky builders so people will be delivered a good product. As has already been mentioned in here, this is the costliest asset that you will have in your lifetime, and people have had their lives destroyed by shonky buildings, by some builders harassing people for purchases, in particular single women that have purchased a house, and it is not good enough. This is a good bill, and I commend this bill to the house.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (16:24): I will keep this brief, because –

A member: Thank you.

Jade BENHAM: Yes, you are welcome. It is getting on in the afternoon and it is just about time for a nap. I am happy to rise, though, to talk about and support the reasoned amendment that my esteemed colleague the member for Croydon has spoken about.

A member interjected.

Jade BENHAM: Esteemed, yes – and echoed by my esteemed colleague the member for Narracan. I mean, it is a good bill. We know it is a good bill, and we are in support of it – we appreciate that it goes a long way to strengthening the building legislation – but it could do more. I have said in this place a number of times that I do not profess to be an expert on everything, but when I know very well that I am not, I am more than happy to seek out the counsel and advice of those who are, such as my esteemed colleague the member for Narracan – builders, plumbers – and also my esteemed colleague the member for Morwell, a plumber: people that are at the coalface. So when we talk about stakeholder engagement, it is great for governments to write and implement and pass legislation, but if it is not practical on the ground, is it actually going to do any good?

That is why I am in support of the reasoned amendment. I think listening to the stakeholders and those on the ground that are actually doing the work is incredibly valuable. And why wouldn't we? Obviously, the theory and the principle are very good. We know that there is a housing crisis, and there are many ways to go about housing. I know lots of people in the industry. In fact a friend of mine that was walking around the halls of Parliament today is in the housing industry, and she has made

comments about the changes to cladding and all of the issues. We have heard numerous members speak about that today. So I have paid special attention to this bill.

With regard to housing in my area, obviously cladding on high-rises is not a great problem – it is not something we deal with day-to-day – but housing is, and the shortage of it. A few years ago, in a former life as a councillor and mayor of a rural council, a conversation was had while I was sitting in Canberra at a housing seminar with the then CEO. I had a crazy idea like, ‘Why doesn’t council just start building houses?’ And of course he said, ‘Well, that’s not what councils do.’ I said, ‘Well, we’ve got land. Why not?’ And he said, ‘That’s not what councils do.’ And I said, ‘Why?’ And he said, ‘No.’ And I said, ‘Why?’ And he said, ‘Okay.’ So we looked into it, and then, magically, we had a discussion with Regional Development Victoria, who said, ‘You know what, that’s actually a good idea. The market’s failed. Here’s half a million dollars. Start building houses.’

That was three years ago, and now on the market in Robinvale we have affordable housing built to a model to provide entry-level houses, brand new, built by local builders. So it has ticked all the boxes. It has used local trades, and the houses will be sold by private treaty so those that have been looking to get into the market can actually get into the market rather than going to auctions and bidding against investors who might own multiple properties and those who can afford to pay over and above what the market is doing – and in Robinvale it is slightly inflated. There are four houses on the market now, and that started with a \$500,000 investment from Regional Development Victoria, which is fantastic. After those four are built, we will roll on and build another four, and so on and so forth – so, practical solutions to solving the housing crisis in regional Victoria. That is what can be done when there are solutions put forward that are not about politics but more about your actual community – solutions can happen if we work together. Like my esteemed colleague the member for Narracan said, things can happen – he said exactly the same thing – when we work together.

I was interested, reading through the bill, in the state building surveyor and the building monitor, and I got thinking about building surveyors – as you do, because it is a thrilling subject – and the lack of them, particularly in regional areas. We are talking about public sector council building surveyors, those that need to be employed by councils to offer sign-off on building permits, for example, if they were to not choose to use a private surveyor. Robinvale falls into the Swan Hill Rural City Council, and currently they have cancelled any application being taken for building permits, because they do not have a building surveyor – in a housing crisis. It is outrageous. They have stopped taking building permits in a climate like this.

So you can talk about building surveyors, but we need to also work on how we attract more of these professionals to regional areas with housing. Where are you going to house them? You cannot build a house because you cannot get a building permit. You cannot employ a building surveyor because you cannot house them. You see the cycle that is quite vicious. It is not only building surveyors, though; it is also planners and engineers. There are almost permanent vacancies for really good positions in councils like Mildura and like Swan Hill. Everywhere in regional Victoria they have these permanent vacancies for positions like this, but to not be able to take building permits during a housing crisis to me is just –

A member interjected.

Jade BENHAM: Exactly. It is a vicious cycle. We cannot increase supply without building permits. It is lunacy. I did say that I was going to keep this brief and I meant it, so with that I will gladly put my support behind the reasoned amendment that the esteemed member for Croydon has submitted.

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (16:31): Well, it is very interesting, the reasoned amendment. I did not realise the Liberal and National parties supported compulsory union membership, because basically the reasoned amendment is to have all building surveyors be members

of a professional organisation, which seems odd and a bit hypocritical when they are not saying that there should be compulsory union membership in other industries.

Anyway, getting back to the legislation that we are here to debate today, the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, as other speakers have said, was part of, first, a review that the Andrews Labor government commissioned and that provided a stage 1 report. This review was commissioned in August 2021 and there were a number of recommendations. This legislation was originally part of a bill that was introduced to Parliament prior to the last election that covered a number of topics, including things in the legislation we are talking about today. We have dealt with since the election two components of that bigger bill – around heritage and also I think around plumbers' restricted licences and other matters. I spoke on both of those pieces of legislation in December and February, and this is the third part of that bigger bill.

Of course a home is the biggest investment that most of us will ever make, and this aspiration is getting more and more difficult to achieve. But as a home is the biggest investment in our life and in fact a human right and an essential necessity – having a roof over our head – we do need strong laws to protect home purchasers, and I would say particularly first home buyers, who often buy new buildings or even off the plan. Residents in the electorate of Thomastown have had their fair share of problems with builders and developers and building that first home. After having the fantastic feeling of finally being able to save a deposit and then purchase a home, they have those dreams smashed by builders in the industry that are not doing the right thing or developers that are not doing the right thing, so this legislation is yet another march on to try to further regulate the industry and ensure there are greater protections for consumers – consumers being the home purchasers.

I just want to go through a couple of the issues that residents have come to me with over the last few years when it comes to the building industry and the purchase of new homes. First of all, we saw some developers using the sunset clause to their advantage whereby a purchaser would pay a deposit to put a down payment, if you like, on a home and land package or even just some land, and then later on the developer, when the price of that land might have inflated by 10, 20 or 30 per cent, would invoke the sunset clause, dashing the dream of that purchaser, who thought they had secured some land. Going past the time in which they were required to start building on the land, the developer would take that land back, give the deposit back to the purchaser and then resell the land for a further profit to somebody else.

Now, the Andrews Labor government fixed that problem. We passed legislation to protect consumers, but it seems to be that people are always finding loopholes. They are always finding ways in which to exploit situations, and so we continually have to provide or introduce new legislation to counter those issues. I have seen damage to people's properties based on the house next door being built and them not being able to find the entity that they can pursue to have that damage rectified. We also see partially developed estates then sold to other developers or builders, and therefore while they get the rewards from the next purchasers, they do not take up the liabilities such as the beautification works or maintenance of nature reserves and all the promises of bigger and better things that just do not happen. Again we need to make sure that the legislation is ensuring that home owners and consumers are protected.

One of the things that this bill actually does is formalise the role of the building surveyor and make the state building surveyor the central point for technical expertise so we do not then have a whole lot of arguments about one piece of technical evidence versus another. The state building surveyor is the primary source of technical expertise and guidance for the industry around building and plumbing. Also the building monitor really is an essential part, I think, of the legislation, because at the moment each individual home owner has to pursue through the courts or VCAT or whatever on an individual basis their issue, but the building monitor will be a statutory appointment and will collect and analyse data and information so that things can be looked at in a systemic way. For example, with the sunset clause issues, each individual home owner had to pursue those issues on their own, whereas with the building monitor this will allow for more systemic addressing of problems, so it will see overall what

the issues are rather than having things being dealt with one by one at the expense of the individual home owner.

It also will expand the categories of building practitioners that will need to be registered to have their works prescribed by regulation, because really the only way to ensure true regulation of the industry is to have licensing registration so that individuals and organisations must be brought in and there is somewhere to go to make sure that there is proper accountability for the work that they are performing and what they are giving back to the purchaser or consumer.

It also enhances the building approvals and quality assurance processes by providing a process for requirements relating to the preparation, maintenance and updating of building manuals, and requires building surveyors to provide owners with information setting out roles and responsibilities. Again it is giving more information, and through that information it is giving more empowerment to the consumer in order to make sure that when they are making, as we said, what is probably the biggest investment in their life – their home – they have more control over what is going on and more knowledge about what is happening.

We know that there has been a little bit of criticism about, for example, the state building surveyor not being independent of the VBA, but again these bodies and positions really have to work with the Victorian Building Authority as the overarching authority around building. So they really cannot be separate; they ought to be working within and be a part of the system.

That system of course then has to be a system that is providing the best possible support and working for the consumer and for the home owner, not for the industry, because the industry ought to be doing good jobs and making sure that the buildings that people are living in are of the best possible standard, whether, you know, we are looking at what sort of regulations we need in terms of accessibility or whether, particularly now we are looking at floods and so on, we need to make sure that homes and builders are properly equipped to deal with all those possible mitigating effects to make sure that homes and people are protected from all sorts of events that are going to happen into the future.

So this legislation gives further protection to consumers – particularly, I think, first home buyers, who are often the ones who are buying the new homes – and this is one further step that the Andrews Labor government is taking to protect the people that need to be protected. Yes, of course the building industry should be making profits – it is a business – but they ought not to be doing it at the expense of home owners. I am sure that there will be further legislation we will see into the future, but this gives a strong foundation for protection, and this bill should be supported by all.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (16:41): It is important to rise and speak on the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. This is really important legislation at a critical time in Victoria as we see our communities expand and grow into the future. As our population expands and grows and we see a diversity of housing stock offered and a range of different changing circumstances in my community out in the City of Greater Dandenong and the City of Kingston, it is important to make some contributions here. I am really pleased to see this bill introduced and the reforms that will be put in place to support consumers and constituents of mine into the future. As outlined by members who have spoken on this bill, on the importance around strengthening the state building surveyor's role as established within the Victorian Building Authority (VBA), this legislation will give that greater formalisation and strengthen its role for protection of consumers into the future. I also want to touch on the establishment of the building monitor to represent domestic building consumer interests in the building system, with a focus on systemic issues.

Now, we have got a couple of examples, but there is one I want to reflect on for the benefit of the house. This might be a really important frame to consider. There are a lot of different changing circumstances across community developments going on. One that is being built at the moment with dozens of dwellings on a site called Sixth Avenue, Chelsea Heights, in my local community was put forward in 2020–21 for development. A number of residents have bought in hoping to get that dream

house. Some of them are first home buyers; some are moving to choose to live in the wonderful City of Kingston and the great suburb of Chelsea Heights. But over the course of two years they have, despite the purchase being made and some residents thinking that the development would be happening sooner, taken up rentals and put their lives on hold, and in some circumstances are paying mortgages as well as renting while waiting for this development to take place.

Disappointingly, there has been just a complete lack of information. Every so often there are communications from the developer, communications from the City of Kingston about how close the development might be, but that has been going on for two years. This is one example of that lack of information for consumers across the sector that can lead to incredible stress and anxiety over when this might come to be. So residents in my local community have come to me with this circumstance, and I think it relates to some of the consumer protections and considerations because effectively those prospective constituents in the City of Kingston and constituents of mine really do not have a voice in this process. As their customers, the developers need to keep them informed.

The City of Kingston does not have a formal relationship with these purchasers because the relationship is with the developer, and so that uncertainty and lack of oversight has led to significant anxiety and concern in the progress of this development. When we think of the HomeBuilder grant that was put forward and the support that was going to be provided for construction that was getting underway, which was a measure that was put in to support and consider the building industry, residents may not be able to access that important support as well. So this could be an area of consideration and interest for the building monitor to put forward and say, 'Well, these are the circumstances where we need greater oversight, greater advocacy or a change in policy and outcomes.' So I am really encouraged by what the building monitor might be and the work that might be put forward in that space. For residents that are in that Sixth Avenue, Chelsea Heights, development as well, what would it mean in circumstances like that?

We have put forward the need to share that information with these consumers in the building industry to give that certainty. There has clearly been a lot of work done between developer and council to get to this point, but the missing link in communications has been those prospective constituents. These are their dream homes. They want to educate their kids at the Chelsea Heights Kinder and be part of the local community. Chelsea Heights Primary School is going so well. Where else would you want to be other than in the City of Kingston or in Chelsea and Chelsea Heights? We just need that information and certainty to go forward, and that is something that could be a really good element and a really important reform that could be supported by the introduction of the building monitor.

I also want to talk about the building approvals process and the introduction of further safeguards to better inform consumers. Every member of Parliament will have an example where they have had a constituent come to them with concerns about a particular building outcome and they have been frustrated about not knowing where to go. Is it Consumer Affairs Victoria? Is it a VCAT interaction as well? And to pay either consultants or lawyers to get to that point sometimes costs more than the work that actually is being undertaken. This can cause a significant amount of duress, concern, frustration and anxiety for a range of different residents and constituents. So any amendments or safeguards that better protect and inform consumers I think are a really important change as well.

We heard reflections on some of the work that surveyors do. I do know that is a very big growth area for the building industry. We need more builders, we need more surveyors and we need more town planners, and as our state and our communities grow, there is such a demand for workers in this sector. So if anyone is thinking of a career choice, there are plenty of opportunities in that space as our communities grow. And it is a really important role. You cannot do anything without surveyors. You cannot do any works without the interaction of our town planners and our councillors in building. It is a really important and critical role in our community, so I am really heartened by the establishment of the statutory role of state building surveyor. I think it enhances and strengthens that oversight, that accountability, as well. It gives greater comfort and protection among ever-changing community relationships and engagements.

When we consider some of the big changes that are coming in the City of Kingston and City of Greater Dandenong, we have the Suburban Rail Loop getting underway, and that will see more people moving into our local communities. It is such a substantial and visionary project. Those development zones are coming as well – those communities of tomorrow that are providing affordable housing, employment and community connections and places for many years to come. It is exciting to think of those communities of tomorrow that are going to be well and truly thriving and really expansionary and visionary.

We need to protect that open space, but we also need to make sure that there is proper building support and outcomes. That is balanced with affordability and taking the time to do it in a considered and reasonable way and making sure that we are supportive of residents. I reckon that consumer voice is really important. A lot of those people that will be buying into some of those developments and some of those apartments in the future will be first home buyers getting underway, whether it is with an apartment or some other dwelling. There will be a great element of social and affordable housing that we connect as well. These are the opportunities that come from such a visionary landmark policy. We do not want people being pushed further and further out based on affordability. We want people that have been born and have grown up in their local community to be able to live there, where they have grown up and participated. So those protections into the future are going to be a really important consideration.

I am really excited as well about the building manual and the bill requiring that a draft building manual be prepared by the applicant for an occupancy permit and provided to the relevant building surveyor for approval. Those building manuals are intended to be a single repository of all relevant information related to design, construction and ongoing maintenance for the building, so there is greater information that we can share between statutory authorities to lessen the impact of delays and share information so people are not having to go back to the drawing board each time. Sharing that, being more transparent in the process, is really important. I reflect as well again on that example and that circumstance in Chelsea Heights.

That lack of sharing of information creates further anxiety for local residents, so the building manual and the requirement for that information sharing, whether it is with owners or with owners corporations, is a really important step. We have so many owners corporations across our community, and indeed across metropolitan Melbourne and regional and rural Victoria, so that information flow, that greater transparency, is something that will be really important into the future.

This is a really important bill. I am really pleased to see some of the reforms to consumer protections to give confidence to the sector as we embark on a massive transformation of building outcomes across our local communities. It is a really important step. I really welcome it, and I know that it will have great benefit for my local community and constituents across the south-east.

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (16:50): I am very happy to rise this afternoon on the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I thank my colleague for South Barwon, who I think was about to stand but has given me a few minutes here. I appreciate that because this bill is very important to my constituents – all of our constituents. We have heard a number of stories from both sides of the house about individual cases in a building industry that we are all generally proud of – we are proud of our builders and our surveyors and everyone in between. We had the member for Narracan speaking about his industry, and it was very good to hear him. We had the member for Morwell throwing in some plumbing advice there. Rebecca and I are about to go into a whole heap of renovations over the next couple of years, and I might be calling on them should things go wrong.

That is what really we are talking about here – when things go wrong. The member for Caulfield piqued my interest when I was in the chair before, because he started talking about *The Castle*, referencing ‘It’s not a house, it’s a home’. We will bypass that for a second. I do not think the reasoned amendment gets us anywhere closer to helping the people that we have all been concerned about – quite generally I think

we are all concerned about them. To the member for Croydon, who made a very good contribution, if he thinks that is helping I would 'tell him he's dreamin'.

Issues come to our desks when it goes wrong. The industry can be great in so many ways, but the frustrations that happen to people – because it is not just a house, it is a home – are very important, not just in relation to the buildings that they dwell in but in relation to their lives. If you go back to *The Castle*, Mr Kerrigan wins his case, because in the end it is not just about the house, it is about the family, the memories, the photographs. It is about the times; it is about the serenity. There is not much serenity for a couple who are living in a house where the surveyor or the building guys or whoever got the level wrong and who accepted plans from a council that said, 'The house next door is going to be so many feet above', but it is actually four more feet than it should be. You are not going to pull that house down. The couple I was speaking to who are in that situation – Angelita and Robert – understand that no-one is going to pull that house down. I thank them, because not only are they seeing the issues through, they are highlighting the frustrations with the system.

So when I read this bill – and I commend the Minister for Planning on this work and I commend the review that occurred and everyone involved in it – and when I saw that we were implementing a building monitor whose express point is to represent the domestic customer, to understand and to assist, this is a hole that we are filling.

So to the constituents I mentioned – to Nicole, who has had issues with a surveyor who classified her land incorrectly, which has resulted in months at VCAT and costs, and to Glenn, who has got a fence falling over because of levels – I would just like to say that this is a good bill that implements some avenues for you to tell your stories and have them listened to and put back into the system. We as members will do that. I think a lot of members are told about cases. We will talk to the Victorian Building Authority, we will talk to the minister and we will express our opinion, but this is another aspect. To have the state building surveyor as a primary source of technical expertise and guidance for the building industry gives answers to some of the concerns we have heard from the other side.

We are here to debate. I would suggest that if this bill passes – and I hope it does – some of the members on the other side who expressed some of these concerns will want to go and talk to the state building surveyor to put those messages across. We all should be using these resources, and this bill is a very good step in the right direction – but it is not finished. Government never finishes; it is a work in progress, and we work every day.

Whilst the reforms and the review are very important and the recommendations of the building system review expert panel stage 1, which have led to this, are so important, I am very happy to inform that stage 2 of the expert panel's work, which is ongoing, will focus on accountability for disputes, roles and responsibilities; building protocols; maintenance; and technologies. A second discussion paper will be released in 2023 seeking stakeholder feedback and stage 2 options. I say to my constituents: there is more work coming. This is a good step. I commend the minister, and I commend the bill to the house.

Darren CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (16:56): It is with some pleasure that I rise this afternoon to make my contribution on the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, and I must say I do so as a Geelong-based MP who very much looks after the growth corridor of Geelong. In fact my seat is one of the fastest growing seats in Victoria. It has one of the fastest growing populations in Victoria. As a consequence of that, we see many people who move to my community seeking to buy some land from a developer to enter into a building contract with a builder and build their dream home. As a consequence of that dynamic of my community, of course my community has a lot of interaction between builders, sparkies, plumbers, building surveyors, town planners and ultimately consumers. On a very, very occasional basis, constituents will indeed approach me when a building that they have got for themselves through engagement with a builder has failed and they have attempted to go through the processes of the act as we currently know it in an attempt to address any defects. Sadly, most consumers that have come to my office have indeed found that process to be disappointing and have found it very difficult, more often than not, to have defects in the fabric of a building remedied.

One constituent in the suburb of Highton last term approached me when they had the back end of the house renovated and they had a new extension to their property built. They went through all of the normal processes of getting permits, getting engineering and other things done, and the slab that the new building was constructed on cracked. They had to go through extensive mediation to get that issue addressed. It was costly and it was problematic. These reform processes that our government – the Andrews Labor government – are putting in place are all about extending the rights of everyone so that when there are challenges on this front there are fair and adequate processes by which consumers can get justice with respect to buildings that they have. This reform process is extensive and it will be ongoing, and I am very pleased to see the work that we are doing in this space. As I say, South Barwon is a very, very fast-growing community, and I commend the bill to the house.

The SPEAKER: The time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived, and I am required to interrupt business. The house is considering the Building Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The minister has moved that the bill be now read a second time. The member for Croydon has moved a reasoned amendment to this motion. He has proposed to omit all of the words after ‘That’ and replace them with the words which have been circulated. The question is:

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

Those supporting the reasoned amendment by the member for Croydon should vote no.

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (55): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Daniel Andrews, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Jordan Crugnale, Daniela De Martino, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Sam Hibbins, 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, Danny Pearson, Tim Read, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ellen Sandell, 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 (24): 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, Peter Walsh, Jess Wilson

Question agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

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

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Gabrielle Williams:

That this bill be now read a second time.

And Emma Kealy's amendment:

That all the words after 'That' be omitted and replaced with the words 'this bill be withdrawn and redrafted to prevent a medically supervised injecting centre from operating in near proximity to schools, childcare centres and community centres'.

The SPEAKER (17:06): The minister has moved that this bill be now read a second time. The member for Lowan has moved a reasoned amendment to this motion. She has proposed to omit all the words after 'that' and replace them with the words which appear on the notice paper. The question is:

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

Those supporting the reasoned amendment by the member for Lowan should vote no.

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (55): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Daniel Andrews, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Jordan Crugnale, Daniela De Martino, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Sam Hibbins, 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, Danny Pearson, Tim Read, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ellen Sandell, 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 (24): 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, Peter Walsh, Jess Wilson

Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That this bill be now read a second time and a third time.

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (55): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Daniel Andrews, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Jordan Crugnale, Daniela De Martino, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Sam Hibbins, 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, Danny Pearson, Tim Read, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ellen Sandell, 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 (24): 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, Peter Walsh, Jess Wilson

Question agreed to.**Read second time.**

*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.*Adjournment*

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Land tax

Jess WILSON (Kew) (17:13): (121) My adjournment tonight is for the Treasurer, and the action I am seeking is for the Treasurer to provide advice on the impact of the land tax burden on Victorians. I have been contacted by dozens of constituents in recent weeks who have been hit by the significant rise in the rate of land tax that was brought in by the Andrews Labor government. Property is a common investment vehicle for Australians from all walks of life. It is by no means the preserve of the ultrarich. In fact it is not uncommon for Victorians to hold the vast majority of their wealth in a single property investment. According to ATO data, 72 per cent of Victorians who invest in real estate own only one investment property. The majority of these investors have an income of less than \$100,000 a year.

You might be surprised to learn that the majority of Australians who own single or multiple investment properties are actually aged under 65. These are people who are seeking to build a comfortable retirement for themselves and a decent quality of life for their families. Such a steep increase in the rate of taxation is not good policymaking. It will add to the existing inflationary pressures on the Victorian and Australian economies. Furthermore, there is a real risk that this tax increase will impact rental prices in an already strained rental market plagued by affordability and availability constraints. Recent data from Domain shows a 64 per cent drop in rental listings over the last year. At the same time rental costs have skyrocketed, with the number of rentals below \$400 per week dramatically falling across Victoria over the past year.

It appears the government has failed to take into account the significant increase in property prices that has occurred in Victoria over the past two decades. Melbourne property prices have been ranked the eighth most unaffordable in the world when compared to how much people are earning, faring worse than New York and London. In regional Victoria, according to a recent study by ANZ, the proportion of annual household income required to service a new mortgage increased to 42.8 per cent, up from 30 per cent in March 2020. Yet the tax-free threshold has increased only marginally, from \$250,000 to \$300,000. With the median sale price for houses in Melbourne currently coming in at \$975,000, and \$628,000 for units, even the new threshold of \$300,000 would appear too low.

More broadly, I am concerned that Victoria's tax base is overly reliant on property taxes. As I pointed out in my inaugural speech, 42 per cent of the state's total taxation comes from land tax and stamp duty alone. We need to think much more creatively when it comes to the measures we enact to raise revenue, which is necessary due to the significant debt this government has accrued. And consider the impact of distortionary taxes on property and land. Housing affordability for first home buyers and the availability of affordable rental stock are vital to ensuring young Australians have a stake in their future and the community. We must ensure our taxation framework does not impede these goals.

I call on the government to use the opportunity afforded by the state budget to consider the pain Victorians are in due to the addiction to property-based taxes and instead responsibly manage our economy and stop wasting taxpayers hard-earned money.

Wantirna dog park and playground

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (17:16): (122) Well, in some pawsome news for Knox locals that will certainly be the anecdote for many a ruff day, I was excited to announce with my cavoodle Penny late last year that we will deliver a new dog park and playground in Wantirna to help locals make furever friends. This is something locals have been respectfully hounding me about for nearly a whole dog year, since I was very furst a local councillor. So I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Environment, and the action I seek is for the minister to inform my community about the election commitment that we made to deliver a new dog park and playground in Wantirna and what the next steps are in delivering this pawsitively exciting project. While I expect many believe these puns are pawful and that I might be barking up the wrong tree, make no mistake, I am very proud of this Andrews Labor government pawlicy to deliver new parks like this in Wantirna and across the state.

Now for a couple of lines without puns, I promise. We know Victorians love their pets, we know that dog lovers need green, open spaces for exercise and play, and we know that our animals are more than just that – they are indeed family. That is why we funded 31 new dog parks across Victoria, ensuring every family has access to the facilities it needs. That is why we stood up for animal welfare by banning puppy farms and introducing the strictest breeding rules in the country. And it is why we made it easier for renters to have pets, enshrining their rights in legislation.

I want to end this contribution with but one more pun. I think it is quite funny – furgive me in advance. What did the dalmatian say after eating dessert? Man, that really hit the spot. And that is what I hope locals will be saying once this new park and playground is delivered for local families in Wantirna.

Wilson's Promontory walking track

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (17:17): (123) That was apawling.

My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Environment, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide the necessary funding and approvals and impetus to Parks Victoria to speed up the replacement of the Sealers Cove walk at Wilson's Promontory. The track there was damaged by the storms in October 2021 and is currently not scheduled to reopen until 2024. Even then, the advice from Parks Victoria on its website is simply that year, 2024, and it is at the earliest 2024. So it could well be 2025 or years after. It is a concern to me that it will take so long. I have walked the Sealers Cove track before. I understand it is in a more remote area and difficult to get to by road – or not all by road. So in terms of getting construction in there, it will be difficult. I also appreciate it is largely through a swamp, so it is a complex project and I understand that. But to have to wait at least three years for this project to be completed at one of our world-class – probably the world-class – national parks here in the state which actually attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors, including many thousands of overseas visitors, I think is not good enough. It comes on the back of the issues that we have been raising in the budget estimates process, particularly on behalf of the member for Gippsland East: the Thurra River bridge at Croajingolong and the Cape Conran boardwalk and cabins at Cape Conran that have still not been rebuilt, and indeed in the case of the last two have not even got a time line for when they will be rebuilt after the 2019–20 fires.

I put this in contrast to a media release that the minister issued last week about the \$21 million urban parks active wellbeing program being completed. When it is an urban project we can build the rock walls and the playgrounds and the refurbished and upgraded toilets that are part of that project, but when it is something in a part of regional Victoria that is critical to our tourism offering, Parks Victoria is extremely slow. This is, I think, not good enough. I might add that there is a suspicion among many regional Victorians that Parks Victoria does not actually want humans in our national parks, and delays like this only go to reinforce that suspicion.

Mary-Anne Thomas: Wrong!

Danny O'BRIEN: Well, if I am wrong, Minister, then please talk to your colleague the Minister for Environment and actually make sure that this does get done on a reasonable time line. I think to say three years for the replacement of that track, a very popular track in Wilsons Promontory, is not reasonable. It needs to be sped up.

Thomastown electorate sporting facilities

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (17:20): (124) I have a matter to raise with the Minister for Community Sport, and the action I seek is that she come with me to visit a number of the community sport clubs in the Thomastown electorate. The electorate of Thomastown has it all from basketball, AFL football, soccer, swimming, calisthenics, netball, traditional and cultural dancing from around the world, tennis and cricket. They are strong clubs run by hardworking and energetic volunteers, people that are also often the linchpins for communities, keeping people connected and always giving a helping hand.

The Andrews Labor government has provided millions of dollars to councils to upgrade pavilions, playgrounds, night lights, scoreboards and playing grounds; however, the City of Whittlesea is overall responsible for local recreational and community sport facilities. The state government does what it can through the Local Sports Infrastructure Fund and previously the Growing Suburbs Fund, but council needs to step up. There is not one indoor basketball or netball stadium in the entire seat of Thomastown built by council. Many football grounds and pitches are in a sorry state of disrepair. Coaches' boxes and lights do not comply with sporting codes, and these problems are just an ongoing source of frustration. On the other hand, where the state government has been able to provide support we have made some wonderful facilities, but I am sure the minister will appreciate having a look.

Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (17:22): (125) My adjournment matter is for the Premier, and the action that I seek is for the Premier to provide me with a program of Victorian government events marking the occasion of the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III. Minister for Health, at the table, I am happy to repeat that action for you if you like.

While it was a day of great sorrow for him on 8 September 2022 in the event of his mother's death, Charles III became the King of Australia. In keeping with tradition, the organisers waited for a while to allow a due amount of time to honour the life of Her Majesty before setting a date for the coronation. Now we have a date: the coronation of His Majesty the King will take place on Saturday 6 May 2023. The coronation ceremony will take place at Westminster Abbey, London, and will be conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

We are fortunate in Victoria because His Majesty of course has a special connection here. King Charles himself went to school at Geelong Grammar School in Victoria. In 1985 the state of Victoria celebrated its 150th anniversary, and as part of the festivities King Charles and his then wife visited Victoria to join in the celebrations. He has, in fact, visited Australia 16 times in his lifetime, including the opening of the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane, and as is customary he is expected to make a trip Down Under in 2024 as a newly crowned King. We know that the Prime Minister of Canada has announced that a ceremony will be held in Ottawa on 6 May. We know that in Bermuda there will be a celebration in honour of His Majesty's coronation. In the UK on 6 May it will be declared a public holiday, when many, I am sure, will line the streets to catch a glimpse of that special moment in history and in their lifetime. It is my sincere wish that His Majesty and his successors will continue to play an ongoing and meaningful role in the life of our nation and indeed the state of Victoria for many decades to come, and I trust that the Premier will be able to provide me with a comprehensive list of the Victorian government events marking this very special occasion.

Littlecroft Family and Community Centre

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (17:24): (126) Sorry, I was a bit speechless there. The matter I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Local Government and concerns the Littlecroft

Family and Community Centre. The action I seek is that the minister provide any information on the upgrade of the community centre and how this will benefit my constituents in Narre Warren South.

It was a fantastic day in 2021 when the state government announced \$917,000 from the Growing Suburbs Fund towards the expansion and upgrade of the Littlecroft Family and Community Centre with the City of Casey contributing \$393,000 to this \$1.31 million project. The upgrade will create more spaces for kindergarten and maternal and child health services and other community programs. It will also provide a new kitchen facility, community outdoor space, an undercover verandah, compliant amenities, a reception area, meeting rooms and storage facilities. Littlecroft has been delivering essential services to our local children and their families, including parents groups, information sessions, sleep and settling support services, the introduction of foods advice and kindergarten places.

For over eight years the Andrews Labor government has invested \$425 million in critical infrastructure projects in our fast-growing outer suburbs, supporting almost 350 projects and creating more than 11,300 jobs. I would appreciate it if the minister could provide any further information on the upgrade of Littlecroft Family and Community Centre, and I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

Goulburn Valley Health

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (17:26): (127) My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is that the minister funds in this year's budget stage 2 of the Goulburn Valley Health redevelopment. This past week the minister visited the GV Health hospital site with no mention of future funding for stage 2 of the hospital redevelopment. The GV Health stage 2 master plan has been developed, detailing the scope to deliver the works and the much-needed facilities. Stage 2 works consist of construction of an integrated cancer centre for the Goulburn Valley, increased acute and subacute inpatient capacity at the GV Health site, additional spaces for ambulatory care services for specialist clinics, clinical support and diagnostic services and the much-needed additional car parking and helipad. GV Health have received \$26 million to build the integrated cancer centre.

Additional budget allocation is required to close the funding gap and to enable the integrated cancer centre project to proceed as part of the stage 2 development and to deliver best practice cancer care and treatment to people from across the Goulburn Valley. Patients are not able to have treatment locally, which causes enormous stress at an already incredibly difficult time for the patient, families and their support networks. There are also the additional costs in accommodation, travel and taking leave from employment while doing their best to care for the patient and still trying to juggle their lives and commitments at home. In too many cases those close to the patient cannot be there to support them during their time of need due to the distance and all the other challenges of being regionally based. Health care must be a priority, and I seek the minister's support.

Clifton Springs Primary School

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (17:27): (128) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to visit Clifton Springs Primary School to inspect the ongoing redevelopment works currently being undertaken at the school. Clifton Springs Primary School is a great local primary school led by the very dedicated principal Meg Parker and her team. Having been built back in the 1980s, the school's facility was ageing and needed an upgrade and modernisation. In recognising this, in 2018 the Andrews Labor government committed \$500,000 to develop a master plan. On that master plan's completion, thanks to hundreds of hours put in by the school, once again the Andrews Labor government supported the school by committing \$15.6 million for future construction. This stage, scheduled for completion in September, will equip the school with a new learning centre incorporating specialist arts, science, engineering, maths and food technology facilities. In addition, a new administration resource centre is being built, including a wellness centre integrated with the school's current sensory garden. As Clifton Springs grows in population, the Andrews

government will support the school in continuing to provide a quality education to its students in a first-class facility. I know the school would welcome the minister on a works inspection visit.

Mornington electorate sports facilities

Chris CREWTHER (Mornington) (17:29): (129) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events. The action that I seek is for the minister to meet with representatives of local sporting organisations and me as well as other key stakeholders in the Mornington electorate to both discuss the urgent need for funding upgrades to the facilities and commit the necessary funds, which I will outline, in the upcoming state budget. I have had many constituents contact me to discuss the need for investment in a number of sporting and community organisations in the Mornington electorate, which has fallen behind in population growth or has otherwise been neglected by this Labor state government, particularly as compared with other districts. In the lead-up to the state election I consulted widely with such organisations and made several commitments from an elected Liberal state government that would have delivered much-needed upgrades.

Unfortunately, none of these commitments were matched by Mornington's Labor candidate, so with the election of a Labor state government these organisations are continuing to have to seek funding and may be forced to struggle with inadequate facilities. So I urge the government to reconsider and commit. Some of the things I committed to during the campaign include the Mornington District Basketball Association, which has hit capacity with only three courts but thousands of members and participants, meaning they are unable to expand their player base. As such, the Mornington District Basketball Association at Mornington Secondary College needs a number of new courts and at least \$5 million towards that happening. At Emil Madsen Reserve in Mount Eliza, which involves Mount Eliza soccer, cricket, football, netball and skating, they are in need of a \$5 million funding boost. I would urge the state government to work with the federal government and council to see the major upgrade that is needed at Emil Madsen, the highest participation sporting complex in the country. I would like to see that happen as soon as possible.

With the Mornington Soccer Club, they need a \$2.5 million pavilion upgrade plus fixed grounds as soon as possible. At Mount Eliza Bowling Club they are in need of much-needed upgrades after 35 years of deterioration, including at least \$1 million to start with. At Mount Martha Soccer Club they need a fitted-out pavilion for their new pavilion that was built on the back of the \$3 million of federal funding I secured a number of years ago towards building their new athletics track and soccer fields.

Going beyond these commitments, I would also like to see commitments for the Mornington civic bowls club, the Peninsula Pirates baseball pavilion, the Mornington Junior Football Club at Narambi Reserve, the Moorooduc Junior Football Club and various clubs that are involved at Ferrero Reserve. Once again, going back to this adjournment matter, I encourage the minister for sport to commit the needed funds to these organisations in my electorate in the upcoming budget and to meet with me as soon as possible.

Point Cook schools

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (17:32): (130) The matter that I raise is for the Minister for Education, and the action that I seek is for the minister to join me in visiting Laverton P-12 College. I firstly want to thank the minister for their recent visit to Alamanda College K-9. The Labor government has of course been building and upgrading schools across the electorate, including support for planning for two new schools in Point Cook, part of the Labor government's commitment to building 100 schools by 2026. Investment in education is invaluable, and I look forward to seeing these new schools take shape. This joins some of the amazing efforts that we have made for schools in our local area, including recently opening the Homestead Senior Secondary College and Saltwater P-9. Laverton P-12 College, although located outside the electorate that I represent, services a large portion of the community in Altona Meadows, and I believe the school would be greatly benefited by a visit from the minister. The Labor government is committed to great education across our state, and the commitment that we have made to education is of course unmatched. However, there

is always more work to do, and I look forward to working closely with the minister to continue to achieve great outcomes for the people of Point Cook.

Responses

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (17:33): I might begin by addressing the matter raised by the member for Shepparton, and I note that not only is she not in the house for my response to her question, she was not in Shepparton with me last week when I was there to open the emergency department at Goulburn Valley Health, a \$229 million investment under our government. It was great to see that we have more than doubled the emergency department capacity, and of course to see that emergency department open was fantastic. This is on top of other parts of the upgrade, which include a five-storey inpatient tower, which features 10 ICU beds, 64 inpatient beds and four new operating theatres. A single-storey 16-chair dialysis unit, 12-bed maternity unit birthing suite and a new special care nursery and paediatric ward have also recently been delivered. Having said all of that, I am happy to follow up. I did in fact have this conversation with the CEO and the board chair of Goulburn Valley Health about their future priorities, as I do when I travel right around our state meeting with health service CEOs and board chairs.

As you would expect, there is always more to do. That is one thing our government absolutely acknowledges. This response tonight I suppose does give me that opportunity to talk a little bit about our \$18.1 billion infrastructure program, which is seeing health services right across Victoria, including in the member for Shepparton's electorate, being upgraded.

The member for Kew raised a matter for the attention of the Treasurer. The action that she is seeking is that the Treasurer provide her with advice on the way in which land tax is impacting both members of her own electorate and Victorians more broadly. The member for Bayswater has an action for the Minister for Environment. He is seeking that the Minister for Environment inform him of the next steps on the delivery of his much-loved dog park in Wantirna. The member for Gippsland South raised a matter for the Minister for Environment, and the action that he seeks is the funding and the speeding up of plans to replace the boardwalk at Sealers Cove, which was damaged by storms in 2021.

The member for Thomastown raised a matter for the Minister for Community Sport. She has asked the Minister for Community Sport to come and visit some community sports clubs in her electorate and to take the opportunity to see the results of the big investments that our government has made in the electorate of Thomastown. The member for Bellarine raised a matter for the Minister for Education. Specifically she would like the Minister for Education to come down and visit Clifton Springs Primary School and to inspect the works and the upgrade of that very important primary school in the member's electorate. The member for Mornington also had a matter for the attention of the Minister for Community Sport. He is seeking that the minister commit to upgrades for various sporting facilities in his community.

I have missed a member. I am sorry, I better get back to the minister for Sandringham. The minister for Sandringham has requested –

A member: Member.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: Sorry, it is Thursday.

Jess Wilson: He would be happy with that.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: He would be happy with that. The member for Sandringham has raised a matter for the attention of Premier requesting what I suspect might be a very short list of events to commemorate the inauguration of the King.

Jess Wilson: Coronation.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: Coronation, thank you. I am a republican.

ADJOURNMENT

Thursday 23 March 2023

Legislative Assembly

1295

The member for Narre Warren South has requested an action from the Minister for Local Government, and the action he seeks is that the minister provide him with further information on the upgrade to, again, a very important resource in his local community, the Littlecroft Family and Community Centre, a centre which has received funding from our government under the Growing Suburbs Fund.

The member for Point Cook raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. I note that the member for Laverton is sitting with the member for Point Cook. He is seeking that the minister come and join him and presumably also the member for Laverton at Laverton P-12 College – which, by the way, is where I taught when I was a secondary teacher – to see the building upgrades at that school. The member took the opportunity to outline some of the other building upgrades and new schools that are being built in the fast-growing communities that are so well represented by the member for Point Cook and the member for Laverton.

I believe, Deputy Speaker, I have covered off the matters that have been variously raised this evening.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I believe you have. The house stands adjourned until our next sitting.

House adjourned 5:40 pm.