



# **Hansard**

## **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**60th Parliament**

**Tuesday 5 March 2024**



**Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly**

**60th Parliament**

**Speaker**

Maree Edwards

**Deputy Speaker**

Matt Fregon

**Acting Speakers**

Juliana Addison, Jordan Crugnale, Daniela De Martino, Paul Edbrooke,  
Wayne Farnham, Paul Hamer, Lauren Kathage, Nathan Lambert, Alison Marchant,  
Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Kim O’Keeffe, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor and Iwan Walters

**Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier**

Jacinta Allan

**Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier**

Ben Carroll

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

John Pesutto

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

David Southwick

**Leader of the Nationals**

Danny O’Brien (from 26 November 2024)

Peter Walsh (to 26 November 2024)

**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**

<b>Member</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Party</b>
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel <sup>1</sup>	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 <sup>2</sup>	South Barwon	Ind	O'Keefe, Kim	Shepparton	Nat
Cianflone, Anthony	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Pallas, Tim	Werribee	ALP
Cleeland, 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 <sup>7</sup>	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Farnham, Wayne	Narracan	Lib	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Foster, Eden <sup>3</sup>	Mulgrave	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
Fowles, Will <sup>4</sup>	Ringwood	Ind	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Groth, Sam	Nepean	Lib	Theophanous, Kat	Northcote	ALP
Guy, Matthew	Bulleen	Lib	Thomas, Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Halfpenny, Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Tilley, Bill	Benambra	Lib
Hall, Katie	Footscray	ALP	Vallence, Bridget	Evelyn	Lib
Hamer, Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Vulin, Emma	Pakenham	ALP
Haylett, Martha	Ripon	ALP	Walsh, Peter	Murray Plains	Nat
Hibbins, Sam <sup>5,6</sup>	Prahran	Ind	Walters, Iwan	Greenvale	ALP
Hilakari, Mathew	Point Cook	ALP	Ward, Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Hodgett, David	Croydon	Lib	Wells, Kim	Rowville	Lib
Horne, Melissa	Williamstown	ALP	Werner, Nicole <sup>8</sup>	Warrandyte	Lib
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

<sup>1</sup> Resigned 27 September 2023

<sup>2</sup> ALP until 29 April 2024

<sup>3</sup> Sworn in 6 February 2024

<sup>4</sup> ALP until 5 August 2023

<sup>5</sup> Greens until 1 November 2024

<sup>6</sup> Resigned 23 November 2024

<sup>7</sup> Resigned 7 July 2023

<sup>8</sup> Sworn in 3 October 2023

**Party abbreviations**

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

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**Tuesday 5 March 2024**

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

*Rulings from the Chair*

**Broadcast of proceedings**

**The SPEAKER (12:04):** I advised the chamber last week that I would review whether a member had breached standing order 234 in rebroadcasting chamber proceedings. Members will know that standing order 233 provides for an official broadcast of chamber proceedings and standing order 234 provides for that official broadcast to be rebroadcast subject to certain requirements. Many members use the provisions of standing order 234 regularly by obtaining clips of debates through Hansard's video-on-demand service. Members then share those clips on their own websites or social media to highlight various proceedings in the house or debates they particularly want their communities to be aware of.

I note in passing that standing order 234 prohibits 'digital manipulation' of rebroadcast footage. Members regularly include photos or captioning when posting their clips. However, I do not consider that to be digital manipulation unless it somehow changes the meaning or context of the clip. I do ask members to take care when editing or adding to clips, however, to ensure they are compliant with the terms of standing order 234.

While we are all familiar with using clips via the Hansard service, I need to consider whether rebroadcasting from the IPTV live feed in our offices complies with standing order 234. That is, if a member uses a camera or smartphone to record the broadcast showing an IPTV screen and streams that live to their own website or social media, is that covered by standing order 234? I do not think the house anticipated this option when authorising the rebroadcasting standing order.

The footage on the TVs in our offices and around the building is provided by Hansard, and it is an official broadcast for the purposes of standing order 233. There is also an option on the IPTV that is not published to the website, which is the wide-angle shot of the whole chamber. While the official broadcast that goes out to our website is on a 30-second delay, the two IPTV versions are only delayed by a couple of seconds. This is very useful for members and indeed for the Speaker in keeping track of chamber activities in almost real time. However, where a member effectively live streams the IPTV to their own website or social media they are pre-empting the publication of the official broadcast on Parliament's website, which is on a slightly more delayed broadcast and which viewers can only see after they accept terms and conditions at an introductory screen. There is also a risk that members could publish the wide-angle shot, which is not otherwise available to the public.

I have a number of concerns about this which I intend to discuss with the Standing Orders Committee to see if standing order 234 is still fit for purpose and whether I need to issue further guidelines under standing order 233. In the meantime I advise that members should not stream or publish the IPTV feed and should only rebroadcast from the video-on-demand or concierge service.

*Bills*

**Energy and Public Land Legislation Amendment (Enabling Offshore Wind Energy) Bill 2024**

*Introduction and first reading*

**Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (12:07):** I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Land Act 1958, the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 and the Forests Act 1958 to enable licences over public land to be granted for up to 21 years for purposes relating to offshore wind energy generation, to include offshore wind energy generation companies within the scope of

certain provisions in the National Parks Act 1975 and to amend the Electricity Industry Act 2000 to enable the minister to declare persons to be offshore wind energy generation companies and for other purposes.

**Motion agreed to.**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (12:08): I seek a brief explanation of the bill.

**Lily D'AMBROSIO** (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (12:08): The bill will amend land legislation to allow offshore wind developers to obtain long-term tenure over public land for offshore electricity infrastructure and the Electricity Safety Act 1998 to explicitly allow the installation of electric line on public land for offshore electricity infrastructure.

**Read first time.**

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

**National Electricity (Victoria) Amendment (VicGrid) Bill 2024**

*Introduction and first reading*

**Lily D'AMBROSIO** (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (12:09): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005 in relation to VicGrid and for other purposes.

**Motion agreed to.**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (12:09): I seek a brief explanation of the bill.

**Lily D'AMBROSIO** (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (12:09): The bill amends the National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005, NEVA, to introduce new arrangements for transmission planning in Victoria via the implementation of the Victorian transmission investment framework, VTIF.

**Read first time.**

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

**National Energy Retail Law (Victoria) Bill 2024**

*Introduction and first reading*

**Lily D'AMBROSIO** (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (12:10): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to apply as laws of Victoria, and subject to any necessary modifications prescribed under regulations, the provisions of the National Energy Retail Law providing for retailer of last resort arrangements and the other provisions of that law that support the effective operation of those provisions, to make related amendments to the Electricity Industry Act 2000 and the Gas Industry Act 2001 and to make other minor technical amendments to the Electricity Industry Act 2000 and the Gas Industry Act 2001 to improve their operation and for other purposes.

**Motion agreed to.**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (12:10): I seek a brief explanation of the bill.

**Lily D'AMBROSIO** (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (12:10): The bill is to apply the national retailer of last resort scheme in Victoria, applying relevant parts of the National Energy Retail Law. This bill also repeals equivalent provisions of the Victorian retailer of last resort scheme contained in the Gas



Industry Act 2001 and the Electricity Industry Act 2000, amending provisions in these acts to ensure consistency.

**Read first time.**

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

*Business of the house*

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

**The SPEAKER** (12:11): General business, notices of motion 17 to 32 and order of the day 3, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 5 pm today.

*Petitions*

**Youth crime**

**Jade BENHAM** (Mildura) presented a petition bearing 279 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly to the growing concern casting a shadow over our families and children in the Sunraysia district, particularly Mildura. Many young people we know have been victims of unprovoked physical abuse. Our kids are being robbed of their innocence and safety due to the escalating youth crime rates. The situation has reached an alarming point where children can't even be kids anymore. The fear and insecurity they face every day is unacceptable. According to the Crime Statistics Agency Victoria, there has been an increase in youth crime incidents in recent years (source: CSA Victoria). This includes not only petty crimes but also serious offenses that put the lives of our children at risk. It's heartbreaking that some children are subjected to physical harm within their own communities where they should feel safest (source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare). We cannot stand by while our community's safety deteriorates further. Our kids deserve to live their lives without fear. The way the criminal justice system currently operates is ineffective and must be changed immediately.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to:

1. Implement tougher criminal penalties and sentencing laws that so that perpetrators of youth violence are held fully accountable for their actions, unlike the present "wash and repeat" situation where offenders are not answerable for their crimes.
2. Implement tougher criminal penalties and sentencing laws holding caregivers accountable for the actions of children in their care.
3. Implement tougher criminal penalties and sentencing laws for those, including juveniles, that record and distribute violent acts on various social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok.
4. Implement legislative strategies that will better support victims of these violent attacks acknowledging the long-term physical and mental health impacts experienced.

**Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.**

*Committees*

**Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee**

*Alert Digest No. 3*

**Gary MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (12:12): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 3 of 2024, on the following bills:

Bail Amendment (Indictable Offences Whilst on Bail) Bill 2024

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing Pilot for Drug Harm Reduction) Bill 2023

Estate Agents, Residential Tenancies and Other Acts Amendment (Funding) Bill 2024

Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024

Statute Law Revision Bill 2024

together with appendices.

**Ordered to be published.**

*Documents*

**Documents**

**Incorporated list as follows:**

**DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT** – The Clerk tabled:

Electoral Review Expert Panel – Report on Victoria’s laws on political finance and electronic assisted voting under s 222DB of the *Electoral Act 2002*

*Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984* – Notices under s 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to:

Statutory Rule 102/2023 (*Gazette G9, 29 February 2024*)

Statutory Rule 106/2023 (*Gazette G9, 29 February 2024*)

*Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986* – Certificate under s 7

*Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978* – Register of Interests – Return submitted by a member of the Legislative Assembly – Primary return 14 February 2024 – Ordered to be published

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

Central Goldfields – C38

Macedon Ranges – C145

Maribyrnong – C162, C186

Melbourne – C379

Moonee Valley – C232

Murrindindi – C76

Whitehorse – C220

Wyndham – C262

Yarra Ranges – C217

Statutory Rule under the *Children’s Services Act 1996* – SR 12

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* – Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rule 12

Victorian Inspectorate – Inspection Report February 2023 under the *Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003*

**PROCLAMATION** – Under SO 177A, the Clerk tabled the following proclamation fixing an operative date:

*Building Legislation Amendment (Domestic Building Insurance New Offences) Act 2024* – Whole Act – 28 February 2024 (*Gazette S 88, 27 February 2024*).

*Bills*

**Building Legislation Amendment (Domestic Building Insurance New Offences) Bill 2023**

**Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2023**

*Council’s agreement*

**The SPEAKER** (12:14): I have received messages from the Legislative Council agreeing to the following bills without amendment: the Building Legislation Amendment (Domestic Building Insurance New Offences) Bill 2023 and the Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2023.

**Building Legislation Amendment (Domestic Building Insurance New Offences) Bill 2023****Service Victoria Amendment Bill 2023****Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2023***Royal assent*

**The SPEAKER** (12:15): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Building Legislation Amendment (Domestic Building Insurance New Offences) Bill 2023, the Service Victoria Amendment Bill 2023 and the Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2023.

**Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024***Appropriation*

**The SPEAKER** (12:15): I have received a message from the Governor recommending an appropriation for the purposes of the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024.

*Joint sitting of Parliament***Senate vacancy**

**The SPEAKER** (12:15): I have received a letter from the Governor transmitting a dispatch from the President of the Senate notifying of a vacancy in the representation of the state of Victoria in the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia following the death of Senator Linda White on 29 February 2024.

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

**Ellen SANDELL** (Melbourne) (12:15): I move, by leave:

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

**Leave refused.**

*Motions***Gippsland East electorate fires**

**Tim BULL** (Gippsland East) (12:16): I move, by leave:

That this house:

- (1) notes that after four years important tourism infrastructure destroyed in the 2019–20 fires in East Gippsland remains unopened and in some cases the projects not commenced; and
- (2) calls on the Victorian Labor government to inquire into the reason the rebuild has been delayed so long.

**Leave refused.**

**Middle East conflict**

**Tim READ** (Brunswick) (12:16): I move, by leave:

That this house:

- (1) notes that, since this house resolved on 17 October 2023 to stand with Israel, the following have occurred:
  - (a) over 100,000 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed or injured; and
  - (b) a growing humanitarian catastrophe is occurring in Gaza;
- (2) does not support the state of Israel's continued invasion of Gaza.

**Leave refused.**

*Business of the house***Program**

**Mary-Anne THOMAS** (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:17): Speaker, it is great to be here and with you today. I move:

That, under standing order 94(2):

- (1) the order of the day, government business, relating to the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023 be considered and completed by 5 pm on 5 March 2024; and
- (2) the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5 pm on 7 March 2024:

State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023

Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024

Statute Law Revision Bill 2024.

What a great government business program. We went to the people of Victoria in November 2022 and we said, ‘We’re bringing back the SEC!’ That is exactly what we start doing today in our Legislative Assembly. This is the delivery of an election commitment that is something I know members on this side of the house feel so strongly and passionately about, and I look forward to their contributions. Along with the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023, we have previously agreed in this place that there would be concurrent debate on two bills, with the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023, because it is so vitally important that we protect the SEC from the privatising inclinations of those on the other side. That is why we are proposing that it be included in our constitution.

On this side of the house we have great respect and regard for important public institutions. We have all got an SEC story to tell, and I look forward to hearing those. We stand for strong public institutions like the SEC, and I look forward to the concurrent debate on these bills. It will be interesting as we debate two SEC bills this week to listen to the contributions of those on the other side. I will be interested to hear whether indeed there are maybe 10 or fewer or more from those opposite – do they support renewable energy or not?

Here is an opportunity for those on the other side to stand up and declare their support for a managed transition through to renewables to deliver affordable energy for all Victorians. Of course we are guillotining this bill later today – it does require a special majority of the house – and we are doing that because we want to do everything that we can to protect the SEC from those on the other side, should they ever have the opportunity to return to the government benches, doing what they always do to important public institutions. Be it the SEC, be it health, they privatise; they sell off and they privatise. We know that is what they do.

We will also be debating the Statute Law Revision Bill 2024, and I expect that the Manager of Opposition Business will be making a contribution on that bill. I am looking forward to the member for Malvern’s 30-minute contribution on that. That will be good.

We also have the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024. This is another bill, I might say, that speaks so strongly to the values of those of us that sit on the government benches. We made a prior commitment to reviewing the private security industry in Victoria. We published a review in 2021 that delivered on an election commitment that we made back in 2018 with a view to improving conditions for workers and moving to a more professional and well regarded industry, because on this side of the chamber we understand that all work is important, that all workers need to be respected and that all workers deserve the opportunity to work in well-regulated industries where their working conditions are protected. So this will be an important bill.

Finally, there will be an opportunity to continue the take-note motion on the care leavers apology. We do propose for that opportunity to come to the house tomorrow, and we will give interested members

across the chamber an opportunity to talk about what has been such an important issue. It was such a great moment in this house's history when that apology was delivered by the leaders of the respective parties only a few short weeks ago. I commend the government business program to the house.

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (12:23): The coalition will be wholeheartedly opposing the government business program. How outrageous it was to hear the Leader of the House get up and say that 2 hours into debate on the cognate SEC bills the government will be guillotining one of the bills. How outrageous – 2 hours in. With that in mind, I move:

That the government business program resolution proposed by the Leader of the House be amended by omitting paragraph (1) and after '7 March 2024:' inserting 'Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023'.

It is outrageous to think that this government has so mangled the SEC bills that it now is trying to rush them through the house without any scrutiny. That is what the government is trying to do today – rush them through the house without any scrutiny. We had a promise last year from the government that the bills would be done and dusted that year. They were listed on the government business program and they were sent to the world at large – and then, when they realised their members could not turn up in this place, they pulled the bills. So over a hundred days later, the Parliament is considering these bills now.

The Leader of the House says that it is so important that these bills be considered as a cognate package – that they must be considered as a cognate package – except when we all vote. How extraordinary to think that we have to consider these bills as a package – that there must be a cognate debate. We heard last year that the Leader of the House explained that members on her side of the chamber did not have the capacity to delineate between the two bills when they were being debated – did not have the capacity, so it must be cognately debated.

**Mary-Anne Thomas**: On a point of order, Speaker, the Manager of Opposition Business knows that he cannot mislead the house, and he is simply making up things that he is attributing to me.

**The SPEAKER**: That is not a point of order, Leader of the House.

**James NEWBURY**: The point I will remake is that the government put to this house and passed that the two SEC bills must be considered together. It was an imperative that they be considered together. And the government business program today has made it clear: except when they vote. It is extraordinary, and we know why the guillotine is being brought on one of these bills at 5 o'clock today. We know why: because the government does not want any scrutiny of the detail of this bill. That is what this is about. They do not want the media, they do not want Victorians, looking at this issue in detail. We know that is why. We know they do not want the upper house members thinking about the debate that is occurring in this place, and I look to all members in this place when I speak about that matter. That is why the government wants to rush this bill through. That is why governments always, when they rush bills through, want to do it – because they want to hide from the scrutiny.

And I suspect there is also a second reason, and that is: there is no capacity for the government to hold their own members here on Thursday. This bill requires a special, special number in terms of the vote, and every single Thursday the government is knocking on my door to allow more of its members to go home and to pair them off – every single Thursday. The reason why this bill is not being debated until Thursday is because they cannot hold their numbers until Thursday. They know they cannot get their special, required vote on Thursday afternoon, so they are going to ram it through today.

It is outrageous. What is being done today is an outrageous affront to democracy. We are not considering these bills appropriately; in fact the government took over 100 days to provide a bill briefing and then just sent a political adviser to give one. It would not allow the department to turn up. It is outrageous, the handling of these bills. It is so obvious for the world to see. We will be moving our amendment and dividing on our amendment. If that unfortunately does not pass – and I live in hope that the government has heard my speech and reconsidered – we will be opposing the government business program.

**Pauline RICHARDS** (Cranbourne) (12:28): Thank you for the opportunity to be able to contribute on the government business program. Of course there are so many of us on this side of the house who are absolutely so excited about bringing back the SEC. I am delighted that I was able to be here for that contribution from the leader of opposition business, because I was feeling a bit like I was experiencing some sort of *Nemesis* throwback. But I am very pleased to be able to have a look at the extraordinary work that is being done by one of the hardest working ministers I have ever known. There are so many pieces of legislation coming from the minister that I started to count, and I lost count. There is no question that we are getting on with the important work of government.

Bringing back the SEC of course was not just a key election commitment but was something that people talked about over and over again, and it gives me the opportunity to for the first time this year I think acknowledge and thank those people I know, those comrades from the Electrical Trades Union, who spoke about the important policy work that goes into making sure that we have a renewable energy scheme that is modern and fit for purpose, not nuclear. And I have the member for Frankston here next to me, who, you know, is protecting the beaches of Frankston potentially from nuclear, so I am very pleased that this government is getting on with bringing back the SEC.

We have members of organisations like the Electrical Trades Union, people like Troy Gray, Danny Filazzola, Graeme Watson, Mark Perryman and Shannon Crundwell. This is an opportunity for us to acknowledge that it takes people who are doing the work of working in renewables, making sure that we have what we need and making sure that the future is looked after. This legislation is something that is incredibly welcomed by the broader community, by the whole Victorian community and, certainly as the parochial MP I am, by those in my community. It was something that people asked for, and here we are delivering it.

It is going to be a constitutional amendment. We are doing that because we need to make sure that this gets embedded and we do not have that type of behaviour, that type of activity, that we saw when those opposite had the levers of power. I know that those opposite who had the levers of power last time were around on Saturday somewhere down in Frankston, so I was interested to hear that they are still able to commentate and talk about what is going on. Recognising that, we need to make sure that the SEC is embedded in the constitution. I am very pleased to be able to see that the government business program this week is going to be fulsomely supported by those on this side of the house, because we are fulfilling the commitment we made to our communities, but also as somebody who has young people in my life telling me all the time about the importance of renewable energy, making sure that we have got our eyes on the future, making sure that we are looking to what needs to be done to secure a future that is free of nuclear power as well as securing lower costs for our community.

Another piece of legislation that is incredibly important is the Private Security and County Court Amendment Bill 2024. It is an opportunity for me to also thank that minister for the hard work that has been done, and our hardworking security guards and the many people who keep us safe in so many contexts, often people who are unseen. It is really important to acknowledge that work. The Statute Law Revision Bill 2024 is once again important legislation that we need to acquit. We are making sure that the government business program as always is fulsome, but we do, as well as that important legislation, have the opportunity for people to contribute on the important apology. As the manager of government business identified, it was a real elevation and highlight of this chamber to be able to have that apology to Victorians who experienced historical abuse and neglect as children in institutional care and to be able to have people provided that opportunity. I am looking forward to the many contributions on this important government business program.

**Jade BENHAM** (Mildura) (12:33): I am with the member for Brighton on this one. How outrageous it is to pull a stunt like allowing only 2 hours of debate, an absolute stunt to guillotine a bill that has been on the government business program for over a hundred days – a cunning stunt, some might say, to guillotine this constitution amendment today after 2 hours of debate. And for what reason? I thought everyone was so proud of this, and I thought every member of this place would want to debate this bill. We have to debate them together. In fact we were all lining up to debate these bills,

every single one of us, because despite what those on the other side say, it is not about us being against renewables. No-one has ever said that. In fact it is quite the opposite. Technologically agnostic, I would position it as. When we talk about renewables we have to talk about commonsense approaches to these things. But to guillotine a debate on something so important and that the other side are so excited about and have been for so long, it now appears that they want to sweep it under the rug and let it go after 2 hours of debate. Why? Because they are embarrassed by it. They should be; I would be. It is embarrassing.

And to try and rewrite history – I mean, who was the one that started the sell-off of the SEC? We will not get involved in that, but I think we all know. And now to sweep it under the rug with minimal debate means that many members in this place, on our side – many of the Nats, whose families worked for the SEC, or who have worked for the SEC; they understand what it means to bring it back, and they understand the history firsthand – will now not get the opportunity to debate it in this place, the house of democracy, which is where it should be debated. Everyone should have the chance to go through this bill and have their say – not after 2 hours, having been on the program for over a hundred days. It is outrageous, absolutely outrageous. So we support the member for Brighton’s amendment – of course we do – because it should be debated for as long as is needed. That is what this place is all about. The member for Cranbourne said that everyone was excited to debate this – well, not excited enough to allow more than 2 hours or a few days, which is customary, I suppose.

Obviously, we are not supporting the government business program after a stunt like this. However, we will be lining up to speak on the Statute Law Revision Bill 2024, and I very much look forward to the member for Malvern’s 30-minute speech on typos. Again, I always come back to: ‘Can we do things right the first time?’ Mind you, there is quite a lot to unpack in that bill as well. It will give each one of us the chance to speak about things that are actually important to our communities, because there are a lot of acts in this that need to be amended.

So I am looking forward to hearing the debate. Every single one of the Nats has lined up to debate this bill. We all want a go, because that is what we come here to do – to give our communities a say, to debate the things that are important to them and not to quickly run through important bills such as the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023, which they used to be so proud of. The member for Cranbourne said, ‘We’re excited about it’ – not excited enough to allow two days of debate at least. I am absolutely perplexed and outraged – two bills in one, not to mention. The mind boggles. I am befuddled. I am boggling and I am befuddled – there is another adjective. It is outrageous, absolutely outrageous.

It would be great for all of us to be able to have our say on the bills that we have to debate together. Unfortunately we will not get that chance, but I am sure, being the creative bunch that we are, that we will be able to discuss that in debates on many other bills this week and hopefully into the future.

**Dylan WIGHT** (Tarneit) (12:38): It gives me great pleasure to be in here this morning to speak on the government business program. Indeed it gives me great pleasure, as it does all of my colleagues, to be back in here this week to do what matters for all Victorians, unlike those opposite, who are only interested in speaking about themselves. Time after time after time we see that they are more worried about themselves, more worried about who their leader is going to be in the next few weeks.

**James Newbury**: On a point of order, Speaker, as much as it pains me to stop the waffle, this has nothing to do with the motion before us.

**The SPEAKER**: Order! The member for Tarneit will come back to the debate on the government business program.

**Dylan WIGHT**: Indeed. Thank you very much, Speaker. Week after week after week after week we come into this place with a fantastic government business program to try and help the lives of working families and all Victorians, and week after week after week we come in here and we listen to the member for Brighton, with his confected outrage, oppose the government business program,

simply trying to divert attention away from the dysfunction that is the rabble of the Liberal Party in Victoria.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, the member is defying your ruling.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Tarneit, you are defying my ruling. I ask you to speak to the government business program.

**Dylan WIGHT:** That is fair enough, Speaker, and I apologise. It always gives us great pleasure and it is absolutely fantastic and exciting any time we get to come into this place and speak about the SEC. We said before the election in 2022 that we were going to bring back the SEC, and we were not just going to bring it back, we were going to enshrine it in the constitution to protect it from the vandals opposite. Let us not forget and let us be very, very clear: in 1994 the Liberal Party under Jeff Kennett privatised the SEC.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, this now pains me – the member is not debating the government business program. He has defied you now twice.

**The SPEAKER:** I will uphold the point of order. Member for Tarneit, this is your third warning to speak to the government business program.

**Dylan WIGHT:** Of course. Thank you, Speaker. As I said, every week that we come into this place and have the capacity to speak about the SEC and to debate and pass legislation that puts steps in place to bring back that incredibly important Victorian institution is a good week. I spent 10 years going through factories speaking to workers, to sparkies and to maintenance workers that used to work for the SEC, who got their first opportunity to work in those industries in government-owned energy and who got the fantastic opportunity that the SEC provided to undertake significant training within those sectors. It is so incredibly important for them, many of whom live in my community, that we come in and debate this legislation this week and also enshrine it into the Victorian constitution. Like the member for Cranbourne, I would like to acknowledge the Electrical Trades Union and the AMWU and all the work that they have done to bring back this incredibly important Victorian institution.

It is also incredibly important that we do this, that we enshrine it in the constitution and that we bring back the SEC, because of the significant renewable energy targets that we have right here in Victoria – some of the most ambitious anywhere in the entire world. What we know is that doing that will help industries such as agriculture, it will help our food producers and it will help manufacturing businesses as well. I support the government business program, and I cannot wait to debate the bills.

**Roma BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (12:43): I rise to oppose the government business program and support the Manager of Opposition Business in his amendment to the business program, which will give us the opportunity to debate the two bills the way that we should be debating, instead of bringing the two bills together and debating them. It is absolutely an affront to democracy, coupled with the fact that we have been asking for bill briefings for over a hundred days and the government refuses to cooperate in the way that we would normally see, in fact offering a bill briefing just this morning and wanting to debate for 2 hours only tonight and then adjourning and gagging the ability to actually debate these bills.

Here is a government that is out of ideas. It is as plain and simple as that. This week's government program is certainly a reflection of that. Whilst Victoria faces a cost-of-living crisis, a health crisis and a housing crisis, this government's priority in Parliament is a statute law bill that fixes typographical errors. Another key priority for this government is to establish the SEC in the constitution, something they have been talking about for years and that will finally feature in this week's government program. But how did they go about it? Well, despite the legislation being tabled over a hundred days ago, the government has not offered a single briefing to explain the legislation, as is the process that we have always seen. So, naturally, from this legislation on the government's business program that they refuse to explain, one can only conclude that the government have got something to hide. We know what



that is; we know it is a shell of an idea with no substance. All the government has mainly done so far is print hats and jackets and give out lollies and bags.

What we are really seeing on the ground is families struggling with a 28 per cent rise in the cost of electricity bills and an increase of 22 per cent in gas bills, and yet there is nothing on the government business program that tackles the cost of living. This week's government business program further reinforces that Labor have the wrong priorities for Victoria and no plan to address the challenges we face. We need a government business program that actually addresses real everyday issues for Victorians. In my electorate we have got Department of Families, Fairness and Housing homes sitting empty while people sit on waiting lists for years for social housing. We see the government are falling well behind on their targets to build houses. The government business program should be responding to these issues that Victorians are facing today, yet time and time again they are being ignored by this Labor government. Instead of actually having the opportunity to debate these bills, which the government have spruiked will actually do something to help Victorians facing the cost-of-living crisis, they will do nothing. We can see that by them putting these two bills together and giving us just 2 hours to debate them.

You are absolutely right that we all did want to speak on this bill. So why are we being forced into a situation of having the bills sit on the program for over a hundred days, with no bill briefing of any value? Last night we were offered a bill briefing at 4 o'clock but with no people from the department who had been involved in drawing up the bill; no-one was available to give that briefing to us as an opposition. We are being asked to debate a bill without the ability to scrutinise it and understand it. After the pressure that was applied there was an offer of 10:30 this morning. We were all preparing for Parliament, which starts at 12. Really? They want us to be present at a bill briefing that they have had a hundred days or more to deliver – and they are doing it this morning. Then they are expecting us to debate it this afternoon, putting only 2 hours aside of the government business program to do so. If that does not smack of something underhanded – perhaps chaos, perhaps arrogance. It does. It simply smacks of the arrogance of this government. The irony is –

**Tim Richardson** interjected.

**Roma BRITNELL:** Yes, you are right, member. It is an irony. If you think you do not need your community –

**The SPEAKER:** Member for South-West Coast, through the Chair. The member for Mordialloc will come to order.

**Roma BRITNELL:** Through the Chair, the member for Mordialloc is correct: there is an irony that this government feel they have so much arrogance that they do not need to give bill briefings. They do not need to be communicating. *(Time expired)*

**Ellen SANDELL** (Melbourne) (12:48): *(By leave)* I just wish to make a short contribution on the government business program. There are some important bills on the program this week, in particular the two bills that deal with putting the SEC into the constitution, and of course as the Greens we support greater climate action and safeguarding climate action against future governments who may wish to undo it.

We do have some amendments to these bills, which we have indicated to the government and other parties and independents. We have requested consideration in detail for this bill so that we can move our amendments. Of course procedure dictates that we are unable to move amendments as crossbenchers unless we go into that stage of consideration in detail. So on principle this week we will not support the government business program just because I think, as we have indicated before, in the instance where we do request consideration in detail where we have amendments – we will always request consideration in detail when we do have amendments to give us a chance to move them regardless of whether we support the bill or the guillotine overall – we will oppose the government business program if we do not receive consideration in detail just as a principled measure.

We do believe that 2 hours is too short for debate. We understand the pressures that the government is under just in terms of making sure that the vote on this bill happens at the right time. We understand that the bill was introduced, I think, a hundred days ago, so there is not a huge rush to get it through, but also there are no surprises; people have had a chance to look at the bill. We would very much like more than 2 hours of debate, just as a matter of democracy and as a matter of principle, but we all do know what is in the bill because we have had it for quite a while now.

So just for the reason that we think 2 hours is too short for democracy on balance we will support the opposition's amendment to push the guillotine on this particular bill off for a couple of days to give more members a chance to contribute. It would be great to see consideration in detail. We understand that the government has said that that will not be happening. Just for that reason – it is not because we do not support the bills; it is not because we do not support the bills that are on the guillotine – we will always oppose the guillotine if we have requested consideration in detail and it has not been provided for.

**The SPEAKER:** The minister has moved the government business program. The member for Brighton has moved an amendment to the motion, to omit paragraph (1) and after '7 March 2024:' insert the words 'Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023'. The question is:

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

Members supporting the amendment by the member for Brighton should vote no.

**Assembly divided on question:**

*Ayes (53):* Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, 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 (31):* Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Gabrielle de Vietri, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, Sam Hibbins, 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, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Jess Wilson

**Question agreed to.**

**Assembly divided on motion:**

*Ayes (53):* Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, 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

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**Motion agreed to.**

### *Members statements*

#### **Turkish Airlines**

**Natalie SULEYMAN** (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (12:59): Hoşgeldin Türk Hava Yolları. Welcome to Turkish Airlines, which has just landed in Melbourne, making history with inaugural flight TK168. I was honoured to welcome the chair Professor Dr Ahmet Bolat and the board members of Turkish Airlines, including Türkiye's Deputy Minister of Transport and Infrastructure. This is a massive win for Victoria, an absolute game changer, with direct flights between Istanbul and Melbourne. Turkish Airlines is the best and largest carrier in Europe, connecting Victoria to over 346 destinations.

This is an economic boost of over \$132 million every year for Victoria, creating local jobs and opportunities for trade and business investment between Victoria and Türkiye. Just yesterday Turkish Airlines announced they will become Melbourne Victory's principal partner – and I cannot wait to see the jersey.

I want to sincerely thank Professor Dr Ahmet Bolat and his whole board and also Ahmet Halid Kutluoğlu, Gökhan Cengiz, the Ambassador of Türkiye His Excellency Ufuk Gezer, consul general of Türkiye in Melbourne Doğan Işık, the CEO of Melbourne Airport Lorie Argus and the whole team at Melbourne Airport for all their work.

It has been an amazing weekend for Victorians, including the Turkish community in Melbourne. This is a historic moment, a moment that opens the doors for many opportunities between Victoria and Türkiye.

#### **Country Fire Authority volunteers**

**Richard RIORDAN** (Polwarth) (13:00): I would like to put on the record today a huge debt of gratitude and thanks to all our CFA volunteers right across regional Victoria, who really went into overdrive in the last couple of weeks. I would particularly like to single out those in my own home electorate of Polwarth, a couple of brigades I had a chance to catch up with in recent days, the Winchelsea CFA and the Bellbrae CFA, both of whom contributed people power, resources and equipment to help keep those further to the north and in central Victoria safe in recent weeks. It is a big credit to them and the effort that they put in. Not only are they flat out helping other communities stay safe, but they are also part of a strong network that keeps the fires safe at home and makes sure that their communities are not at risk.

#### **Torquay Bowls Club**

**Richard RIORDAN** (Polwarth) (13:01): I would also like to do a quick shout-out to the Torquay Bowls Club. The Torquay Bowls Club is one of the oldest in the state, and it celebrated its 100th birthday last Sunday week. And a special note to Ian Gribble: Ian is a relative newcomer to the Torquay area, but he has put a great deal of effort into creating a book on the history of the Torquay Bowls Club, which has been available to all the community and is still available through the fantastic merch outlet at the Torquay Bowls Club for anyone wanting to learn a bit more about the history. It is a great location, one of the best views in the state. A big shout-out to the committee and the team at the Torquay Bowls Club.

### Country Fire Authority Dereel brigade

**Michaela SETTLE** (Eureka) (13:02): Last Wednesday at 6:30 pm the VicEmergency app pinged with a warning of a grass fire in Dereel. With 37-degree heat, a gusting north wind and the spectre of 2013, Dereel CFA kicked into action. Help came from far and wide, and in under an hour there were over 70 crews on the ground and up to 12 air wing above. By 9:30 pm it was contained. No homes were lost, and there was a unit in every driveway. Some people said it was a miracle that it was harnessed so quickly, but it was not a miracle. It was the rapidly deployed aircraft, it was the selfless volunteers from New South Wales and across Victoria, it was FRV strike teams and it was the decades of training by the Dereel CFA. It was their deep knowledge of the terrain. It was knowing when to take a stand so the fire would not cross the Colac-Ballarat Road. It was a brigade who are the pride of their community. Twelve local firefighters fought for their town, each and every one of them a miracle. So to captain Robert Hill, Darryn Hill, Justine Dirago, Steven Moulder, Dimitrios Georgalas, Nathan Delaney, Sharon Dirago, Ryan Ditchburn, Gregory Fadersen, Danny May, Lauren Minns and Ashley Owen I say thank you.

### Regional health services

**Tim BULL** (Gippsland East) (13:04): Last sitting week I raised concerns over the medical imaging delays at Bairnsdale Regional Health Service but also some other country hospitals. I have since been advised I-Med, which provides this service, has flagged a further reduction in what it is going to offer, which will result in longer delays. As the minister would be aware, this impacts health outcomes significantly, particularly for oncology patients who need to start their treatment plans. I acknowledge discussions with the minister last week around country hospital medical imaging being linked into metro health services to improve outcomes for rural patients. Regional Victorians should not have to endure these wait times, and I seek the minister's urgent attention to expedite this outcome.

### Gippsland East electorate roadside vegetation

**Tim BULL** (Gippsland East) (13:04): On 2 October 2020 Labor upper house member Harriet Shing promised an 80-plant nursery for Nowa Nowa to compensate for the loss of the mill in that town. She said:

This initiative will also help to ensure that local community members are able to benefit from the employment opportunities ...

Of course it never eventuated. However, what we did not know was that this government would oversee somewhat of a native tree nursery in its centre-of-the-road barriers between Stratford and Bairnsdale – the eucalypts growing well over a metre high, 150 plants at the last count, and a lot of grasses as well. It is an example of the neglect that our roads are facing, and I urge the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to please ensure that timely repairs are made.

### Frankston City Council

**Paul EDBROOKE** (Frankston) (13:05): On 5 June 2023 a Frankston councillor stated several times on the record that council were removing the \$6 million gymnastics component from a \$55 million project, totally contradicting the council's democratic decision. Later the councillor denied these statements, telling us that the federal and state members were wrong, all our records were wrong, our staff were wrong and former barrister Peta Murphy MP's minutes were wrong, but the councillor could not explain why he did not amend her minutes. I discovered last Monday that eight councillors and the executive team were given secret fraudulent minutes that were not shared or approved and totally removed this councillor's statements from the record to hide his double-dealings from the rest of council. This is clear, cut and dried evidence of corruption in Frankston council. Council directors Babbar and Hughes and council officer Thomson witnessed the councillor's mistruths, and Thomson emailed the fraudulent minutes. All three and CEO Phil Cantillon, whom I have raised this issue with for months, must call out these lies with statements or resign. Our community deserve no less. Creating fake documents to cast a shadow on the late Peta Murphy's integrity is an appalling act. I have referred

this to IBAC and will continue to update Parliament regularly. The only question council need to ask themselves from now on is: how many good officers' jobs will be lost to cover up the incompetence, the stupidity and the litany of lies of the mayor, failed Liberal candidate and now mayor again Nathan Conroy?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I remind members that that word is unparliamentary.

#### **Team Sports 4 All**

**Brad ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (13:06): Team Sports 4 All are a magnificent community organisation who held their annual helping hands event in Hampton last week. Team Sports 4 All support kids and their families to pick up a bat or a ball, put on a uniform and participate in team sport. But more than this, they support often disconnected and isolated families to engage with their local community. Congratulations on a successful night, and thank you to the volunteers and event sponsors who made the event such a success.

#### **Michael Williams**

**Brad ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (13:07): I had the honour of presenting a Victoria award to Michael Williams at the Cheltenham Park Cricket Club's end-of-season barbecue. Michael joined the club as a junior in 1981, progressing as a senior player and always remaining loyal to the club as a one-club man. He spent 25 years on the committee, including five as treasurer and 10 as president. To top off a wonderful day, his three sons joined him on the field for the first time on Saturday, resulting in a memorable family victory. Congratulations to Michael, and thank you for your community contribution.

#### **Beaumaris Secondary College**

**Brad ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (13:07): Last Monday I joined the Beaumaris Secondary College community for their leadership assembly. It was an honour to meet many students, their teachers and their families and congratulate them in their new roles. To finish off, the school band rocked their performance of *Murder on the Dancefloor*. Thank you for having me, and to all the students at Beaumaris Secondary College, I wish you the very best for your 2024 school year.

#### **Stella Maris Catholic Primary School, Beaumaris**

**Brad ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (13:08): Finally, I visited my old primary school last week and spoke to the grade 6 students at Stella Maris primary school in Beaumaris ahead of their visit to Canberra. I enjoyed the Q and A with the kids and appreciated their excellent questions. Yes, I have pineapple on pizza. To the students and their teachers, enjoy your trip to Canberra. I look forward to seeing your leadership contributions in the future.

#### **Eltham High School**

**Vicki WARD** (Eltham – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Employment) (13:08): A huge shout-out to Eltham High School, their amazing staff and fantastic students. EHS have recently renamed their school houses after local Victorians who have helped make a positive difference to our communities. The new house names are: Pakana, named after Aboriginal journalist Uncle Charles Pakana; Skipper, recognising one of the founding artists of Montsalvat, Sonia Skipper; Toner, celebrating Pauline Toner, the great Labor woman who was the first female Victorian government minister, first female state MP, first female mayor and councillor for our local area; and Everard, named after William Everard, co-founder of Eltham High School and Speaker of the Victorian Legislative Assembly in the 1930s. I also want to again recognise the wonderful inclusion, equality and acceptance we see daily at Eltham High. Most recently EHS celebrated a flag-raising ceremony of the Progress Pride flag thanks to the support of the ChillOut Festival's raising rainbows program.

### Eltham Jazz Festival

**Vicki WARD** (Eltham – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Employment) (13:09): I would like to recognise the success of this year's Eltham jazz, food and wine festival. Celebrating the festival's 25th anniversary, the Eltham town square was transformed into a hub of live music performances and food and wine stalls as well as fun kids activities like face painting, circus acts and jumping castles. I would certainly like to acknowledge the work of the volunteer committee: Michael S, Daniel, Michael Y, Fee, Angela, Debora, Bernard, Bill, Cam, Kirilee, Melody and Brett. Without you this much-loved community event would not be possible.

### Clean Up Australia Day

**Vicki WARD** (Eltham – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Employment) (13:09): Eltham central, Alistair Knox Park and the nearby Diamond Creek are now rubbish free thanks to the efforts of our wonderful 1st Eltham Scout Group's Clean Up Australia Day. It was great to join many Scout volunteers, community members, Eltham Lions club and Clean Up Australia – *(Time expired)*

### Kew electorate schools

**Jess WILSON** (Kew) (13:10): School is back, and it was a privilege to visit both Sacred Heart Primary School and Kew East Primary School to speak with students about the importance of leadership and present them with their leadership badges. I would like to congratulate Alaia and Joel from Sacred Heart on their roles as school captains. To all the students at Sacred Heart who have taken on leadership roles this year: it is very exciting to hear your plans. Congratulations too to Leah, Alastair, Luke and Jordan from Kew East Primary on your roles as school ambassadors for 2024. And to all the class captains, house captains, music captains, library monitors and school leaders at KEPS, a big congratulations. I trust that the year ahead will be full of exciting challenges, student-led initiatives and wonderful memories.

It was also fantastic to welcome more than 100 grade 6 students from Balwyn North Primary School and a group of grade 6 students from Ruyton Girls' School to Parliament for a tour and role-play. Students learned about the history of the Victorian Parliament, the structure of our system of government and the everyday workings here on Spring Street. I would like to thank all the students for their enthusiasm and for keeping me on my toes with their very insightful questions. I was incredibly impressed by their depth of knowledge and their ability to grasp quite complicated concepts. The students' passion about the working of our Parliament and the institution of government gives me great confidence that the future of our democracy is in safe hands.

### Western Victoria fires

**Juliana ADDISON** (Wendouree) (13:11): It has been a huge two weeks for communities to the west of Ballarat who have been impacted by fires. I am so grateful to the hundreds of people who have worked around the clock fighting fires, supporting the firefighters and caring for those evacuated from their homes, in relief centres. Thank you to the Lake Wendouree Football Netball Club, the Wendouree Cricket Club and the Selkirk Stadium for hosting Ballarat's emergency relief centres. Spirits remained high thanks to the kindness and support of so many wonderful people and amazing organisations. My heartfelt thanks to Ballarat council, Central Highlands Water, Pyrenees Shire Council, Salvation Army, emergency services Victoria, Ambulance Victoria, St John Ambulance Victoria, Agriculture Victoria, the Department of Health, Ballarat Community Health, Victoria Police, Victorian Council of Churches Emergencies Ministry, Basketball Ballarat, Ballarat Animal Shelter, Crown Melbourne and Australian Red Cross. Great work by the member for Ripon too. I also wish to thank the volunteers from the CFA and the New South Wales Rural Fire Service as well as Forest Fire Management Victoria. A special shout-out to Wayne Rigg for his work in establishing the base camp.

### Wendouree West Exodus Community

**Juliana ADDISON** (Wendouree) (13:12): Happy 20th birthday to the Wendouree West Exodus Community. What a wonderful celebration of community, respect, inclusion and friendship. Twenty years ago Fr Frank Smith established the Wendouree West Exodus Community to strive to journey with the people of Wendouree West and with each other, listening deeply to the needs of other people. Thank you to everyone involved in this transformational journey over the last two decades, including Malcolm and Katrina Burns, Val Bourke, Kevin Waugh, Sandra Dillion and Cathy Finn.

### Gippsland South electorate events

**Danny O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (13:13): The devastating storm event of 13 February that tore through Mirboo North has unfortunately overshadowed the massive success that was the Mirboo North Italian Festa just two days earlier. I hate to think what might have happened had that deadly storm hit two days earlier, given we had tens of thousands of people – literally – in Baromi Park for the massive event.

Starting out as the Feast of St Paul, in 2016 the event went mega and is now one of the most popular events on the Gippsland, multicultural and indeed statewide festivals calendar. I was most excited to be invited this year to take part in the grape stomp, and I am happy to report that my colleague in the other place Melina Bath and I had a win. It is a great credit to Rosie Romano and her extremely hardworking team of volunteers, who put on what is a massive event celebrating all things Italian and what Italian migrants have brought to Australia and Gippsland. It speaks volumes that just a few days later those same ladies were putting on a barbecue that should have been to thank the town and the volunteers for the festa but doubled as an exercise in feeding those without power and still struggling after the storm went through.

The festa is but one of many events on in Gippsland during this beautiful season. The Foster show last weekend was a massive success, particularly the increasingly popular dog high jump; 290,000 people have viewed the highlights on my Facebook page. On Saturday there was the Boolarra Folk Festival, attracting thousands, and this Sunday I am looking forward to the running of the Stony Creek Cup – a great day out at country racing. The events keep on coming, proving Gippsland is the place for food, wine, festivals and fun.

### Linda White

**Mathew HILAKARI** (Point Cook) (13:14): Vale, Linda White. The labour movement knew Linda was 100 per cent for unions. The Labor Party knew Linda was 100 per cent for the party. The extraordinary capacity of Senator Linda White made both these things true simultaneously, and Linda was much loved for it – 25 years as assistant national secretary of the Australian Services Union, her love and her passion. A fighter for gender equality – I witnessed her securing the affirmative action deal in 2015, an effort that has made Labor better. Linda did not need airs and graces. She wanted change, and she was effective at achieving it.

Her role in the 2012 equal pay case improved the lives of 200,000 non-government social and community service workers, who were mainly women. Linda was in it for the long haul, recovering entitlements for Ansett workers in a decade-long struggle. Linda was a bridge between the ALP national executive and the state branch through their first intervention in 50 years, and what followed has been our greatest electoral success in generations. Linda was a part of that success – a firm part of it. Finally, Linda wanted bread for all, and roses too. Linda contributed to the MCG and the Royal Botanic Gardens and had a particular love for the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, telling me often of the importance of the children of Melbourne's west having access to the cultural institutions of our state. A Senate term cut too short – a loss to Labor and to the Labor Party. I will miss your advice and friendship. You are already missed. Vale, Linda White.

### Smoke alarms

**Gabrielle DE VIETRI** (Richmond) (13:16): In Ballarat in 2022 Simon Scarff died from a fire in his rental, which did not have a single working smoke alarm. Under Victoria's law, Simon's landlord did not have to make sure that they were correctly installed or tested regularly. The same fatal loophole exists for over 43 per cent of rentals here in Victoria because the leases began before 29 March 2021. In the last 10 years coroners have recommended three separate times that the government amend the legislation so that every rental must have working smoke alarms. Labor, this must change now, before more lives are lost to faulty smoke alarms.

### Climate change

**Gabrielle DE VIETRI** (Richmond) (13:16): Last month Victoria had catastrophic fire conditions across the state, including the worst fire risk day in five years. The town of Pomonal lost nearly half of their homes. Fire seasons are becoming longer and more deadly, yet Labor continues to support the burning of coal and gas, the leading cause of climate change. In fact right now Labor has over a dozen new gas projects in the works, including seismic blasting in Gunditjmara sea country, threatening the sacred songlines of Koontapool, the southern right whale. Labor, we cannot afford to be doing this. Quit coal and gas before it is too late.

### Albert Park electorate school fetes

**Nina TAYLOR** (Albert Park) (13:17): Well, the seat of Albert Park has been very busy, let me tell you. We have had a couple of absolutely fantastic school fetes. The Middle Park Primary School fete was on 24 February. I was very happy to sponsor the cake stall. There were rides, delicious foods, cultural dances, lovely fruit cups – nice and healthy – and live music. But I really want to commend the whole school community for that real sense of connectedness; you really felt the love and the support from everyone involved. So commendations to all who put that beautiful school fete together.

Secondly, the St Kilda Park Primary School fete was on the Saturday just past. Again I was happy to support the cake stall. Again there were amazing rides, creative arts – decorated pots and make-up and wonderful things – and live performances. Yes, I offered to be dunked. I was not fully dunked – I do not know – but I was submerged, and I would argue that fulfills the purpose. In any case, it was a brilliant fete again, and it was wonderful to see such beautiful connection amongst our wonderful community.

### Equinix data centre

**Nina TAYLOR** (Albert Park) (13:18): On another note, I was also very happy to accompany the Minister for Climate Action and Minister for Energy and Resources to the Equinix data centre in Fishermans Bend. What is really exciting is the launch of large-scale solar onsite, and that is a result of our Victorian energy upgrades program. It is great to see businesses like Equinix getting on board and getting us to zero emissions.

### Rosebud Hospital

**Sam GROTH** (Nepean) (13:19): I just want to pay tribute to those members in my community who have proudly gone out to fight for the redevelopment of Rosebud Hospital. Recently in this place there was a petition tabled with more than 3500 signatures calling for that redevelopment. There was a community rally earlier this year – they braved some serious heat to get out and do it – and they are actually holding another community rally on Friday 15 March between 10 am and 12 pm at the hospital on Point Nepean Road. I encourage as many locals to get down and support the push to get this hospital rebuilt as we can possibly manage – get behind this important committee redevelopment.

### Community safety

**Sam GROTH** (Nepean) (13:19): I also just want to raise the disturbing issue of violent assaults being perpetrated by young Victorians, especially those that are being posted to social media for



5 minutes of fame by the people committing these heinous crimes. We have recently seen an elderly gentleman pushed into the water down in Mornington, off the pier, and even more recently a 14-year-old girl with autism beaten by young offenders in Altona. I am a parent, and many others in this place are parents, but you do not have to be. What we saw in those videos is completely disgusting and there is no place for it in Victoria. But more to that, it should be an offence for those people to post those videos to social media. That little girl now will not go out in public, and she will not go to school. We need to do more to make sure that the victims of these attacks are protected properly.

### **Victorian Mosque Open Day**

**Nathan LAMBERT** (Preston) (13:20): Last Sunday was mosque open day, and I want to thank Tarek Khodr and Jamal Mohammed for their gracious hospitality at Preston Mosque and also Sam at the Albanian mosque for showing me and my daughter round even though we were quite late and he was trying to pack up. I do know that for some of the smaller mosques it is a bit of effort to open up on mosque open day and they might not get a lot of people through, but I think there is a huge amount of value in those face-to-face conversations and the chance for people to meet each other, especially in this modern era when so much is mediated through the internet and social media. I want to thank everyone involved in that annual statewide initiative.

### **Your Community Health**

**Nathan LAMBERT** (Preston) (13:21): I also want to acknowledge Kent Burgess, Liz Chondros, Wendy Cisar and all the team at Your Community Health on the launch of their new community building, which was significantly funded by this Labor government. A shout-out in particular to Donna Dacey, who runs the social support and men's shed groups and who is celebrating 20 years as part of that wonderful organisation and community.

### **Nam Le**

**Nathan LAMBERT** (Preston) (13:21): I would also like to congratulate Newlands local and acclaimed author Nam Le on the launch of his latest book *36 Ways of Writing a Vietnamese Poem*.

### **William Ruthven Secondary College**

**Nathan LAMBERT** (Preston) (13:21): Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank Rose Alderman for her ongoing activism regarding the oval at William Ruthven Secondary College. The oval has been closed for over seven years now. That is something that needs to change. We are grateful for the work of Rose and indeed the work of principal Andrew Elborough and others who are seeking to address that issue.

### **Child sexual abuse**

**Paul MERCURIO** (Hastings) (13:22): Recently a report written by the Australian Childhood Foundation called *Hear Us Now, Act Now* was released. It spoke about the lived experience of childhood sexual abuse, with over 300 people contributing and telling their stories. I would urge all MPs in this place – in fact I would urge everyone – to read this report.

In this job over the last year many people have come to me to talk about their own childhood sexual abuse. As the report states, it is way too prevalent. In hearing their stories I have come to understand that there is no such place as a safe space. If a paedophile wants to groom and abuse a child, they will. My wife Andrea was sexually abused in her home from the age of six until the age of 12 by her father Richard Toy, and when this was revealed and discovered Andrea's mother Marilyn stood by him. For years we kept this secret, not wanting to hurt the family, and in some strange way we felt we needed to protect her parents. But every day my wife lives with the pain, anxiety, hurt and memories of her abuse and the knowledge that she was not the only child her father sexually abused.

A paedophile's only weapons are secrecy and silence, and when they are removed the abused is empowered to move from victim to survivor and true healing can begin. The weapons we have to

protect our children are the exact opposite of secrecy and silence. Please use them. With my wife's permission and on her behalf I lift this secret from her shoulders today.

### **International Women's Week**

**Luba GRIGOROVITCH** (Kororoit) (13:23): Happy International Women's Week. As part of the International Women's Day celebrations this week I hosted a Kororoit community International Women's Day morning tea yesterday. This is the second year that I have done this, and this year I decided to do something a little different. With International Women's Day providing us with an opportunity to formally recognise the contributions and achievements of women in our lives, I invited community members to nominate a woman who lives, works, volunteers or studies in Kororoit who deserves to be recognised for her contributions to our community. We had an overwhelming response, with so many inspiring stories of the talented local women in Kororoit, from women working in the mental health space to empowering women in our multicultural communities to advocating for equality in our media and to those grassroots volunteers that our community thrives on.

To Wendy, Claire, Sana, Noor, Nikki, Rachael, Melanie, Meryam, Rena, Niti and Cecilia: I was honoured to recognise and award these women for the work that each and every one of them does changing lives and helping people within our community.

I also want to thank Tanja Kovac and Maree Overall, who are the co-founders and co-CEOs of Gender Lens Australia, for being the guest speakers. These two amazing women have worked tirelessly and campaigned and championed gender equality across Victoria, and I am in awe of both of them. Again, happy International Women's Week.

### **Victorian Mosque Open Day**

**Belinda WILSON** (Narre Warren North) (13:25): Last Sunday mosques and Islamic centres across our state opened their doors as part of Victoria's annual mosque open day, a celebration of our state's amazing diversity. Victorians were invited to visit their local mosque, where they could tour the space, see some arts and crafts sessions and connect with the local Muslim community. In my electorate of Narre Warren North and indeed across the south-east of Melbourne we have an incredible diverse Muslim community, and a local mosque is such an important part of all of that.

The first stop of the day for me was the Emir Sultan Mosque in Dandenong, which I visited with the member for Dandenong, Minister Williams, and Lee Tarlamis in the other place, a member for Southern Metro.

I want to say a huge thankyou to Ali, Osman, Merve Dogan, Saliha Kaya and Roqia Ibrahimi, who showed us around the mosque and gave both the minister and me a beautiful headscarf, which we really appreciate. Thank you for everything you do in the community. A special shout-out to Sema Secen and Salam Masri, who also helped out on the day.

Our second stop of the day was the Hallam mosque in the heart of my electorate with the federal member for Bruce Julian Hill. We met up with our friend and community leader Mohammed Janif, Javid Khan and the newly appointed president Fahim Akbar. I also want to welcome the new imam at the mosque Sheik Zulfiken and his lovely wife.

### **Geelong Aboriginal Employment Taskforce**

**Chris COUZENS** (Geelong) (13:26): Last week the Geelong Aboriginal Employment Taskforce proudly presented the third summit of its First Peoples workforce on planning, developing and empowering. Aunty Muriel Bamblett, CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, was the keynote speaker on social and emotional wellbeing of First Peoples and empowering economic independence. We also heard from Kaley Nicholson from Wan-Yaari consulting, Barwon Health's Aboriginal health program on their Aboriginal employment strategy, Barwon Water on their Aboriginal employment journey and an expert panel from Geelong's First Nations leaders. A huge

thankyou to the Gordon TAFE for their commitment and contribution to the summit: the involvement of the Gordon TAFE's First Nations Mumgu-dhal students and the Gordon's Davidson restaurant for a magnificent lunch, along with the Gordon floristry students who prepared the table flowers. It created an incredible day for over 100 Geelong businesses, public servants and First Peoples.

The summits are a result of Geelong First Peoples leaders coming together to improve Aboriginal economic development opportunities, job opportunities, education opportunities and self-determination. First Peoples have led this taskforce. They have set the agenda, and the Geelong community and stakeholders have had the privilege of being taken on the journey with them. I want to thank the First Peoples taskforce for their work and trust. Victoria is leading the way on treaty, truth and self-determination; however, we know that we are not closing the gap fast enough.

### **Victorian Mosque Open Day**

**Dylan WIGHT** (Tarneit) (13:28): Recently I had the pleasure of visiting the three fantastic mosques in my electorate of Tarneit as part of Victoria's Mosque Open Day. Supported by the Victorian government and facilitated by our local Muslim community, this annual event gives people the opportunity to learn about the Islamic faith and traditions and connect with their local Muslim community. Since 2014 the Labor government has provided over \$36.8 million to the Victorian Islamic community to support their programs, their events and their initiatives. I would like to particularly thank the three mosques in my electorate: Golden Wattle Masjid, Melbourne Grand Mosque and of course Virgin Mary Mosque. I would like to thank them for opening their doors to the Tarneit and Hoppers Crossing communities. It was wonderful to have the opportunity for me and also for the broader community to learn and expand our understanding of the Islamic faith. Seeing so many people excited to come and engage and learn was a testament to how welcoming our community in Melbourne's west is. I am proud to be part of a government which is supporting multifaith events and working closely with our Muslim community.

### ***Bills***

#### **Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023**

#### **State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023**

#### *Second reading*

#### **Debate resumed on motions of Lily D'Ambrosio:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Mary-Anne THOMAS** (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (13:29): Under standing orders I wish to advise the house of amendments to the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023 and request that they be circulated.

#### **Amendments circulated under standing orders.**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (13:30): I rise to speak on the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023 and State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023 as a cognate debate. Before speaking about the matters of the bills it is important to talk about how we got here and the background to that matter. This afternoon this Parliament will be dealing with these bills in a cognate fashion, which means that the government moved a motion which requires that the bills be debated together – the bills have to be debated at the same time. When they moved that motion, what the government said was that we must debate those bills together because there is no other way. There is no other way than they be debated together. The government advised me that at 5 o'clock we will divide on one of those bills and then we will debate one of them separately. Let me say that again so the chamber understands: 'These bills must be debated together,' the government said. I have not gone back to get the Leader of the House's contribution on this debate. I have not gone back to read those comments

back into *Hansard*, the need that these bills could not be debated separately, but after 5 o'clock they will. So they will be – they must be – debated cognately.

**Danny O'Brien** interjected.

**James NEWBURY:** They have to be; there is no other way – except after 5 o'clock today. That is what political expediency is about. We know because the Greens belled the cat during their debate on the government business program just earlier today when they said that the vote on the bill this afternoon is happening because it is happening at the right time to ensure, in my view, that the members are here to reach their required 53 votes on the bill. This is outrageous. It is outrageous that the government has played such pathetic games with this bill. Only last year the government said the bills had to be dealt with last year. They put it on the government business program. They sent the government business program to the world at large and then pulled the bills. They did not want to debate the bills they said must be debated – how embarrassing for the minister. And why didn't the government want to deal with it? Because they could not get their members into this place for a vote. How extraordinary! How extraordinary it is that the government could not manage its own numbers to get its own members here for a vote, so they pulled the bills. How embarrassing.

After 100 days – it has been almost 110 days since the government introduced the bill – we have had a third issue, and that is that the minister has refused to provide a briefing on those bills for over 100 days. To give the government some credit –

**Danny O'Brien** interjected.

**James NEWBURY:** I will; I will give the government some credit – most ministers, in fact I would go so far as to say almost all ministers, accept that it is only reasonable for an opposition and Victorians more broadly to be provided with an opportunity for a briefing on a bill. It is not unreasonable; in fact it is a healthy part of democracy because it is not just the opposition who is briefed, it is industry, it is key stakeholders and it is the community that have raised concerns through the opposition. That briefing provides an opportunity to deal with those matters raised. But, sadly, this minister does not. This minister refused to allow the opposition to have a briefing. In fact she refused when her own department came to the opposition and said they wanted to hold one. Can you believe it?

The department said to the opposition they stood ready to do it – direct quote – but the minister said no. After pushing with the Premier directly and after pushing with the Leader of the House, the government provided a bill briefing yesterday afternoon. Guess how many department officials were there to assist with that bill briefing? To answer important questions, how many do you think were there?

**Danny O'Brien** interjected.

**James NEWBURY:** There was less than one – zero. The government – well, the minister – would not allow the department to show up. I have never seen that before. I have never seen a circumstance where the department was gagged from attending a bill briefing. I mean, does it surprise any of us to see that there are no department officers here today. For most bills you will have a department officer here. In fact I think that that is also a precedent. If I can say to the readers of *Hansard*, there are currently no department officers sitting in the Parliament, just like there were no department officers at the bill briefing yesterday. It is an outrageous bungling of this bill, and that the government said that we must debate this bill cognately and now we will split the bills after debating half of them, leaving the other bill to be debated separately, just shows the absolute sham that it is.

What the coalition is for is reliable, secure energy, affordable energy and adequate baseload power. That is what this side of the house is for. What these bills do is none of those things, and we know it. The only thing the minister has managed to do with the SEC is buy a lot of jelly beans. It is not producing a single ounce of energy. It is not reducing a single cost to the consumer; in fact it is going up at a rapid rate of knots. But the minister has bought a lot of jelly beans –

**David Southwick** interjected.

**James NEWBURY:** and yo-yos. I forgot the yo-yos, member for Caulfield, that is right. I personally have never been given one of the minister's yo-yos, and I am sure the minister spends quite some time in the afternoon playing with yo-yos in her office.

What this bill does is none of those things. It does not provide secure, reliable energy. It does not supply affordable energy. It does not supply baseload power. So what the coalition will be doing is moving an amendment, which I ask to be circulated in my name.

**Amendment circulated under standing orders.**

**James NEWBURY:** Part of that amendment is to ensure that we have transparency around what this government is doing, because at this stage all we have seen is a whole heap of yo-yos and jelly beans being bought. In fact the government did not even manage to provide an annual report on the SEC this year. It did not provide an annual report on time, and we know it was caught out for doing that. So what the opposition will be doing is moving an amendment on annual reporting – it is not unreasonable, like when we were talking about energy targets last sitting week and moving amendments in that same vein – ensuring there is transparency on what the SEC is doing. What we know, because it has been publicly stated, is that the government will be on an even playing field when it comes to the SEC's activity in the market – competitive neutrality. And what does that mean in terms of ensuring that we have those things that the coalition stands strongly for – well, if you go to the Grattan Institute, the model doesn't stack up logically, said Tony Wood:

It's supposed to be there to be doing something that the private sector isn't doing. But if they're going to operate on a competitively neutral basis, I don't see how it can compete in what's probably the most cutthroat part of the industry.

RMIT professor David Hayward said that the state:

... was going to wean itself off the privatised and marketised national energy market ...

It has ended up as something far more modest that will support the badly flawed existing system and not replace it ...

The new SECV will do nothing to fix this mess, and, sadly, it is now clear it is not intended to do so.

An Australian Industry Group director said that:

Versus what people imagine a government-owned corporation could do, this thing is going to be much greyer and more sober. This is not the second coming of the 1918 SEC, and it's not even a restoration of the 1992 SEC.

These words are damning. They expose why the government is ramming the bill through this place. They expose why. The government does not want to be exposed for going to an election with a pledge to get the SEC through last year and not doing it. The government do not want to be exposed for committing to majority stakes in renewable energy projects, which we know they have not done. They have invested in a project that was going to be built anyway. Talk about breaching promises one after another. But what is one of the most dangerous parts of the government's energy plan? It is not just the way the SEC will operate and not deliver those things that we require and call for. It is the impact of their dangerous gas ban, and that is being exposed for what it is. If we turn to the president of the Gas Appliance Manufacturers Association of Australia, Ross Jamieson, we know that the government's ban will result in a loss of more than 1300 jobs – 1300 jobs lost, which should concern all of us – within six to 12 months in an industry that supports 4000 direct jobs. As Ross Jamieson said:

The Victorian government is chasing an ideological outcome to achieve the electrification agenda at all costs. It removes the rights of Victorian families to choose the appliance that provides the required heat for their needs in their situation ...

Hear, hear. As we know, 60 per cent of gas appliances sold in Australia are made in Australia, and 95 per cent of electric appliances are imported. So much for a Labor government supporting manufacturing.

I turn to the chief executive of the Australian Gas Infrastructure Group, Craig de Laine, and his comments following the recent largest blackout in Victorian history, where 530,000 people were left without power, which just goes to show the government has no idea how to provide secure energy. He said that at that time:

... fewer than five of our 1.5 million gas customers were without supply during the ... storms.

So as 530,000 homes were without power, there were fewer than five without gas during the storms. Further:

It makes the case for both gas and electricity networks to operate in Victoria into the future ...

And doesn't it just. What is this policy approach doing to consumers and businesses? We know there has been a 25 per cent increase in unaffordability – a 25 per cent increase in costs to consumers. We know that – 25 per cent in the last year. No-one can afford these increases. In fact anybody in this place would only need to talk to one constituent to have the fact of these increases raised. But also I should get on the record the increases in costs for businesses. In terms of gas bills, recent analysis showed a 12 per cent national increase average and 31 per cent in Victoria – again, 12 per cent nationally and 31 per cent in Victoria. On electricity – this is for businesses – it was 8 per cent nationally but 17 per cent in Victoria. Is there any wonder the recent ABS stats showed a net decrease of 7606 businesses in Victoria? This is not the state to do business, with this Labor government attacking you on every front. When it comes to your input costs, when it comes to taxes, we know that is the case.

I have spoken previously about the government's lack of capacity when it comes to transmission and ensuring security through a network, and I note the government has introduced a bill today which we have not had an opportunity to see. I am sure that that is an attempted political fix to try and take away from the fact that the community is concerned about the government not providing that security to people's homes as they should do, as they are required to do and as every Victorian would expect them to do.

I will not go for my full allotted time, because unfortunately the government is ramming one of the bills through within 2 hours and the second bill within 4 hours, and most of the members on this side of the place would like an opportunity to speak on them. That should not take anything away from my passion on Labor's mismanagement of energy supply. The coalition does not support the government. We do not support the government because we are for secure, reliable energy. That is what we are for. We are for secure, reliable energy, we are for affordable energy and we are for adequate baseload power. This government is for stunts, this government is for jelly beans and this government is for yo-yos, and it has done nothing meaningful, as every single measure shows: security is down – 530,000 people without power – and affordability is 25 per cent up, and we know there are very, very serious concerns about baseload power into the future. The coalition does not support the government, and I know that the members on my side of the place look forward to debating this bill and this sham that the government has brought to this chamber.

**Mary-Anne THOMAS** (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (13:47): The Allan Labor government supports secure, reliable and affordable energy, and that is why we are bringing back the SEC. As I said earlier in this house, every person in this chamber will have an SEC story. In my family my brother started his distribution officer traineeship with the SEC before it was sold off and privatised by the Kennett government. One of the great joys of working during the campaign of 2022 was being approached by one of my constituents, who gave me some of his own original SEC merch. He was a proud worker under the SEC, and he was so pleased with our government's commitment. Our government supports

strong public institutions, and we understand exactly how much things like the State Electricity Commission have meant to the people of Victoria for so many generations. That is why I am very proud to be able to rise to speak on both of these bills today and specifically to speak to the amendments that have been circulated. There is no doubt about it: every member on this side will attest that when we had the opportunity to speak one on one with all the voters right across Victoria, they told us that this is what they wanted us to do – bring back the SEC and put power back in the hands of the people. And that is what this bill does.

If I talk to the four house amendments we are proposing to the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023, I can outline to you that these are very straightforward amendments that are aimed at simply making more explicit original elements of the bill. All of these amendments are consistent with the intention of both the original bill and what the government has said publicly about the SEC since we announced the commitment to bringing it back in late 2022. The first amendment provides some additional clarity to a general prohibition on the SEC investing in fossil fuel based projects. We have said since day one that the SEC will only invest in renewable energy sources and zero-emission forms of energy storage such as battery storage.

That is what the original bill says, but some stakeholders have asked that the bill also be explicit that the limits on fossil fuel investment also include energy projects other than electricity generation – and of course it always has – so we are happy to make that crystal clear via the amendment.

The remaining amendments are all designed to give additional clarity to the government's total ownership and control of the SEC as an entity, regardless of what corporate form the SEC entity might take in the future. In other words, whether the SEC is an entity that can issue shares or one that cannot will make no difference. The Victorian government will hold any and all shares and will control appointments of directors. Again, this is exactly what we have always said. It is what the original bill reflected, but some stakeholders have told us that they want to see this expressed unambiguously, and we are happy to oblige.

Let us never forget who sold off and privatised energy in this state.

**Pauline Richards:** Who?

**Mary-Anne THOMAS:** Thank you, member for Cranbourne. That would be the Liberal Party of Victoria. We know that their interests rest with the private sector.

**Wayne Farnham:** On a point of order, Speaker, it is not an opportunity for the government to mislead Victorians. It was always Joan Kirner who started the privatisation of the SEC –

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Narracan knows that is not a point of order.

**Mary-Anne THOMAS:** What we know is that those private multinationals, backed in by the Liberal coalition government, increased prices and sacked workers, and now it is Victorian families who are paying the price: \$23 billion in profits going overseas and counting. It is shameful, and it should never have happened. But the SEC is back, and this bill delivers on our election commitment to protecting it. We are enshrining the SEC in the constitution because we want to do everything in our power to protect it from the Liberals. That is exactly what we are doing, making sure that Victorians can rely on publicly owned energy, jobs and emissions reduction for decades to come, because this government understands that the future is electric and that we need to invest in renewables and we need to grow that market. That is exactly what we are doing.

Under this bill the government will hold a controlling interest in its portfolio. Renewables will replace coal, and new projects will be owned by every Victorian to benefit every Victorian. We committed to bringing back the SEC as a publicly owned 100 per cent renewable energy market participant, and we have delivered. This is a very proud moment for the Allan Labor government. On 25 October 2023 the SEC Victoria Pty Ltd was registered with ASIC as a proprietary limited company under the Corporations Act. On 14 November 2023 the SEC was declared as a state-owned company under the

State Owned Enterprises Act 1992. The Premier and the Treasurer each hold one share in the SEC. It will always be a government owned and controlled entity, and this is reflected in the bill's requirement for the state to always fully own and control the SEC.

Its first project is already under construction, which is good news for bills and good news for power prices. Our government understands that we must deliver affordable energy for all Victorians. That is why the Minister for Energy and Resources, who is in the house, for the past 10 years has pursued the most comprehensive change in our energy markets ever seen anywhere in the nation. She is leading the nation when it comes to implementing a plan that recognises, as I said, that the future is electric. The private sector is divesting itself of interest in old coal because the private sector knows that it is finished. We need to embrace renewable technologies, we need to increase renewable output and we need to ensure that energy prices are driven down by increasing supply, ensuring that Victorians have a vested interest in the delivery of this essential service, and that is exactly what the SEC does.

The objectives of the SEC are to support Victoria's transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions; to generate, purchase and sell electricity in Victoria; to own or operate or participate in the operation of renewable energy generation and storage systems and facilities; to develop or support or participate in the development of or invest in renewable energy generation and storage systems and facilities; and to supply energy-related products or services to energy consumers in Victoria. These objectives of course will contribute to the state government's legislated long-term target of net zero by 2045 as well as our nation-leading renewable energy target of 95 per cent by 2035.

We are entrenching this law, and we are doing that through the constitution, which means that we require a special majority of the Parliament to approve this law or to support it later on today. As I said earlier, we are doing this, we are taking this step, because we need to protect affordable energy from the Liberals. Make no mistake, a Liberal government will privatise government assets whenever and wherever they can to do deals with their private sector mates. As health minister I know this all too well – Mildura hospital privatised, Latrobe hospital set up for privatisation. They cut, they close public institutions. So we are ensuring that the SEC stays where it belongs: in the Victorian constitution.

I know that my constituents across Macedon are really going to welcome today's bill debate. They will be listening to both sides to see who has got a stake in the future of Victoria and who wants to take the state backwards. That is what the Liberal and National parties do – anytime they get an opportunity, they will take us backwards, because they are not interested in the benefits for Victorians. They are only interested in their private sector mates. Only our government has a plan for the transition of the energy sector to electric through renewables – *(Time expired)*

**Danny O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (13:57): Well, well, well, how things have changed. At the election in 2022 and for much of last year the SEC was the be-all and end-all. It was the saviour of the state of Victoria. It was going to deliver everything that all Victorians want, and now we are so proud of it on that side that we are going to debate it in 2 hours and knock it off by 5 o'clock today. I mean, what has this government come to? They are not even prepared to stand up and actually debate their own policy that they thought was so good in 2022. They are hiding this policy. It is absolutely extraordinary. This policy is being revealed now – by the fact that the government is trying to hide debate on this and shut it down by 5 o'clock this afternoon – as the biggest con job in politics since Daniel Andrews said that the east-west link contract was not worth the paper it was written on. What an absolute disgrace this government are that they are not even prepared to stand up in this place and let us debate this legislation in full. This is just a con job, and the Minister for Health at the table has the gall to say that this is about protecting Victorians from the Liberals when we all know – who was it that began the privatisation of the SEC?

*Members interjecting.*

**Danny O'BRIEN**: Everyone on this side seems to know! Can I hear it from the other side: who began the privatisation of the SEC?



*Members interjecting.*

**Danny O'BRIEN:** They have forgotten Joan already! Loy Yang B and Edison Mission and David White. I just cannot believe –

**Mary-Anne Thomas:** On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member for Gippsland South knows that this is not an opportunity to attack members on this side nor to besmirch the reputation –

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The Leader of the House will resume her seat. There is no point of order. It is, however, time for us to break for question time. The member will have the call when we resume.

**Business interrupted under sessional orders.**

*Questions without notice and ministers statements*

**Housing**

**John PESUTTO** (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Premier. Labor's housing statement set a target to build 80,000 new homes every year for a decade. Will 80,000 new homes be built this year?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:01): It is always good to get a question from the Leader of the Opposition, playing right up against the net as he is today. We are really proud that last September we released a housing statement that brought together every element across government, looking at using every lever we have as a state government to build more homes. I will refer to some of the data that has been published recently that talks exactly to the problem we are tackling as a government. We know not enough homes are being built. Not enough homes are being built here in the city, in the country and indeed right around Australia. We know not enough homes are –

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Kew is warned.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this was a very, very simple and clear question. Will 80,000 new homes be built this year?

**The SPEAKER:** The question referred to Labor's housing statement as well. The Premier was being relevant to the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** On the data that has been released, there have been a number of different datasets, but they all speak to the same issue: that not enough homes are being built. We could have, as others have done, sat back and admired the problem or indeed, as others have done, opposed housing developments in their communities. We have taken a different approach. We have taken the approach that a responsible government should take and looked at what we need to do, whether it is the great work that the planning minister is doing to make good decisions faster, looking at how we can make decisions more quickly through the development facilitation program or looking at how we can clear the backlog with local councils to see more homes being built. Indeed the planning minister and I were in Hawthorn not that long ago, where the minister was giving an update –

**John Pesutto:** On a point of order, Speaker, just on relevance, I ask that you draw the Premier back to the question.

**Mary-Anne Thomas:** On the point of order, Speaker, there is no point of order. The Premier, on her feet, was being entirely relevant to the question about Labor's housing statement and the number of houses that we are working to build.

**James Newbury:** On the point of order, Speaker, *Rulings from the Chair* has made it very clear that a minister cannot respond generally; they must respond to the substance of the actual question.

The question was very clear – it was a very simple question – and I submit to you that the Premier is speaking generally but the Premier is not responding to the actual question that the coalition has asked.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier had strayed somewhat from the question. I do ask the Premier to return to the housing statement and the question that was asked.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** I was asked about the housing statement.

**John Pesutto:** No, that was in the preamble; that wasn't the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** As you should know well – you have been here on and off for a little while – the preamble is absolutely part of the question. I put to you: guess what is in the housing statement. A target to build 800,000 homes over the next decade, which is exactly what the Leader of the Opposition asked about.

Unlike others who jump on the back of a ute in their local electorate and oppose housing developments, like the one on Bills Street in Hawthorn, we are going to get on and use every lever possible, whether it is the planning levers or whether it is building more homes on government land or working on putting more homes around activity centres, particularly around our great public transport network, those level crossing sites where there are plenty of opportunities. I know the member for Caulfield knows those opportunities – he has opposed a few of them as well – to put more homes on those level crossing removal sites. We know that this is a big and difficult job. That is why we released our housing statement, that is why we have the industry partnership and that is why we are getting on and working with the industry to deliver more homes.

**John PESUTTO** (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:06): January saw the lowest monthly detached housing approvals since October 2013. After almost a decade under a Labor government, why is it now harder for Victorians to buy or rent a home?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:06): This is exactly the sort of data I was referring to and speaks exactly to the reason why we have released a housing statement that contains actions across government but also in partnership with industry, because we know the housing industry here, like the housing industry across the country, is facing workforce challenges and supply challenges. It is also facing the pressures of successive interest rate rises. Additional pressures also would have come to the housing industry if a policy to lock up 15 well-located, well-serviced inner suburbs to development had proceeded like the policy that those opposite took to the last election – a policy to lock out development in suburbs in the Leader of the Opposition's own backyard.

**Peter Walsh:** On a point of order, Speaker, it is very hard for someone that is looking for a house to live in a housing statement, and I would ask you to bring the Premier back to actually answering the question.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. The Premier has concluded her answer.

#### **Ministers statements: fire and storm events**

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:08): I rise to update the house on the incredible work and effort of our emergency services personnel and the ongoing support we are providing to affected communities across the state. We have seen in just recent weeks that a lot has been thrown at our state by extreme weather events, and I particularly want to thank Victorians for the way they have responded both in emergency services but also at a community level right across the state. Whether it has been from Mirboo North to Pomonal or Cockatoo to Beaufort, every place that I have been I have been able to see firsthand the way communities have pulled together in the aftermath of these events to provide practical support on the ground.

To give you a sense of the size and scale of the extreme weather events, VICSES, for example, have responded to a significant 6200 requests for assistance just in recent weeks. We have seen also the CFA, Forest Fire Management Victoria, Fire Rescue Victoria and aerial firefighters working tirelessly

to bring some of our biggest fires under control, particularly that fire at Bayindeen, which could have caused so much more damage. I acknowledge it did cause damage to a number of properties, but it could have been so much worse but for the work that was put in by emergency services. I should also say, we should not just thank them for their response to these emergencies; we should thank these emergency services, the volunteers and the paid staff, who train for these events, who prepare for these events. We saw that training and preparation on display as assets were protected and as life was protected.

Also, in finishing I want to thank the Victorian community not just for the way they have supported each other but for the way they responded to the warnings and the way they heeded the evacuation messages and heeded the ‘Watch and act’ messages, because that also makes a big, big difference to the work that our emergency services do in response to an emergency.

### Housing

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (14:10): My question is to the Minister for Planning. Last week the Minister for Environment stated that, if everybody who had the eligibility to build a granny flat did that tomorrow, we would have 700,000 homes overnight. Is the Labor government relying on 700,000 Victorians to build a granny flat in their backyard to fix Victoria’s housing crisis?

**Sonya KILKENNY** (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for the Suburbs) (14:10): I thank the member for his question. Let us get something straight: you do not get more affordable homes by blocking them, and that is exactly what we have seen from those opposite. Whether it is blocking them in Hawthorn, whether it is blocking them in Brighton or pushing people out to the fringes where they cannot –

**James Newbury**: On a point of order, Speaker, I understand the minister is embarrassed by today’s numbers, but that was not the question that I asked.

**The SPEAKER**: The member for Brighton knows that that is not a point of order. I ask the minister to come back to answering the question.

**Sonya KILKENNY**: The way you get more affordable homes is by setting a target. It is by working with industry, alongside local government, alongside communities –

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER**: Order! The member for Bulleen can leave the chamber for half an hour. The minister will be heard in silence.

**Member for Bulleen withdrew from chamber.**

**Sonya KILKENNY**: It is working with industry, alongside community, alongside local government. It is working across government to pull the levers available to us to get the conditions right to ensure that those conditions are best to enable industry to get on with the job and build more homes for Victorians where they want to live – close to family and friends, close to jobs, schools and services – not pushing people out to the fringes, not saying, ‘No, not in Brighton. Not in my area, not in Hawthorn,’ not by blocking them. It is about identifying where we need to build these homes. It is about working with local government to ensure that people have housing choice and that we build more homes to make them more affordable.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER**: Order! The member for Mildura can leave the chamber for an hour. The minister will be heard in silence.

**Member for Mildura withdrew from chamber.**

**Sonya KILKENNY:** It has been only five months since we released the landmark housing statement. That statement contains initiatives that show how we are going to build the 800,000 homes that Victorians need over the next decade. We have already seen with the development facilitation program, that streamlined pathway, thousands and thousands of homes in the preapplication stage. The interest from industry has been extraordinary. These are record levels of interest because the industry understands what needs to happen. That is why we are working in partnership with industry. It is not just about identifying the problem, it is about identifying how we address that problem and how we set out a plan to build the homes that Victorians need.

We are reforming the planning system. These are the biggest reforms that we have seen in generations, not only the development facilitation program but also working with councils to support them in unlocking that backlog that has been sitting there holding up these applications. We know we need to give certainty to the construction industry to create that pipeline so they can get on with the job of building more homes for Victorians.

**James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:14):** I note the minister's response that it is not a race to fix the housing crisis. How many new granny flats is this government relying on to meet its housing target?

**Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for the Suburbs) (14:15):** What a ridiculous question. We are on this side saying we have a housing crisis. We acknowledge there is a crisis. I understand those on the other side, the Liberals, have their own crisis – their own leadership crisis.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The disrespect being shown to members on their feet is outrageous.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, I asked a very simple data-based question. If the minister does not know the answer, she is welcome to advise that to the house.

**The SPEAKER:** The Manager of Opposition Business knows how to raise a point of order. I will accept your point of order this time. The Minister for Planning will come back to answering the question.

**Sonya KILKENNY:** The Allan Labor government's housing statement has set out initiatives and a plan for how we are going to deliver 800,000 homes over the next decade. It is not by blocking them; it is not by blocking the delivery of new homes. It is by working with industry, listening to industry, creating that certainty and that pipeline, reforming the planning system, providing ways –

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, standing order 58 does require the minister to be direct in relation to answering the question. I asked for a data-based answer.

**The SPEAKER:** The minister rejected the premise of the question at the beginning of her answer.

**Sonya KILKENNY:** Those on the other side do not want to help solve this housing crisis. They are commentators on this. We are working with industry, alongside council, alongside communities, to deliver the 800,000 homes that Victorians will need over the next decade.

#### **Ministers statements: health system**

**Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:17):** I rise today to update the house on 10 highlights in the health portfolio over the last 10 months or so. Our landmark women's pain inquiry has confirmed that four in 10 Victorian women live with chronic pain, so we are doing something about it. It is why we are delivering an additional 10,000 laparoscopic surgeries.

Speaking of surgery, we have opened 10 rapid access hubs as part of our COVID catch-up plan. Our investments have seen innovation like Austin Health's phone week, which in the first week saw a 10 per cent decrease in the number of patients on the waitlist. Of course the Allan Labor government

continues to deliver in primary care with our priority primary care centres. We started with 10; now we have got 29.

But our support does not stop there. As part of our \$32,000 package to GPs, we are contributing \$10,000 to help with exam costs. Our community pharmacy pilot is also expanding access to treatment for uncomplicated urinary tract infections and skin conditions, as well as the contraceptive pill for Victorian women. With over 700 pharmacies now participating, that is a lot more than 10. We are saving Victorian families up to \$10,000 each for public IVF, and we are helping new families in those crucial early years with more than 10 new and expanded early parenting centres.

Finally, of course we are making it free to study nursing and midwifery for 10,000 nurses. This week, as we celebrate International Women's Day, I can tell you this: there will be many more than 10 women standing with our Premier when we celebrate that day. The same cannot be said for the Leader of the Opposition.

### **Donnybrook road safety**

**John PESUTTO** (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:19): My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Last week I visited the Yan Yean electorate and spoke with Michelle Mitchell. Michelle and other residents of the Olivine estate are forced to dodge trucks as they walk on the side of busy Donnybrook Road on the way to the train station because Labor has not funded a continuous footpath. In the words of Michelle, 'It's so dangerous.' Why is Labor putting Donnybrook residents' lives at risk by refusing to build a footpath?

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will be removed from the chamber without warning.

**Melissa HORNE** (Williamstown – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (14:20): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question, and I would also like to thank the member for Yan Yean and the member for Kalkallo for much of the advocacy that they have done in this space. As you can appreciate, many of these complex infrastructure projects require additional funds through the PSP and through developer contributions but also require us to work with councils to be able to deliver some of these funds. We will continue this important work to make sure that road safety is always top of mind. If the Leader of the Opposition would like to provide me with Michelle's details, I am happy to have this conversation with her directly.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Narre Warren North will leave the chamber for half an hour.

**Member for Narre Warren North withdrew from chamber.**

**John PESUTTO** (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:21): Will the minister guarantee that she will provide a footpath to Donnybrook station for local residents before someone is killed?

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Yan Yean will leave the chamber for an hour.

**Member for Yan Yean withdrew from chamber.**

**Melissa HORNE** (Williamstown – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (14:21): It is a shame that the member for Yan Yean is leaving, because she has been a passionate advocate in this space. I will continue to work with the council, the minister for active transport, the local community and the local MPs to make sure that we have this infrastructure in place.

**Ministers statements: major events**

**Steve DIMOPOULOS** (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (14:22): I rise to update the house on the sports and major events capital of Australia. It has been a big couple of months for Victorians, who love to enjoy some of the biggest and best events in the world. Our major events calendar is now worth a massive \$3.3 billion in economic value to our state, supporting local businesses, communities and local jobs. It is a big serve for Victoria and over half a billion dollars more than it was prepandemic. Importantly, our major events industry delivers 15,000 jobs a year every year for Victorians.

As we enter mad March, here are a select number – maybe 10 – of recent major and regional events which have contributed to the growth of our \$36 billion visitor economy. Number 1 is the Superbike World Championship hosted at Phillip Island, which I know the member for Bass was really excited about. Number 2 is the Matildas versus Uzbekistan match in front of a packed crowd at Marvel Stadium – 10–nil. Number 3 is the Maurie Plant Meet, the second highest ranking international track and field circuit, in the member for Albert Park’s electorate. Number 4 is the Riverboats Music Festival, which welcomed brilliant artists for a long weekend in the member for Murray Plains’s electorate. Number 5 is the Cadel Evans road race, which the member for Geelong tells me has enormous economic benefits for the region.

Number 6 is the Victorian Open golf event, where the member for Bellarine presented the winners trophies. Number 7 is the Boomers versus Korea basketball match at Red Energy Arena in Bendigo. Number 8 is the *Titanic* exhibition currently open at Melbourne Museum. Number 9 is the *BBC Earth Experience* at Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. And of course number 10 is the Australian Open – 1.1 million attendees. The member for Nepean will remember how it felt when he looked up from the court and saw all his adoring fans cheering him on. Though he has now swapped the court for Parliament, he is still counting his numbers, and if the rumours are true, it is about to be game, set and match for the member for Hawthorn.

**The SPEAKER:** Before I call the member for Eildon can I acknowledge in the gallery the former member for Lyndhurst and Keysborough and former minister the Honourable Martin Pakula.

**Housing**

**Cindy McLEISH** (Eildon) (14:24): My question is for the Premier. Many public housing properties, like 2 Pockett Road, Healesville, have remained empty for over 12 months. Why has the Labor government left so many properties like this one unoccupied in the middle of a public housing shortage?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:24): I thank the member for Eildon for her question. She refers to one particular property – I think she said it was in Healesville – and if the member can provide the exact address I can refer that to the Minister for Housing to be able to follow up. I do note that whether it is through our Big Housing Build – that record investment, significant investment, in building more homes – or the ongoing work that we know we need to do in terms of the maintenance and upkeep of our public housing properties, we know that we have to continue to put our shoulder to the wheel and build more homes, particularly for those Victorians who rely on the government as the housing provider to provide them with the dignity of a roof over their head.

I do note that we have made record and significant funding in this area, and that is a contrast to a previous time when a previous government in every single budget – 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 – cut funding to the housing portfolio. That is not the way that you keep up with your maintenance. That is not the way that you get more homes built. We have taken a very different approach, whether it is the \$5.3 billion investment in the Big Housing Build – and I draw to the house’s attention that in just the last few weeks alone we have seen announcements for more housing for people with mental health and complex needs in the Pakenham, Drouin and Mooroopna areas –

**Cindy McLeish:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this related to public housing properties which are empty.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier was being relevant to the question in relation to public housing.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** We have also made an announcement in St Kilda for a particular project that is focusing on supporting people who are homeless to be able to get into new homes. There are a range of other projects almost too numerous to mention, because when you have the \$5.3 billion in the Big Housing Build, the additional \$1 billion through the Regional Housing Fund and the \$150 million for the regional worker fund, these are the sorts of sustained investments that result in you being able to build more homes, particularly, as I said, for people who rely on the government to do that work.

**Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (14:27):** How many public housing properties have been sitting empty for over 12 months during the housing crisis? And to make it easy, I am after a number.

**Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:27):** To make it easy for the former deputy leader of the opposition, I will refer that to the Minister for Housing to provide further detail. But also to make it easy for the former deputy leader of the Liberal opposition, I will also point out to the former deputy leader of the Liberal opposition that when you oppose housing projects, like the leader has done in his own electorate, like the blocker from Brighton has done in his part of the world, you do not get any homes built for more Victorians.

#### **Ministers statements: public transport**

**Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (14:28):** With Victoria’s population expected to hit 10 million by 2050, the Allan Labor government are making the investments we need to keep our state moving. Since 2014 we have delivered over 20,000 new bus services and 2000 new train services, bringing us closer to a turn-up-and-go network operating every 10 minutes or less. And we are not stopping there, with hundreds more services to be delivered over the next three years, including 200 services across our regional network and trains every 3 minutes through the Metro Tunnel.

It has been just over 10 months since we announced Melbourne’s new G-class tram will be stabled at the new maintenance and stabling facility in Maidstone. Consultation with accessibility groups and driver reps about the new G-class tram has now concluded, and this feedback will be taken on board as manufacturing commences, supporting up to 1900 local jobs. In fact this government’s landmark investments in rolling stock have supported up to 10,000 local jobs across our manufacturing sector and supply chain – not 10 but 10,000 jobs. We are also building 25 new X’tropolis 2.0 trains to progressively replace the old fleet along the Frankston, Craigieburn and Upfield lines. These new trains will create smoother and more comfortable and reliable journeys for passengers on those lines. These new train and tram projects will make it faster and will make it safer and easier for Victorians to get employment, to get to education opportunities and to get to the many essential services that we all need.

While those opposite might be preoccupied with their own ambition, with shoring up their numbers, on this side of the chamber we will continue to focus on building a world-class public transport system that Victorians deserve.

#### **School fees**

**Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:30):** My question is to the Minister for Education. Why, in a cost-of-living crisis, are the parents of Victorian government school students paying the highest fees of any state?

**Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for Medical Research) (14:30):** Can I thank the member for Kew for her question. In our school system – do not take only my word but

that of the Productivity Commission – we are leading the nation on investment in schools. I have not opened 10 new schools in the past month, I have opened 14 new schools. We have put \$31 billion –

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, just to assist on relevance, I think the minister misunderstood the question. It was in relation to the cost of schools.

**The SPEAKER:** I understand what the question is, Manager of Opposition Business. The question referred to government schools. The minister was, so far, being relevant to the question.

**Ben CARROLL:** Just on that particular issue, I hosted education ministers from right around Australia last Friday, and they realised we are doing more as a government than any other state or territory. Those opposite cut Free Fruit Friday; we brought it back – 4000 breakfast programs, the school glasses program, the school uniform program. We are getting on with building more schools – more investment not only in our schools and our teachers but in the very first 1000 days in a child’s life, the new start allowance. We are getting on and making sure, no matter your background, no matter who you are, you can go from playing tennis to being the Leader of the Opposition and making sure you can do what you do. You can fulfil your dreams in this state, and you can get on and do what you want to do.

Under the Allan Labor government we are investing more in education than any other state, not \$10 billion, not \$20 billion – try \$30.8 billion invested in education across this state. That has led to 2000 school upgrades –

**Jess Wilson:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was very specific about government school fees, and I am happy to table the ACARA data for the minister.

**The SPEAKER:** The minister was being relevant to the question that was asked.

**Ben CARROLL:** It goes to the cost of living. We are doing more for our schools than ever before. Those opposite should know and the member for Kew should know that it is our government that is doing more for our schools and investing more in our schools than any other state. The Productivity Commission itself came out with a report that showed Victoria is leading. Whether it is the free glasses program, the program on breakfast clubs, whether it is supporting women with free pads and tampons right across our state, we are doing more than any other state. The opposition should know better. The party of financial responsibility should be investing more in their policy development rather than looking for a messiah and rather than looking for another bloke to lead the opposition.

*Members interjecting.*

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

**Member for Mordialloc withdrew from chamber.**

**Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:34):** Given that the government has flagged cuts to education in the upcoming budget, will parents be hit by even higher fees?

**Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for Medical Research) (14:34):** I think those opposite could do with a bit more support from the Smile Squad program. That is something they should be getting to very soon. Smile a bit more over there – come on, fire up. On this side of the chamber we know you change the dial on disadvantage more than any other school – that has got them smiling. That is good, isn’t it? We know our \$30.8 billion is doing what it needs to do – growing our teacher workforce faster than any other state; not opening 10 new schools in one month, opening 14 new schools; opening 100 new schools by the time of the next election.

We are getting on with delivering everything we need to. We are very proud on this side of the chamber to be the Education State. That is why we have more people applying to be a teacher than any other state or territory. Enrolments for teaching are up over 10 per cent. That is the first time in decades. People know that if you want to change your life, if you want to go from being a tennis player to being



a politician or Leader of the Opposition, you get an education, and that is what we are about in this state.

**Ministers statements: energy policy**

**Lily D'AMBROSIO** (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:35): I am very pleased to reaffirm to the house the Allan Labor government's ongoing opposition to nuclear power as part of our energy future. It will come as news perhaps to the Leader of the Opposition, but it has been our position now for more than 41 years. Why is that the case? Well, it will drive people's power prices up by 500 per cent. Building nuclear will cost 500 per cent more than building firm – oh, they are listening. They are quiet because they actually do not know this. They have been sold a pup. They have been sold a lie, because they are too much into their own internals at the moment and counting those numbers.

**John Pesutto** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, I do not need assistance to make rulings from the chair.

**Peter Walsh:** On a point of order, Speaker, if the minister would like us to interject, we are very happy to oblige.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Nationals knows that is not a point of order.

**Lily D'AMBROSIO:** It is 500 per cent more to build nuclear than it is to build firm solar and wind. That is the reality: 500 per cent or 50 times 10. Whichever way you want to look at it, it is still 500 per cent. Of course there is also the issue of toxic waste, which stays in our environment for millions of years. There are some who are hanging on for dear life, wanting Victorians to believe that we have got an open mind to this, but we are not open to this, because it is a reckless policy that is only about driving people's power bills up – just to save a leadership. I can tell the Leader of the Opposition: you are on your own on this one, you and your 10 friends.

**Lily D'AMBROSIO:** Can I just say, the future is renewables, and that is what we are delivering now. If you want to support a technology that is 10, 20 years away from being developed here in Australia whilst our coal generators are closing down, we are delivering the replacement renewable energy which is the most genuinely affordable power to come into the state. That is what we need. Anything else is about driving up people's power bills and not having enough electricity to keep the lights on. That is their recipe. It is not just me saying that; the member for Wannon says that, and the member for Polwarth is silent, and like any leadership – *(Time expired)*

**Roma Britnell:** On a point of order, Speaker, I have six overdue unanswered questions dating back to last year – in fact they are six months late. The questions are to the ministers for environment, outdoor recreation and health. They are about important issues for South-West Coast, such as the Warrnambool boat ramp, Port Fairy Golf Club, Terang aged care facilities and Dutton Way. The community deserves answers on these pressing matters, which the ministers have been sitting on for many months, highlighting their disregard for parliamentary process and regional communities. Those questions are 469, 338, 341, 413, 319 and 531.

**The SPEAKER:** Could you please supply the list to the clerks, member for South-West Coast.

**Constituency questions**

**Lowan electorate**

**Emma KEALY** (Lowan) (14:40): (530) My constituency question is for the Minister for Emergency Services, and the information I seek is: when will the government announce emergency disaster funding for small businesses and primary industries recently impacted by bushfire in my electorate of Lowan? The Valentine's Day fires devastated the Pomonal community, with around 40 per cent of this tight-knit community burnt to the ground, including multiple businesses. For those

businesses that were not damaged by fire, the impact of police roadblocks and road closures for many weeks on trade and cash flow has pushed many businesses to the absolute brink. Dadswells Bridge was also impacted by a bushfire on this same day, largely impacting productive farmland, with around 200 head of sheep destroyed and hundreds of kilometres of fence lines. While both fires have been declared a natural disaster, the same funding supports offered during previous bushfires declared a natural disaster have not been extended to the small businesses and primary producers impacted by the recent bushfires. I therefore ask: when will the minister announce emergency disaster funding for small businesses and primary industries impacted by bushfire – *(Time expired)*

**Pascoe Vale electorate**

**Anthony CIANFLONE** (Pascoe Vale) (14:41): (531) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education: how are the upgraded facilities at Mercy College providing ongoing educational benefits for young women across Pascoe Vale, Coburg, Brunswick West and the northern suburbs? As we celebrate International Women’s Day for 2024 I would like to acknowledge the contribution that Mercy College has made for nearly 60 years in providing local young women with the knowledge and skills to equip them in their future life directions. First established in 1965 on the site of the former Mercy convent on 760 Sydney Road in Coburg, Mercy College has a rich history and continues to be guided by the values of the Sisters of Mercy, which include excellence, hospitality, justice and compassion. Today home to a growing student enrolment of over 400 students under the stewardship of school principal Lila McInerney, Mercy is continuing to help build a fairer and more inclusive community, with former alumni including the member for Mill Park. I had the pleasure to celebrate the school’s night of excellence on 5 December and to meet with local students on 3 November – Amelia, Kayla, Ayushi, Jessica and Omindi – for a very impressive student-led discussion around education and skills pathways; women’s health and wellbeing; road, community and women’s safety; and local transport connectivity and accessibility – *(Time expired)*

**Croydon electorate**

**David HODGETT** (Croydon) (14:42): (532) My constituency question is for the Minister for Planning, and the question I ask is why Homes Victoria is not bound by a covenant at 5 Blossom Walk, Croydon South, in the same way that occupants of the estate are. My constituent who lives in the Gateway estate, Croydon South, advises me that Homes Victoria can build two units at 5 Blossom Walk when the entire estate is bound by a title covenant that runs forever at law. I am informed that hundreds of properties in that estate are bound by a title covenant restricting them from having more than one dwelling per lot and that such dwellings must be of at least 75 per cent double brick or brick veneer external construction. Homes Victoria are building two units on one block, which I understand will have weatherboard facades. My constituent has spoken to Homes Victoria and was informed that they cannot explain how or when the land title covenant somehow evaporated from this site.

**Narre Warren South electorate**

**Gary MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (14:42): (533) My constituency question is for the Minister for Jobs and Industry regarding the digital jobs program. Minister, how will the digital jobs program support mid-career constituents in my electorate of Narre Warren South? The digital jobs program is now in its ninth round, helping Victorians reshape their careers through training in specialist digital skills. It is important to keep workers up to date with the latest technology for growing job prospects in areas such as cybersecurity and programming. I am grateful for this initiative to support workers in my constituency, particularly women, the neurodiverse and those who speak a language other than English. I look forward to sharing the minister’s response with my community.

**Narracan electorate**

**Wayne FARNHAM** (Narracan) (14:43): (534) My constituency question is to the minister for sport, and my community wants to know: when will funding be made available to support the growing needs for more ovals and facilities across the Narracan electorate? In recent weeks I have been

contacted by many clubs desperate for funding to expand their facilities and meet the needs of local sport. In Warragul we have multiple codes competing for time on local ovals, including Western Park, which is adjacent to many new homes. In Trafalgar we have football, AFL and cricket teams also desperate for more space and to meet the demand for players. In Drouin, where thousands of new homes are being built, there is a severe lack of new ovals and a critical need to upgrade those we have, including change rooms. Bunyip is struggling too, with the rear paddock being used to fill the gap for junior football. We need urgent action from the government to invest and support these growing towns with sports infrastructure as soon as possible.

**Preston electorate**

**Nathan LAMBERT** (Preston) (14:44): (535) My question is for the Minister for Public and Active Transport, and my question is: what was the average number of departures and arrivals at Reservoir train station for each hour of each day of the week for the 2023 calendar year and separately the 2022 calendar year? As the minister will know, this government has steadily increased the number of services on the Mernda line, most recently in May of last year when we added another five peak shoulder services. Of course there is always a discussion within the community about the ideal distribution of those services – whether there should be more at night or at peak hour or at other times – and we would appreciate any information the minister could provide that would help us understand current patterns of Reservoir train travel. On that note we would like to thank Sarah and her team at the Keon Park Level Crossing Removal Project, who are of course making a very major contribution to improving our local public transport network, facilitating more trains more often and removing the dangerous level crossing at Keon Parade.

**Morwell electorate**

**Martin CAMERON** (Morwell) (14:45): (536) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the information I seek is whether the minister is considering installing traffic lights at the intersection of Bank Street and the Princes Highway in Traralgon as a matter of urgency. I stood in this place in November asking for urgent action to finish the safety upgrade at this notorious intersection. I have still not received a reply. In that time there have been at least three accidents at Bank Street, and it is no exaggeration to say it is a deathtrap. We have been waiting nearly 18 months for the safety upgrades, and lives are being put at risk every day because of the government's inaction. We are aware there is a hold-up with the railway signalling – that is clear – but the minister must at least install the traffic lights and do so immediately to protect the people who use this currently dangerous intersection on a daily basis.

**Box Hill electorate**

**Paul HAMER** (Box Hill) (14:46): (537) My constituency question is for the Minister for Community Sport. How many projects did Whitehorse City Council apply to receive funding for in the most recent round of the Local Sports Infrastructure Fund? The Local Sports Infrastructure Fund provides a range of grant opportunities across community sporting facilities, and in previous years Whitehorse City Council has made great use of this fund. Thanks to this fund our community has seen lighting upgrades at Morton Park and Koonung Park, the installation of a fixed scoreboard at Springfield Park and construction of a multipurpose court facility at Eley Park. I look forward to learning how Whitehorse City Council intends to make best use of the available funds to continue improving community sporting infrastructure and facilities in Box Hill.

**Warrandyte electorate**

**Nicole WERNER** (Warrandyte) (14:47): (538) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and – you guessed it – it is about the Five Ways intersection in Warrandyte South again, because it is still not fixed and remains a top-of-mind issue for my constituents. I ask the minister what information and advice she has specifically received as to why Five Ways cannot be fixed. Just a few weeks ago another constituent wrote to me about his young daughter, who was nearly in a collision, a

near miss, at Five Ways, and I hear stories like this every single week. The roads minister could be renamed the minister for copy and paste. She has consistently responded to my questions on Five Ways with the same variation on the paragraph each time, that ‘the Department of Transport and Planning has advised that due to the complex geometry’ et cetera, et cetera, so I hope that the minister this time provides a real answer on why they cannot fix the deadly Five Ways intersection.

### **Bellarine electorate**

**Alison MERCHANT** (Bellarine) (14:48): (539) My constituency question is for the Minister for Energy and Resources. Minister, what is the expected time frame for the completion of the neighbourhood battery to be installed in Queenscliff? This battery is one of 100 that is being built across our state which will soak up that excess rooftop solar energy, resulting in the reduction of emissions and assisting to lower power bills for locals. In a time when many constituents in my electorate are mindful of their power bills, this battery is an important measure and will be a welcome relief for residents across the community. I am sure my electorate would be excited to hear an update on the time frame for this installation and completion. I look forward to hearing from the minister and sharing this response with my constituents.

### *Rulings from the Chair*

#### **Constituency questions**

**The SPEAKER** (14:48): Before we return to government business, I have reviewed the constituency questions from Thursday 22 February. Previous Speakers’ rulings and the recent training on constituency questions provided by the department note that questions that start with ‘Will’ and ‘Can’ often in fact ask for an action rather than seek information. The members for Melbourne and Evelyn both asked for actions, so I rule those questions out of order. Further, the member for Melbourne did not direct her actual question to the Premier as she commenced her constituency question.

### *Bills*

#### **Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023**

#### **State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023**

#### *Second reading*

#### **Debate resumed.**

**Danny O’BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (14:49): I was disappointed to be interrupted by question time as the wind was taken out of my sails when I was just reminding some of those opposite, who like to say that this bill is actually protecting the SEC from privatisation by the Liberals, as the previous speaker said, of who actually began the privatisation of the SEC.

#### *Members interjecting.*

**Danny O’BRIEN**: Come in, spinner – from the minister at the table. I have actually got the press release here from Joan Kirner, 11 June 1992. The headline is ‘Loy Yang B bill passed by Parliament’, and it includes a direct quote from the Premier of the day Joan Kirner. It says:

The Victorian Government’s decision to involve private investment in this new project is essential to our energy future.

#### *Members interjecting.*

**Danny O’BRIEN**: The Minister for Transport Infrastructure – you can call it whatever you like, Minister. It is privatisation, and if the minister does not like that one, he can talk about the land titles office. We could talk about the Port of Melbourne. We could talk about the VicRoads licensing and

registration division. The point is: privatisation when done by Liberals and Nationals – bad; privatisation when done by Labor, past, present or future – perfectly fine, no problem at all.

*Members interjecting.*

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Call it whatever you want, Minister, it is privatisation, and this government stands condemned for its absolute charade of the SEC this time around. We heard the then Premier in 2022 say, 'Offshore wind, not offshore profits'. That was his big pitch: 'We're not going to let offshore private companies take profits.' What did we have at budget estimates last year? I asked the interim CEO of the SEC: will the SEC preclude foreign investors from investment? No, they will not. We also had the Premier say at the time the government will invest as a majority stakeholder. What was the first investment they made – a minority stakeholder with Equus Australia in the so-called big battery out at Melton.

So the government has just fibbed and obfuscated around this from the very start. It misled the public of Victoria into thinking that they were getting the old SEC back. Indeed in the bills that I am actually cognate debating at the moment, one of them is specifically about that. They are actually abolishing the old SEC, getting rid of it, and bringing in their own new one, partly because they did not realise they could not use the logo because the old SEC owned it. I mean, it is extraordinary that the government has got this. The key point in this is that the government is saying, 'We're going to bring prices down through the SEC.' Again, when I asked the minister –

**Jade Benham** interjected.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Down, down, down. In fact it was the minister's comment, member for Mildura: 'Down, down, down'. When I asked the minister for clarity at budget estimates last year on what proportion of the electricity generation sector the SEC will control by 2035 – of course 2035 is when the government is saying we are going to have 95 per cent renewables and everything – the answer was: out of 25 gigawatts the SEC will control 4.5 gigawatts. That is less than a fifth of generation, and somehow magically that is going to bring costs down for Victorians. I mean, this is an absolute con that the government is involved in.

I could go on for hours on this, but I know there are other members on our side and we know the government have suddenly become so very embarrassed by the SEC policy and just what a shambles it is and what a disgrace it is going to be and how it will make no impact on electricity prices for Victorians in future that they have actually truncated debate. So as much as I would like to continue on, I will sit down so that my colleagues get more opportunity to say it, because this government is gagging debate on this legislation. We oppose this. We oppose the SEC. It is a sham to try and put it in the constitution, and the government stands condemned for that politicisation.

**Vicki WARD** (Eltham – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Employment) (14:54): That was quite a shouty effort. It was a very shouty effort. I am sure it is your passion, but it was still very, very, very shouty. It is nice to have a debate here that is done with a bit of decorum, a bit of calmness, because this is something quite important that we are talking about, it really is. I know on this side of the chamber we understand the potential of the SEC. We understand what the SEC can build, and we struggle to understand why those opposite do not support the investment that the SEC will create in this state and why they do not support renewable energy – oh, no, I do know, because they like nuclear energy. They think nuclear energy is the way of the future, which is a bit shameful, really.

It was interesting, the Leader of the House spoke in her contribution around her experience talking to locals about the SEC. I take on board the member opposite's comments around misleading people, and there is nothing further from the truth. We spoke to people about bringing back the SEC in 2022, and what we have continued to talk about is the new SEC and what that investment would be for our state – the renewable energy investment that would bring to our state and something that is state owned. We know those opposite do not like anything the government owns. We know that those

opposite do not believe in the government owning assets, and that is why they sold them off. They do not believe the government has a role to play in our essential services, and we do not agree with that position.

We said we would bring back the SEC, and we did. We committed to a publicly owned, 100 per cent renewable energy market participant, and this is what we are delivering. Now it will always be government owned; we have made sure it will always be government owned. We are putting power back where it belongs, which is with Victorians. This is one of the very many cost-of-living measures that we are putting in place. I see that the Minister for Climate Action has come and sat down next to me, and I want to thank her, her office and her department for all of the cost-of-living measures that she and her department have put in place, like the terrific power saving bonus, which helps so many Victorians to afford their increased power costs. We see the increases to electricity because of the inefficiency that comes with coal-fired power generation.

As I said earlier, those opposite have opposed and continue to oppose this groundbreaking change that we are bringing about in this state. They have no vision for this state. They cannot see what this state can achieve and the leadership that this state is showing when it comes to renewable energy. They flogged off the SEC, and the private multinational companies increased prices and sacked Victorian worker after Victorian worker, whereas what we are doing is creating a new pipeline of jobs and career opportunities for Victorians in the renewable energy sector. It is Victorian families who have footed the bill, with \$23 billion in profits going overseas, and that is a lot more than what the former Premier Kennett charged when they flogged it off. This has been devastating for Victorian households. It has cost Victorian households innumerable amounts of money, and we are changing this. We are well underway.

I want to talk about the jobs that we are going to create in our state and the support that we are giving to the sector and to new people coming into the sector – those who want traineeships, those who want opportunities to come into the renewable energy sector. We have come from a corporation, the SECV, which effectively has no employees, to creating the SEC, which will have employees and which will help the industry have more employees to create more employment opportunities. The SEC will table an annual report under the Financial Management Act 1994 in line with other similar entities. Last year the old SECV was not a separate entity and reporting was included in the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action annual report.

We are getting some real confusion from those opposite, who really do not understand this legislation and do not understand the purpose of what it is that we are achieving here. If we want to talk about transparency and output measures, let us talk about those opposite. Retail energy prices increased by 34.1 per cent under the previous Liberal government – that was from quarter 4 in 2010 to quarter 3 in 2014 – and disconnections doubled from 28,959 to 58,503, leaving vulnerable Victorians without power and heating. I am sure that there will be a few people in this place who can remember when Loy Yang went off power and Jeff Kennett told us to suck up having cold showers for week after week after week. They do not care when the power goes off, they do not care when the water goes off, they do not care when heating goes off.

What those opposite should be transparent on is their disdain of renewable energy and their support for nuclear. They stopped the construction of wind farms and voted against all bills this government has brought forward on renewables and climate action, and just yesterday on ABC radio the Leader of the Opposition was out there saying that nuclear will be a part of their energy mix. The opposition leader has been out coddling up to dangerous climate sceptics, saying:

Even if people have different ideological perspectives on climate change and sustainability, and that is all legitimate in my view, there is nothing wrong with that.

Let us not let the facts get in the way of mischief making, and that is exactly what this is about. The opposition are still afraid of climate change. They are still afraid of engaging on climate change, of engaging on renewable energy and of engaging in transforming our economy to a new economy and

the jobs and the opportunities that that transformation will create. They continue to beat the same drum around privatisation, around dead and dying industries like coal and nuclear, and are unable to engage with new industries around renewable energies.

The statewide transition to renewable energy is a whole-of-government approach. We recognise on this side of the chamber the opportunities that this creates, and we embrace those opportunities. As Minister for Employment I am beyond excited that Jobs Victoria has partnered with the Latrobe Valley Authority and Solar Victoria to deliver a priority workforce partnership in Gippsland and Melbourne's south-east. Unfortunately, we do not have the member for Gippsland South here anymore, who I am sure would also be excited by the opportunities that this will present. The priority workforce projects are designed to deliver secure jobs for people who need extra support finding work and in industries of growth or where there are workplace shortages. These projects work with jobseekers who are in cohorts where finding work can be more difficult, including women aged 45 or over, people who are long-term unemployed, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, people with a disability, people seeking asylum and refugees, newly arrived migrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds, people from CALD communities, young people, single parents and veterans. I do not know why those opposite want to deny opportunities to any of those cohorts – why they would turn to those cohorts and say, 'You don't deserve the job opportunities. You don't deserve cheaper power bills. You don't deserve a new SEC.' I do not understand why they would do that. This \$2.9 million project will support 130 people into jobs in renewable energy, including working in solar hot water, manufacturing, solar farm assembly and manufacturing renewable energy batteries – all areas that we desperately need. So far 53 jobseekers have been placed in their new careers with businesses, including with Alinta Energy, Exum, PavFab, RACV Solar, PowerPlus and RayGen.

We have also got our jobs mentors. This is a fantastic program doing incredible work. It is through the Jobs Victoria mentor program that we are supporting our transition to renewable energy. The fantastic mentors at Rumbalara Football Netball Club, the Jobs Vic mentor program delivery partners in the City of Greater Shepparton, are working with people in their community who are long-term unemployed or at risk of long-term unemployment. They are finding new careers locally, working with Beon Energy Solutions on new solar farm projects. This has immense benefits to the Shepparton community – a community, I might say, which has 1 per cent unemployment. That is under our watch. That is the work that our government is doing investing in our communities, including our regional communities.

Whether they are working in Gippsland manufacturing solar hot water or whether they are in Shepparton working on solar or whether they are working building wind turbines near Portland, the SEC creates immeasurable opportunities for workers in this state, and it should be supported.

**David SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (15:04): The opposition opposes this stunt of putting the SEC into the constitution. It is an absolute political stunt and nothing more. It is not going to bring down energy prices. We are in a cost-of-living crisis. Victorians are paying more than any other state when it comes to energy prices – a 25 per cent increase in the last year – and yet this government thinks by bringing back the SEC in a back-to-the-future moment it is going to bring down energy prices.

The government know this themselves. The government are saying that it was the Liberals and Nationals that closed the SEC. But they know that it did not work back then, and they know that it was the government of Joan Kirner, the Premier back in 1992, that privatised the energy system. We saw a statement from the Premier herself, saying Loy Yang A:

... will be a state-of-the-art power station ...

The Victorian Government's decision to involve –

the private sector –

... in this new project is essential to our energy future.

She said the presence of Mission Energy in the Latrobe Valley would ensure it was completed on time and on cost. She said:

There are enormous benefits for Victoria as a result of this sale – particularly, continued reductions in the real price of electricity to Victorian customers and improved customer service.

That was the Labor Party back in 1992. In a back-to-the-future moment, they are bringing back the SEC. It did not work in 1992, and they believe it is their silver bullet now. It is simply nothing more than a stunt. The government and the Minister for Energy and Resources have had over 12 months to do something here, and all we have seen are websites that were not even registered but logos that were put up, and then we have seen money that has been invested: money – \$380,000 – invested in the SEC. Well, what have taxpayers got for \$380,000? They are struggling with energy prices at the moment – an energy crisis and a cost-of-living crisis. \$380,000 does not buy you cheaper energy; \$380,000 buys you yo-yos, tote bags, pens, all kinds of promo material –

**Roma Britnell** interjected.

**David SOUTHWICK:** Hats – all of this stuff. Jelly beans! \$380,000 does not bring down energy prices; all it does is fuel the political stunt that says this government is going to do something. Well, the only thing this government can do is spend taxpayers money. They are very, very good at spending other people's money, and ultimately all Victorians are suffering. You only have to talk to people in my electorate. Many cafes, restaurants, butchers and bakers are struggling to actually keep their businesses afloat, to employ people. I have spoken to a number of cafes that are down 40 per cent in their sales at the moment, yet the price of electricity continues to rise. If you look at the supermarket when you buy things – this government believes that things just magically appear on the shelf without the processes they go through. I can recall just before the election going to Flavorite, who grow strawberries in Warragul. They rely on gas, the very gas that this government wants to turn off. They want to turn off gas in their ideological war to say, 'You know what – as long as we build up every other type of energy, then it's good.' Well, the SEC will not bring down power prices. The SEC is not the silver bullet that this government is looking for. Ultimately, we need supply. As Joan Kirner said back in 1992, we need competition – something that this government is ideologically opposed to. They will not sit down with industry, they will not sit down with investors, and that is why investors are taking their bags and then going to other states.

Now this government is going to make us a net importer of energy. With their VNI network, 25 per cent of energy will have to be imported from New South Wales just to keep the lights on. What a shambolic and hopeless legacy from the energy minister. Something that we were so proud of, being a net exporter of energy: not only did we have a legacy of the cheapest energy in the country, the most reliable energy in the country, but we also helped other states to have the same benefit as well. We are just about to lose that because this government have not managed the energy system, they have not managed the transition, and ultimately all Victorians are paying the price.

Enough of the stunts, enough of the jelly beans and tote bags and wasting taxpayers money – it is time to actually do something to bring down energy prices, and it is time to do something to ensure we do not continue to have a cost-of-living-crisis here in this state.

**Kat THEOPHANOUS** (Northcote) (15:09): What an exceptional occasion we have before us today with the bringing forth of the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023, a bill that holds within it the promise of a brighter and more sustainable future for our state: one in which energy is returned to the hands of Victorians, where our energy sector is rapidly transformed to deliver us our target of 95 per cent renewables by 2035, where 59,000 clean energy jobs are created through monumental wind and solar projects, where profits are reinvested in the people, where our state is propelled towards net zero in the next two decades and where we as Victorians do our bit on the global stage to safeguard our climate. It is nothing short of exhilarating, and in my community the enthusiasm for what the State Electricity Commission will bring and what it signals for our broader climate strategy is palpable.



Sadly, not everyone shares the excitement, nor our vision, nor our determination. The Liberal–National coalition predictably remains grumpy about the prospect of delivering state-owned 100 per cent renewable energy. They would of course prefer the privatisation route, and we have all seen how that has panned out for Victorians – our power assets sold off to big private multinationals, power prices increasing, workers sacked, huge profits sent overseas, Victorian families bearing the cost and our climate bearing the weight of private companies with a singular purpose. It is shameful and it never should have happened – that is why our Labor government is turning it around. It is what we promised Victorians, and it is what we are delivering, because unless you have not realised or heard, the SEC is back. Last October it was registered as a proprietary limited company, and then a few weeks later, in November, the SEC was declared as a state-owned company under the State Owned Enterprises Act 1992. The Premier and the Treasurer each hold one share in the SEC.

Today we are further protecting it by enshrining it into our Victorian constitution. This is a critical step for us, because although those opposite are not generally reliable in much at all, there is one thing we can count on them for, and that is that they will sell off the SEC at the first opportunity if they get their hands on it. They have said as much themselves. It is no surprise really – privatisation is in their DNA. They are addicted to it. They even wanted to privatise sewerage before the last state election. That is why we are not just content to bring back the SEC but enshrining it – protecting it from the whims of future conservative governments and making sure that Victorians can rely on publicly owned energy, clean jobs and emissions reductions for decades to come. Under this bill the government will hold a controlling interest in the SEC, renewables will replace coal and new projects will be owned by every Victorian for their benefit.

The SEC will have some specific features and objectives which I want to touch on because these objectives hold great significance to my community in Northcote. They are what we have been fighting for and pushing the agenda on as we have collectively worked to make Victoria the epicentre of real and rapid climate action. First and foremost, the SEC will be enshrined to support Victoria's transition to net zero emissions. It will generate, purchase and sell electricity in Victoria. It will own, operate, invest in or participate in renewable energy generation and storage systems and facilities. Indeed the SEC is specifically prohibited from owning, operating or investing in a fossil fuel facility, making it always 100 per cent renewable. Critically, the SEC will supply energy-related products and services to consumers in Victoria and play that really important role as a source of trusted information and support for Victorians to help them get off fossil gas and gain the benefits of reliable, affordable renewable energy.

Our renewable energy targets have never been more important for climate action, for cheaper electricity and for grid stability. The SEC will play a crucial role in getting us to where we need to be, and that is doing our part under the Paris goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees. We have traversed a remarkable path since 2014, when only 10 to 12 per cent of our energy came from renewables, our emissions reduction target had been dumped and huge exclusion zones had ground renewable energy investment to zero. Fast-forward to the present, and Victoria has the strongest climate legislation in the country. We are decarbonising at the fastest rate in the country, and we have cut emissions by more than any other state. We are absolutely leading the nation here, there is no question about it. Victoria now has a renewable output of 36 per cent, on track to achieve 40 per cent by 2025 and 50 per cent by 2030. If we can continue on this path, we will reach the colossal milestone of 95 per cent renewable energy by 2035 – a mind-bending achievement from where we were at in 2014. That does not happen by accident, it happens when Victorians choose governments that are focused on real action, energy equity and reform that pushes us forward.

It also happens when Victorians reject the cynicism, virtue signalling and empty slogans that are doled out by the Greens and extremist minor parties. Curbing the impacts of climate change takes galvanisation of support from every sector of our society, yet in the sinister political calculations made within the darkest corners of the Greens party room, they surmise that they can alienate large segments of our community in order to peel off support from others.

So we see the same old tactics: grandstanding media opportunities, destructive and obstructive showboating, blocking of progressive bills. The objective for them is not progress, it is recruitment. Maybe it would be a little less obvious if they actually showed up once in a while for a vote or a debate or put in any actual policy development work. But it is pretty obvious where their motivations are, and it is certainly not with genuine climate action. Actual reform requires the work of bringing communities with you, not alienating them. It takes perseverance, engagement, policy refinement and getting that right balance of incentives, support and legislation to make sure equity and security remain at the heart of our transition – none of which you will get with a three-word slogan on a rock poster.

Labor's transition supports Victorian households and businesses every step of the way while we are propelling us forward and playing to our enormous strengths as a state. Programs like the power saving bonus, Solar Homes and the Victorian energy upgrades are already making a huge difference. Just a few weeks ago I was proud to join the Minister for Energy and Resources in the inner north, where we announced the Solar for Apartments program. It is something I pushed for in Parliament last year off the back of many conversations in my own community about ways we can make it easier for renters and low-income earners to access solar subsidies and lower their bills. The new program means apartment households can apply for rebates, and in some cases this will cover 100 per cent of the system purchase and installation costs, meaning switching to solar will be free.

This is the kind of policy that makes a real difference in people's lives, and it builds off our resoundingly successful Solar Homes program, a program that has already resulted in over 300,000 installations of solar PV, hot water and batteries, a program that those opposite would themselves up in a tizz over because it was apparently too interventionist. If 'intervention' means support to households and propelling our state to energy efficient homes, lower bills and less emissions, they might need to rethink their approach.

There is so much to say about the SEC and its value within our energy sector and economy, not least being how it will support a new clean energy workforce. Apprentices and trainees are going to be a key part of this initiative, and the establishment of an SEC centre of training excellence and the development of a Victorian energy jobs plan are key, because we want Victorians to have every opportunity to be part of the renewable energy transition in our state, to access the jobs of the future that will be created as we unlock billions of dollars in investment.

An exciting part of this workforce development is happening at a local school level, with renewable energy pathways now embedded in Victoria's core offering of VET in schools. This means any student studying VCE, including the VCE vocational major or Victorian Pathways Certificate, can work towards a career in Victoria's booming renewable energy sector. I know that this is of particular interest and excitement to my community, where in recent years both of our government high schools, Northcote High and Thornbury High, have received significant investment from our Labor government to build dedicated science, tech, engineering and maths facilities to augment student learning. Last year I joined the Thornbury High community to celebrate the grand opening of their state-of-the-art STEAM centre, a utter triumph for that school, and later this year I hope to do the same at Northcote High. STEM jobs are growing almost twice as fast as other jobs in Australia, and we are giving our students every opportunity to access them through the pipeline and pathways that will be offered through the SEC.

This bill and enshrining the SEC in our Victorian constitution is a vital step forward as we embark on a necessary transformation of our energy sector to deliver reliable, secure, affordable and clean energy. I know it is difficult for those opposite to wrap their heads around it, but inertia in relation to the risk of climate change is not an option. We will not be deterred by those opposite – not now, not ever.

**Roma BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (15:19): I rise to speak on the cognate bills, the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023 and the State Electricity Amendment Bill 2023. This morning I rose and spoke on the government business program about cognate debate on these bills, but since that time the government have again changed their mind and we are going to speak on both

the bills now, then we are going to vote on one bill and then we are going to continue speaking on the other bill. What a debacle this whole thing has been right from the outset. The SEC was put forward, let us all remember, just before the election of 2022, and it was to make it sound good – ‘Bring back the SEC’. Everybody wants to see reliable, affordable, renewable energy with a base that actually gives us sustainability and, like I said, reliability and affordability.

What we have got here in front of us is a stunt. The first part of the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill is to enshrine the SEC into the constitution. Enshrine what? What have we got? We have had a hundred days since this bill was put in the Parliament. There has not been enough information for the government to even give us a bill briefing. If they cannot give us a bill briefing and they could not get the department to turn up to a bill briefing, then clearly they are struggling to actually tell us what it is that we are getting for our investment in the SEC. So far what we have seen is the government invest in a company that is building a battery that they were already going to build, so it is not going to give us anything different than what we have currently got, which is a market full of a plethora of suppliers. They have just entered the same market and become another one. You do not have to listen to me; the Grattan Institute energy director Tony Wood said the government had made some big statements about the SEC’s ability to provide more renewable energy and push down power prices:

“It’s still unclear,” he said. “The acting chief executive was speaking at a conference in Melbourne ...

“I can’t see anything that says the SEC is going to do something that the private sector wouldn’t have done.”

Hence the investment into a battery that was already going to be built. But let us also remember that the government did spend some of the money they have put aside for this SEC, which is just a shell with nothing in it except a bunch of yo-yos, caps with the SEC brand and some nice jackets that they have given out to some people to put around and wear at press conferences while nodding their heads. But at the end of the day there is nothing to see here to benefit Victorians and reduce power prices, as was promised. Power prices in Victoria have gone up by 28 per cent – that is electricity going up by 28 per cent – so how are people who are getting their bills meant to cope with an increased cost of living added to by the energy bills that they are receiving at the moment and added to by the land tax bills that are creating problems for them to be able to provide houses for tenants or for renters to afford the increases in rent? I could actually go on forever about the cost-of-living crisis that is being facilitated and enabled by this government, who continue to put out spin like this SEC, which gave them plenty of votes, they thought, before the election, but has delivered no substance.

Look at the offshore wind farm promise that they have made. We had an offshore wind farm announcement. We had the Premier asserting that a proposal for environment assessments had been done down at the Port of Hastings. Then we had the Minister for Planning Sonya Kilkenny refer the project for environment assessment in October 2023. The Minister for Ports and Freight went down to Hastings and said, ‘Look what we’re going to do here.’ Then we had the minister at the federal level, Minister Plibersek, come forth and say, ‘There’s no way, with the Ramsar wetlands environment that’s down there, that that will ever take place.’ But the Premier has said she will push on despite the environmental implications.

We have also got the minister for energy Chris Bowen saying he does not expect much offshore wind to be operating by 2030, so it is no surprise to me to hear the rumours that are going around Portland today that Minister Bowen is turning up tomorrow to announce that he is going to reduce that footprint by 80 per cent. I am sure the people of South-West Coast will be very happy, because we are very concerned about the whale migration pathway, the Bonney upwelling, which is one of only very few in the world that exist, where the plankton and the krill just come up from the bottom and the depths of the ocean to feed all the whales and the marine life. It is an incredible phenomenon of the ecosystem that exists in that marine area, and we do not want that disturbed if we cannot be confident that the environmental research and feasibility studies have been verified.

Given the government’s push through the Ramsar area that exists down in Gippsland for the energy hub that they are trying to put at Hastings, I most certainly do not doubt that they will fudge some of

the results to get their targets through and build their offshore wind farms right across Victoria. But the people of South-West Coast are up in arms, and even a reduction I do not think is going to satisfy them as a suitable outcome, because the whale migration pathway does extend way past Portland. The whales come into Warrnambool in the July–August time of the year, and we do not want a government that is going to muck around with that ecosystem. It is too important to our surfers, it is too important to our families and it is too important to every single person in South-West Coast. We all care about the environment and we all want to see reliable and affordable power, and this SEC is one big scam that is not delivering one jot.

**Nina TAYLOR** (Albert Park) (15:25): First of all I shall acquit the amendment that is proposed by the opposition, yet again opposing renewable energy – over and over and over. Let me tell you, they have form in this regard. Anyway, the SEC will table an annual report under the Financial Management Act 1994 in line with other similar entities. Last year the old SECV was not a separate entity, and reporting was included in the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) annual report, just to acquit that particular concern that they have put forward. And if we want to talk about transparency, because that has been mentioned a bit around the traps today, retail electricity prices increased by 34.1 per cent under the previous Liberal government – quarter 4 of 2010 versus quarter 3 of 2014 – and disconnections doubled, 28,959 versus 58,503, leaving vulnerable Victorians without power and heating.

I can go on, and I shall, because there is plenty more to talk about in this space. They absolutely strangled wind, let me tell you. The renewables did not have a hope under the Liberals. Pursuant to the legislation that they put in place under Matthew Guy, they made it basically unviable to pursue that industry, and that is why Labor had to get back in – for so many great reasons, not the least being to clean up our energy sector. And of course their automatic default is: ‘Nukes – just whack them in there.’

It is funny. I was on the nuclear inquiry a couple of years ago. I remember that it was a little bit embarrassing because the company that was pushing the SMRs at the time – in the middle of the inquiry, because they were hoping that was going to be their launch pad where they could launch their magnificent technology – had a major setback: years and years of delays for these wonderful SMRs that were going to magically solve everything. Where are we going to plonk them? Are we going to plonk them down at Brighton Beach or down at the peninsula at Mornington? I mean, take your pick: Mordialloc, Anglesea, Albert Park, Port Melbourne? I do not know about you, but I do not think the electorates of those areas – anywhere, really – particularly want them, let alone the waste. Nobody has come up with a long-term solution for high-level nuclear waste. No-one has a solution for that. They just ram it into the ground and hope to God it does not leak into the groundwater. They hope to God, but nobody actually knows. Every hundred years you have to dig it up and repackage it, and who will the poor workers be that have to do that? I would not want to be the person having to do that. These are just some things to consider when we default to that tired old trope ‘Just go nuclear’, because we know what that has led to around the world.

We did talk about cost, so I just want to acquit some of those matters. We know that the cost of gas bills keeps going up and up. We know the best way your slash your energy bill is to electrify your home. In fact Victorians could slash their bills by at least 60 per cent with solar panels. But it is not always easy; it is hard to know where to go for trusted information and what services you can access. That is why the SEC will play an important role as a one-stop shop to help Victorians get off fossil gas and electrify. The SEC will start with pilot solutions this year before rolling it out to all Victorians. While those opposite want to lock Victorians into expensive fossil gas bills, we are helping them slash their bills with more affordable, more reliable renewable energy. There was a lot said about it: ‘Why would you do it? What’s it going to do in terms of saving the costs and saving the burdens for Victorians?’ I do not know if they have done the math on it or there is just some other vested interest. Perhaps the latter; I do not know. I am just putting it out there.

I do want to say – and I know it has already been said by some learned colleagues around the chamber, quite rightly – that we are leading the nation in climate action. It is funny how those opposite never want to dabble in that regard, but I tell you what: there is not a primary school or a secondary school that I visit without the children speaking of wanting to have an environment to live in and a clean planet that will actually be livable and inhabitable into the future. They know – and it is funny that those opposite have not clued into that – and they base that on science. If the kids know, I think the opposition should get on board as well.

I do want to speak to what we have done to date. They are calling this a stunt. Well, let us talk about what a stunt might not look like. Since 2014, 59 projects providing 4471 megawatts of new capacity have come online. There are nine projects currently under construction, which will provide 1314 megawatts of capacity. Is that a stunt? I do not think so.

We have created over 5100 jobs in large-scale renewable energy since we were elected, and this agenda is saving households money one bill at a time. In the 2022 calendar year more than 510,000 households and 49,000 businesses received discounted energy-efficient products and services through the Victorian energy upgrades program. I am still getting to the cost. Okay, on average, households and businesses that undertake energy efficiency upgrades under the program save \$110 and \$3700 respectively on their annual energy bills. Even those who do not participate will save on bills, with households saving \$150 and businesses saving \$870 over the next 10 years due to lower network costs.

So when you get out your calculator and add it up, you can see that we have actually thought this through. Our Solar Homes program has had over 300,000 installations of solar PV, hot water and batteries since 2018. That is sending a strong signal to me; I do not know about you. That is dollars and cents not only in terms of savings on energy bills but also in terms of emissions to our wonderful environment as well. Victorians actually get it; they are on board. It would be nice if the opposition took note of that as well. Over 1.8 million homes also applied for the power saving bonus before it closed last year, coming off a successful round 3 of almost 1.8 million applications. So when you look at our record you can see that we have delivered time and time again, but we are only just warming up now – sorry, pardon the pun, when we are talking about global warming – and that is why the SEC is really driving renewable investment forward.

Now, they did say this is just a stunt. I proffer to rebut that further, because construction has already begun on the SEC's first project, a 1.6-gigawatt battery in Melton with Equis Australia. Let us be clear: because of the SEC this project is happening sooner, is bigger and enables more renewables to come into the system. The SEC's investment has brought forward delivery of this project and upscaled one of its components from 2 to 4 hours – beyond what the market would have otherwise delivered. You do not just have to take our word for it: the managing director of Equis, the SEC's partner in delivering the project, said that the partnership had delivered results quicker than they had anticipated. He said:

... if the Premier and the minister would allow me I'd patent –

the partnership –

... and apply it right across the region.

His words, not ours. With over 100 companies lining up to partner with the SEC, there is plenty more to come. That is hardly a stunt. So to those trying to smear those actually in the industry who are telling us that they are keen to be part of this and they approve of the model, that has got to count for something, doesn't it? I would have thought so.

We are delivering more affordable, more reliable renewable energy owned by Victorians, with every cent of profit being reinvested back into the SEC. Victorians knew this at the election – we were very up-front talking to them. I talked to many, many people in my electorate and they were very keen. They could see the wisdom in it, particularly with these ambitious targets in terms of driving a cleaner

energy future and actually driving real jobs as well, putting downward pressure on power prices and also reducing our emissions.

There is an important element here – there are many – but I should say when we are looking at what the bill will amend and we are looking at the amendment to the constitution, the bill will require the state to always have a controlling interest in the SEC. It will provide that the SEC is to have the objects of supporting Victoria’s transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions – I do not know why they are against that; generating, purchasing and selling electricity in Victoria; owning, operating and participating in the operation of renewable energy generation and storage systems and facilities; developing or supporting or participating in the development of or investing in renewable energy generation and storage systems and facilities; and supplying energy-related products or services to energy consumers in Victoria, from people they can trust. It will prohibit the SEC or the state from doing anything that would result in the state not having a controlling interest in the SEC and prohibit the SEC from owning, operating or investing in fossil fuel facilities.

We are being very up-front and very transparent about what we are delivering for Victorians. Victorians were made fully aware of this at the election, and we have taken it on board and we are delivering as we have promised.

**Martin CAMERON** (Morwell) (15:35): I rise today to talk on the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023 and the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023. Forgive the dust that is on these papers. I did have them done, my dot points, back in November to read, but unfortunately I had to put them away and bring them out today. That is okay. The state government unveiled its half-baked plan to revive the SEC about 18 months ago, and I might have to take a little bit of the blame for having the SEC coming back, because in the seat of Morwell during the election things were not going to plan for Labor down there, and they actually turned up one day with the old SEC logos, the jumpers, the caps, the bomber jackets that they used to have, and they walked in to hand out their how-to-vote cards because an announcement was imminent that the government was going to bring back the SEC. I may have to take a little bit of the blame for this coming back.

After the release of their official plan, we are really still none the wiser about how the SEC is going to operate and how it is going to help our push into the renewables sector. In all that time and after the fanfare, Labor has done next to nothing to deliver on these farcical pledges. It has invested in one single project, which we heard before, which is a battery. Fantastic. We can do that. But the thing that gets me is that we already have a battery down in the seat of Morwell at Hazelwood, and it is wonderful how we can use a coal-fired power station to generate the energy to be stored in this battery and all of a sudden it miraculously becomes green as it is put back into the system to supply our power. It is wonderful how that can happen. All that Victorians have been given is a vague \$1 billion pledge with no independent costings whatsoever that experts say will be woefully inadequate to transition to renewables, and it will come with an estimated cost of about \$320 billion.

The Minister for the State Electricity Commission, who is sitting at the table, a couple of sitting weeks ago when talking about bringing back the SEC was adamant and very animated when she said that bringing back the SEC is going to bring our actual prices ‘down, down, down’. The cost of our bills will be coming ‘down, down, down’. I got my bill the other day along with a lot of other people, I imagine every other Victorian, and I opened it up and – surprise, surprise – it had not gone down, down, down, it had gone up, up, up by about 25 per cent. The SEC will not bring power prices down. I do not think it can actually do it. Enshrining it in the constitution I do not think is going to bring down our prices. I am not sure it is going to deliver on the 59,000 jobs, and it absolutely will not deliver enough renewable energy to meet the demand in time for Labor’s accelerated shutdown in 2035 of our coal-fired power stations.

The Latrobe Valley is in my seat, and I need to go in to bat for my workers that work down there in the coal industry that supply the energy we are using here today so I can keep the lights on to read my dot points that I have in front of me, because they have been told that they will be given help to

transition out of the coal industry and into the renewable industry. When is that going to happen? What projects are they looking forward to? We have a lot of information and facts and figures and numbers put out by the Labor government stating that we are going to be reaching these targets. Where is the road map? When will this actually happen? Those are the things we are asking down there in the seat of Morwell, my seat, where I am trying to protect the jobs of my constituents.

I could talk about this for hours, but I realise that there is really only an hour and 20 minutes left to be able to talk about this bill before it is disgracefully sent to the guillotine to be voted on. I want the member for Narracan to get up and talk and other members on this side of the chamber to be able to get up and talk in that 2-hour period before we actually get to vote on this.

We are attempting to enshrine the revised SEC in the constitution. Why is it needed? We do not know why. It is the flagship of the government. This was the big one; everyone in Victoria had voted on it. Hey, they did not vote on it in my electorate and in the member for Gippsland South's electorate. We did not vote for this. To say that the entire people of Victoria have given you a mandate to go forward with renewables I do not think is right. That is enough from me on this. As I said before, with only a few hours – minutes – left before it goes to the guillotine, I would love that the rest of the people on my side would be able to have their say on this as well.

**Tim RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) (15:41): It is great to rise and speak on the SEC bill, the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023. What an extraordinary waffle we have heard from some of those opposite. They present a position here that they have an opposition to this bill and then provide no substance on any alternative they would put forward. It must drive the minister at the table, the Minister for the State Electricity Commission, spare to then come in here and try to educate those opposite for over a decade on renewable energy policy and investment, which has seen renewable energy targets achieved and investment in renewable energies – our transition leading the nation.

**Danny O'Brien** interjected.

**Tim RICHARDSON**: The member for Gippsland South has been up and about today. It is all right. There was no substance to it, and you made no sense in your bill speech besides ranting and raving. Now is the time to listen in and tune in and hear a little bit more. While he might have had a lived experience of seeing Barnaby Joyce up close and the policy inertia of those at the federal level, including advising him, and maybe he would have made a bit of sense rather than seeing some of the antics we have seen in climate change policy and renewable energy –

**Danny O'Brien**: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I do not believe the member is being relevant to anything to do with the SEC at the moment.

**Tim RICHARDSON**: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I know the member for Gippsland South does not understand the substance of this bill, judging by his speech. But if you cannot talk about renewable energy policy in a national context and you do not think that is relevant, you really should not be here.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Meng Heang Tak)**: There is no point of order.

**Tim RICHARDSON**: When we talk about costs and price, it is a significant issue to then reflect on the journey that we have had for well over a decade in policy inertia. The policy inertia that we have seen federally substantially impacted on the investment in renewable energy into the future, and that policy inertia has played out across our states and territories, who have had to scale up themselves. We have seen that in New South Wales with the coalition and now a Labor government investment, and we have seen that in a Victorian Labor context, with significant scale-up and investment. The astonishing thing that is put forward by Liberals and Nationals on this bill is not an alternative pathway but a complaint about a policy that was unanimously taken by this government to the people of Victoria, putting that forward.

**Danny O'Brien:** On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member on his feet is required to be factual, and the member for Morwell has just pointed out how it was not unanimously accepted by the people of Victoria, quite specifically in the area where the people know the SEC the best.

**Tim RICHARDSON:** On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the intervention that the member for Gippsland South is running is vexatious. If he listened to what –

**Danny O'Brien** interjected.

**Tim RICHARDSON:** He is literally just a bit out of control at the moment. Do you want to just take a drink of water, mate? Settle down and let people add their contribution. Acting Speaker, just on the point of order, I said that it was unanimously taken by government. Those opposite have not been in government for over a decade. When we put forward –

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Meng Heang Tak):** There is no point of order.

**Tim RICHARDSON:** There is not. I do not know what is going on with the member for Gippsland South. I know that this is a really sensitive topic for those opposite, because for bill after bill they oppose climate change action and renewable energy targets. He can try to deny it for many years to come, but they are the facts of where we find ourselves now. That is why Victorians have substantially supported a Labor government investing –

**Jess Wilson** interjected.

**Tim RICHARDSON:** Well, 56 seats, member for Kew, I think is substantial. Increasing the margin of seats each and every time is pretty substantial. The former member for Kew, Tim Smith, being chased around by teals and then the change in policy in those seats is a substantial change. The fact that in Victoria and New South Wales the Liberals have been absolutely slain in their primary is probably a change and a pretty substantial change.

But that is the part of the debate where we find ourselves. That is why we are bringing back the SEC: because it is the right thing to do for Victorians to invest in renewable energies and invest in climate change policy into the future, because jobs depend on it. We need to send a strong signal to our communities that investment in renewable energies, job certainty and creation of those incredible projects into the future and the technology –

**Jess Wilson** interjected.

**Tim RICHARDSON:** This is the free marketeer, the member for Kew, who was not here at the time but was an adviser during that time for, what was it, the IPA when the candidate for Frankston, Michael Lamb – ‘free market, leaving it to the markets’ –

**Wayne Farnham:** On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is not being relevant to the bill at all now. Please bring him back to the bill.

**Tim RICHARDSON:** On the point of order, Acting Speaker, how is talking about the journey of renewable energy not relevant to the State Electricity Commission?

*Members interjecting.*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Meng Heang Tak):** Let me make the ruling. There is no point of order, but could the member come back closer to the bill.

**Tim RICHARDSON:** Again, it is strikeout after strikeout. You can run interference, but the truth hurts. It does, doesn't it? The member for Kew's interjection at the time – and this is a contention that has been put by the coalition – was to leave it to the market. We remember the policy inertia of those opposite when the then Liberal candidate for Frankston said, ‘Coal-fired power stations are our policy. We'll leave it to the market.’ The market was not building new coal-fired power stations. When that



was put on seven occasions to the Liberal candidate, he then gave the policy away – that they would be investing in coal-fired power stations into the future.

**Danny O'Brien:** On a point of order, Acting Speaker, on the question of relevance, I am afraid we have completely thrown the member for Mordialloc off any train of thought that he might have had. What the Liberal candidate for the seat of Frankston in 2018 has to do with the SEC bill, I do not know. Acting Speaker, I ask you to bring him back to the legislation.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Meng Heang Tak):** I have ruled on the point of order, so the member can come back to the bill.

**Tim RICHARDSON:** It is policy inertia that it gets to this point, and the fact that those opposite have not put any credible policy forward in the time that they have been here, despite our renewable energy target, our investment in renewables and us exceeding those targets, when we see the policy investments in Solar Homes, when we see the battery capacity and the uplift in technologies, when we see wind energy and projects coming forward into the future. These are hard truths. You cannot come into this place on this bill and oppose it and pretend that you have not been a part of all of that policy inertia federally and as put forward by the opposition in this state. It is not surprising that the Liberals and Nationals oppose the SEC. They have not supported a renewable energy policy platform or position in the whole decade that the Andrews and Allan governments have served in this place. That is not surprising thing.

**Danny O'Brien** interjected.

**Tim RICHARDSON:** We have got the member for Gippsland South interjecting and on the hook again, because it is hard to accept that their policy inertia has contributed nationally to some of the price rises that we see. But it has required state jurisdictions like Victoria to provide that certainty in the future, to invest in renewable energy and jobs certainty, because how would any organisation or corporation have the certainty to invest in our state with the substantial challenges that they faced federally? So it required, then, some policy initiatives to be put forward and to invest in that future.

I want to take those members to the fact that the \$1 billion is in addition to a whole policy playbook of investment in renewable energies. It was this government that set ambitious targets in renewable energy and generation. Our offshore wind targets of at least 2 gigawatts by 2032, rising through 2035–2040, are signalling to the market the certainty for the future. They are hard things to hear for those opposite when they are opposed to everything and they stand for nothing, just like we see time and time again, trying to tear down the SEC, which was substantially supported by Victorians. Over and over and over, our renewable energy targets, our investment in climate change policy into the future and how we are scaling up our climate change targets, our target of 75 to 80 per cent reduction by 2035 and zero by 2045 – Victorians get it over and over again –

**Danny O'Brien** interjected.

**Tim RICHARDSON:** The member for Gippsland South has ranted and raved throughout my whole contribution, because they are hard truths. It is hard to accept this fact in reality that they have not got this policy right, that they have been punished by Victorians in their electoral outcomes federally and at a state level. They are hard truths to hear. They might interject, but that is the truth as we find ourselves here.

When they talk about prices going up, that is a decade of policy inaction by the federal Liberal–Nationals that has played out time and time and time again. That is the reality. That has been independently audited. It is no wonder that the then Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull tried to bring in a national energy guarantee. All the commentary around that at the time was that the policy inertia to that point did not send a signal to market to invest and scale up and there was no certainty to attract dollars into our nation or into our state.

It is cheap politics and really again a lack of depth and engagement on this bill and on the policy of the SEC to come through here and say that they are opposed and offer no alternatives. Every single position has been the same in their bill briefings – they have been brief, they have not covered anything at all in the substance or what they would do differently other than that they are opposed: ‘Prices are going up, nuclear might be okay, we still support coal and we’re opposed to the SEC.’ Once again they have been exposed for the policy inertia that we have seen for over a decade.

**Wayne FARNHAM** (Narracan) (15:51): I am pleased to rise today to contribute on the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023 and the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023. Oh, my goodness, haven’t I heard some rubbish today – some absolute rubbish. I am glad the member for Mordialloc brought up some hard truths. I am going to give them some hard truth. The reason the SEC was privatised by Joan Kirner in 1992 was because under government control it ran up an \$8 billion debt. Joan Kirner had to sell off the SEC because of the mismanagement of the Labor government back then, which racked up an \$8 billion debt. I find it ironic that this government wants to pass the SEC into the constitution so that it cannot be sold. What you are doing now under your government – and your government has history of this – means if it runs into debt, it cannot be sold. We can never get rid of it. We are going to be with the burden of this government’s incompetence on running projects, and it will be there in the constitution.

**Tim Richardson** interjected.

**Wayne FARNHAM:** The member for Mordialloc can mouth off at me all he wants. You know what, I built an idiot once, and when I want spare parts I am going to go see him.

I am the only person in this chamber that worked at the SEC, and back then, prior to 1992 – I was there in 1989, I was an apprentice in the annexe at Yallourn – the wheels of the privatisation of the SEC were in motion. We were told, the 40 apprentices in there, that four of us would have a job by the time we finished our apprenticeship, which was in 1991, Loy Yang was going to be sold and the SEC was going to be privatised, and that was all under Joan Kirner. I get sick and tired of this house misleading the Victorian public about who actually started the privatisation of the SEC. They have form on privatisation, don’t you worry about that.

**Tim Richardson** interjected.

**Wayne FARNHAM:** There is a list of privatisations, and the member for Mordialloc is just going to sit there and gob off the whole time because he does not like the hard truth. He wanted the hard truth; I am giving him the hard truth. This is what he has asked for; this is the truth. And the fact of the matter is that you are going to pass this into the constitution, you are going to mismanage it, it will run at a loss and then Victorians will inherit another debt. That is the problem. That is why I do not support this bill, because this government has history on it.

My electorate and my colleague the member for Morwell’s are the heart and soul of the SEC. The electorate of Narracan and the electorate of Morwell are the heart and soul of the SEC, and we have seen over many years the struggles of people in Morwell and the flow-on effect down to Narracan that they have had with the war on the SEC over the last decade. When Hazelwood shut, there were thousands of people out of work. The government set up the Latrobe Valley Authority and re-employed, out of the thousands of people, about 400. Four hundred people were re-employed out of the loss of Hazelwood.

You can sit there and tell me all the stuff you want – ‘It’s going to be cheaper; it’s going to be this.’ It is not. There is absolutely no proof to date that it will be cheaper. To date it is not cheaper. It is not cheaper; power prices are up 25 per cent. You are setting targets – your whole wind program went out with the federal government. They absolutely threw it in the toilet. So you have got to redo that. You have to get your SEC up and going again. And passing this into the constitution is just absolute virtue signalling. That is all it is. It is just a show for you guys – you are like a show bag. That is what this government is like; it is like a show bag.

I want to give my colleagues an opportunity to speak on this, because this government has decided we are not going to have a bill briefing and we are going to guillotine this at 5 o'clock. There are a lot more people who want to speak on this who are just as passionate as me about this bill, and that is why we do not support it.

**Mathew HILAKARI** (Point Cook) (15:56): I always appreciate following the member for Narracan, but I am on my feet actually a little bit earlier than I expected. I am following Liberal–Nationals speakers who were 4 minutes, 4 minutes, 5 minutes – South-West Coast, Narracan, Morwell – all giving up their time because they did not have a lot to say on this bill. Now, I do not know if that is because they are ashamed about their time in government from 2010 to 2014 or they are ashamed about Kennett selling it off or they are ashamed about what they did not do in federal government. I was most interested to see some reporting today in fact where Dutton is saying that he is going to support five or six nuclear sites in multiple states, and that is after a decade of being in government. Of course he decided not to do anything at that point on his nuclear ambitions. But once again Dutton goes to nuclear.

I remember talking just in the last sitting week about energy in this state, and all of those opposite were downcast when I asked them the question, 'Well, do you support nuclear power and nuclear energy?' They were all up and about until that point, and I could not understand why they were so downcast when we posed the question. Well, posing the question came to fruition really quickly with the member for North-Eastern Metro Richard Welch. He got up just a few hours later and he said:

If nuclear power is the way to achieve it and avoid the limitations of renewables, they are ... happy to have it in the mix.

He was talking about young people, and I am quite shocked by this. I do not think I have met a single young person ever in my life who has said nuclear is the future. It is the future for those who grew up maybe in the 1950s and the 1930s, when they did not realise the consequences – the 100,000-year legacy of nuclear waste.

I am sure the member for Narracan is looking for his nuclear reactor. I am sure the member for Gippsland South is looking for the small-scale reactors in his community; maybe Sale would enjoy this. The nuclear tips in Traralgon – I am sure we are all looking for this. The kilotons of nuclear energy coming out of Kew – they are all looking forward to it, but they are not up and about now. Why aren't you backing in your national leader? Why aren't you backing in those other members in the other place of this Parliament and talking up this nuclear ambition?

I think this goes some way towards the reason why they actually oppose the SEC being included in the constitution – because of course they have other ambitions for when they get into government, their nuclear ambitions, and they do not want these nobbled and destroyed by a well-run clean energy program across the state. I think that is really at the end of the day why they oppose it. They keep talking about it, election after election. Before the last election four coalition MPs, including two frontbenchers, would not even put their name to it – they would not even put their name to their support for nuclear energy. They said, 'It shouldn't really be ruled out. We should always reassess these things.' Just last year their members in the upper house voted to repeal the Nuclear Activities (Prohibitions) Act 1983. Of course they would, because they are up for it; they are up for it all the time.

As a result of Kennett's full privatisation of the SEC we have seen \$23 billion in profits going overseas, and that number keeps going up all the time. That is why we need market intervention. We do support market intervention on this side of the house, because these are essential services and utilities that our community relies on, and we have seen so many times that our community relies on these important utilities. The community that I represent is one that is forward-thinking and already making the move themselves, with large numbers of community members owning Teslas, one of the highest rates in the state, and massive amounts of solar energy, because people are making the move. And they need a little bit of support. This government has been happy to support them, whether it is through support for solar panels or support for batteries to harness the very cheap power produced in the middle of the

day. Of course we will be there to support them, and we will support the whole community through the reintroduction of the SEC.

Why do we need to safeguard it in the constitution? It is because we know those opposite just cannot help themselves. They cannot help themselves in privatising the things that people in Victoria need, and they just have not been able to help themselves before on so many other projects. We know in Victoria that renewables will replace coal. They will replace gas. This is an inevitability. We are committed to it. We are committed to a pathway to achieving this as well, and we have already started on that pathway since being elected. On 25 October SEC Victoria Pty Ltd was registered with ASIC, and then less than a month later it was declared a state-owned enterprise under the State Owned Enterprises Act 1992.

Of course we will keep moving on this. I have heard many of those opposite argue about why they cannot have more time to debate, while they are not using the time up fully that is allocated to them. Part of the reason that they are so avoidant of these issues is because they simply do not believe in them. They do not believe that the government should have a role in any industry, no matter how vital to the lives of Victorians. They are also not really interested in lowering the cost of living. We heard in question time today of the 500 per cent increase in costs that nuclear power plants would provide for Victorians rather than those that come from solar energy, from wind power – all those things that those people on this side of the house are seeking. It is not just because they are cheaper. It is also because of the net zero greenhouse gas emissions that are associated with them.

The SEC's objectives are to generate, purchase and sell electricity in Victoria and to own and operate or participate in the operation of renewable energy generation, storage systems and facilities. Of course these are the places that we would invest in, because they actually make a difference to the lives of Victorians and to our power grid. That grid stability has been put so much at risk by the inaction in the last nine years of the Liberal government. It is so disappointing that we are now fixing up the bills for the inaction of that federal government. We have legislated in Victoria to get to net zero by 2045 and our nation-leading renewable energy targets of 95 per cent by 2035. This forms a fundamental part of it, because with climate change here already, with us feeling the effects of climate change today, we must do something about it and we must do something immediately about it. We want cheaper electricity, we want to see grid stability and we want to see us address climate change.

We protect the SEC through this bill by having a controlling interest that cannot be sold off by those opposite, and that would mean that the minister and the Premier hold those shares on behalf of the Parliament to make sure that we can hold them in perpetuity. It requires, once it is in the constitution, a larger majority for this to be knocked over. In fact we are putting a new section, section 107, in place because we want to make sure that for those opposite, who have tried again and again to privatise state assets, it is really difficult to do, and that three-fifths majority is an important protection against these assets being sold off, which our state needs and our state will increasingly need. I think we saw in the Parliament most recently a group of the Indian community come to the Parliament to cook some Indian food on all electric, because this transition is here now. It is happening, and we are going to be leading those transitions on an ongoing basis, because fossil fuels just simply are not the future.

We have precedents for including these sorts of matters in the constitution. One of those was in 2021, the Constitution Amendment (Fracking Ban) Act 2021. I am not sure – I was not in the Parliament at that particular time – but I have the sense that those opposite may well have opposed that.

**Richard Riordan** interjected.

**Mathew HILAKARI:** You do mention it is a silly idea to ban fracking. I am surprised that the community you represent in Polwarth – those places like Torquay, Jan Juc and such – would be particularly interested in seeing their beautiful coastline all fracked up. That is a matter for the member for Polwarth of course to work out, whether he supports fracking in the way that he does. Good luck to you, I say.

The Constitution (Water Authorities) Act 2003 also prohibited public authorities with the responsibility of delivering water services from transferring that responsibility as well. Once again we have seen the important matter of making sure we preserve those public assets and institutions and protect our communities. Of course I commend this bill to the house.

**Richard RIORDAN** (Polwarth) (16:06): I rise today to talk about the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023 to put the SEC permanently in the constitution. This government now has had a very disturbing habit of wanting to put all sorts of things into the constitution, that governing document that is there for all Victorians for all time. This government takes cheap shots by wanting to regulate and trying to lock things in place in the constitution regardless of the merit of using our constitution in such a way. It really poses the question: how far would this government go in trying to make a point with the way it abuses and uses our constitution? For example, if we were having this debate back at the turn of the 1900s about transport and communications here in Victoria, would this government seriously have looked at enshrining into the constitution the use of cable trams? Would they have said that we need to make sure everyone has a government-run horse-and-cart service and therefore we need to put that in the constitution? Would we have ensured that in order to expand Victorian railways we put into the constitution and lock in the use of steam trains?

The reality is that technology and the best way to do things evolve and change over time. No-one in this chamber can possibly be definitive about how we will use, consume, absorb and generate energy into the future. A government must allow the best technology, the most efficient technology and the technology that is best for the environment to be used at the time. This government is attempting to put its stamp today on what future generations will need and want and desire here in Victoria and complicate it in a process that could see future generations held up and delayed in taking on the best possible technologies. You could take it further. Imagine back in the late 1980s if this government had had it in its brain to go putting communication technology into the constitution. Would we forever be destined to use Betamax recorders or VHS recorders? Would we in fact not have our iPads but be walking around with a Sony Walkman strapped to our hips?

This is the government trying to pick the winners of the future when it clearly does not stack up. But it is worse than that, because they are clearly being very loose with the truth about what this SEC means. The first thing is – and I refer specifically to the purpose of the bill – they are wanting to enshrine the SEC and to entrench its objectives into the constitution. If we refer back to May last year when the government put its press release out about its initial \$1 billion investment into the SEC – hello, government, hello – the average wind farm alone will cost more than \$1 billion to construct. Do you seriously think we are going to have any sort of energy company established, built, running and operating and saving the environment for Victoria on the mere smell of \$1 billion? It is ludicrous. It means absolutely nothing. It is a cheap shot at the intelligence of all Victorians in the way that they are wanting to lock into the future. I also refer to the press release where it says this will create 59,000 jobs. Hello, government, the whole Victorian renewable energy sector from most recent ABS statistics employs just on 6000 people – 6072 people in fact from the last ABS statistics.

How on earth is \$1 billion, which is one-pooftenth – a technical term – of the entire investment in renewable energy today, going to generate some 10 times more jobs than what currently exist across the whole renewable energy sector in the state? It is actually either grossly misleading or an entirely incompetent figure put out by the spin merchants here in this current Victorian government. So there are two lies that this bill is being brought to the Parliament on – two complete mistruths that are being put to this Parliament and the people of Victoria as an excuse as to why this document should be enshrined in our constitution. With such poor research, with such a poor foundation, there is no way this Parliament and both houses should be agreeing to put this type of constitutional change through the Victorian Parliament when it is just not factual.

The release when this came out talked about the desire of this government to lower energy bills and the cost of living, which is absolutely devastating so many families in Victoria at the moment. The government, under its own sort of logic, has only claimed to bring a reduction to people's power bills

by actually getting taxpayers money, writing out a cheque and giving money back to the consumer through their \$250 energy bonuses. Do Victorians seriously believe that the way forward is to have an imaginary organisation imaginarily making up 59,000 jobs and creating a renewable energy sector on a billion-dollar investment and that that is going to deliver lower costs? The only way this government has been able to lower the cost of a household energy bill is by actually writing out cheques from Treasury and giving it back to people. That is not sustainable. It cannot be the way that Victoria develops and grows its energy sector, with such poor management and such a poor basis.

If Victorians want to have cheap, reliable, affordable energy, we have to be energy agnostic. We have to be prepared to search the world, look at the best ways to do it and bring the best technology and the best energy options to Victorians and always have an open book as to the best way we can do it. To lock a concept and an idea into our constitution which will forever tie the hands of future governments, future Victorians, future generations, is not only an act of gross irresponsibility, it is unfair to Victorians now and into the future.

To highlight why we will always need to keep our minds open and our opportunities available to all Victorians: just today, only in the last half hour, Victoria's energy generation from wind was 1.8 per cent of our energy requirement – this afternoon. On a beautiful, clear, productive midweek here in Victoria, with the billions that this government wants to invest into that sector, we are only generating 1.8 per cent of our energy requirement. We are still highly reliant on old fossil fuel sources. This government has banned gas, which is the clear pathway or road map into a future of renewable energy. We have banned that, so that option has been taken from our basket, and we are left with an energy source that on a nice, calm, beautiful, sunny day just simply cannot do it by itself. This bill that we are expected to pass today is enshrining in Victorian law, in the Victorian constitution – tying the hands of future generations – a technology, an idea and a concept that just does not pass the pub test. I cannot support this bill that is coming forward today. I hope that the government and those in the other chamber see reason and do not allow this legislation to go through.

**Jackson TAYLOR** (Bayswater) (16:14): It is a great pleasure to rise in support of these bills in this place today.

**Steve Dimopoulos** interjected.

**Jackson TAYLOR**: Thank you very much, Minister. It is always wonderful to see you at the table. Your brimming smile and loud voice echo through the corridors, but it is nice to hear it in this place. It is a great privilege to rise to talk in support of these bills, and from the very outset can I just acknowledge the fantastic work of our Minister for the State Electricity Commission, who has done a wonderful job in championing not just this legislation –

**Lauren Kathage** interjected.

**Jackson TAYLOR**: As the member for Yan Yean said, a fabulous minister – that and so much more. We see her day in and day out in this place. You know, she does not just talk the talk, but she walks the walk. She has led nation-leading reform through this place in all of her actions as the minister and of course as the Minister for Energy and Resources, and she should be indeed congratulated for her commitment to having Victoria lead the way and to bringing this legislation into this place. And of course I am grateful to her team and the department, who have done a great deal of work, no doubt, getting this legislation into this place.

Actually, before I get on to that, I just want to acknowledge the member for Mordialloc, who is no longer in the chamber at this point in time, and his fantastic contribution as always. He spoke about something that really gave me the irribs when I was a little bit younger, not in this place. He spoke a bit about – as did the member for Point Cook – in essence the climate wars. I think we have had a bit of that in this place as well, but it has played out certainly on the federal stage over the last 10 to 15 years. We saw in the absolute banger of a series *Nemesis* three terms of a federal coalition government dithering away on renewable energy and the future of energy generation instead of taking

that opportunity by the horns, wasting nine years without having Australia at the forefront of renewable energy production and at the forefront of this issue. Of course it is now pleasing to see, as I believe some of our federal colleagues say, the adults back in charge. We do not hypothesise and we do not use terms like energy agnostic; we stick with the science, we stick with the facts and we actually go where the market is going.

We know that fossil fuel is a thing of the past, we know that private energy companies are leaving – they are packing up shop – and we know that the government has to play a stronger role, and that is exactly what we are doing. We also know that renewable energy is the cheapest form of energy. It is the future of energy generation, and I am absolutely proud to be part of a government that acknowledges that and that takes action on it. What we have heard essentially from those opposite – the member for Narracan said ‘the war on the SEC’; the irony of that comment in his contribution given what we are debating today – which the member for Mordialloc also acknowledged, is no alternative. Where is the alternative? They want to be in the government. They want to be the government, and I tell you what, I am grateful every day I am in this place that they are not, because we are here talking about serious legislation, serious outcomes for Victorian people. And if you do not agree, then what are you suggesting? I mean, Peter Dutton, the leader of the federal opposition, gets accused of being Mr No, constantly negative. The opposition are basically replicating that at a state level. There is no alternative. You cannot come to this place and debate the legislation, serious legislation, that is going to drive down the price of energy.

Yes, it is not going to happen tomorrow. It is going to take time. These big reforms take time, but this government has never shied away from the reality of these types of reforms and making sure we set about them, because the best time to start is today. There are obviously a whole range of measures that we know will be delivered tomorrow or in a month, and of course this reform will continue as long as this government is around. We will make sure the SEC remains in existence via the very mechanism that we are introducing into this Parliament today so that those opposite cannot simply get back into government and privatise it like we know they have done in the past.

I am very glad that our government absolutely do not sign up to the climate wars. We understand the science. We understand the facts. This idea of ‘energy agnostic’, I have got a sense as to what that really means. I do not have people in my electorate going, ‘G’day, Jackson, can you give me a nuclear reactor in Boronia? It’s what we really want in Wantirna in our beautiful parkland.’

**Mathew Hilakari** interjected.

**Jackson TAYLOR:** If it is not good enough, member for Point Cook, for Wantirna – and I bet it is not good enough for Point Cook or for Werribee – then I reckon it is not good enough for the places that the federal opposition leader has mooted. I tell you –

*Members interjecting.*

**Jackson TAYLOR:** Tell us where. I want to hear members from this opposition and this place tell me where they want to build these things. Do you agree with Mr Dutton? Really, I would love to hear everyone say ‘No nuclear’. Is that too much to ask? What you are essentially saying is: let us look at introducing what we know is a form of power generation which would take years to come online, is the most expensive form of power and generates waste which no-one wants in their backyard. What we are really talking about here is – I think perhaps part of the issue is – just delaying tactics. For 10 years no-one has talked about it – boom! ‘We’re out of government and we’re in opposition. We’re not going to take ourselves seriously. Now we’re all about nuclear.’ I tell you, I do not reckon –

**Lauren Kathage** interjected.

**Jackson TAYLOR:** It is toxic, member for Yan Yean. I think people see straight through it. I do not really bet these days, but if I were to have a bet, if they were to have the privilege of being back in government at a federal level I reckon the topic of nuclear might just disappear somewhere. I reckon

it would be off the agenda when they have to make the hard decisions and they are back in the cabinet room.

This is just some of the stuff that we are getting in this place today – the same old stuff, the same old climate wars, with no alternatives. The only people who are getting on and delivering real outcomes and listening to the Victorian people – because it is not Peter Dutton and it is certainly not those opposite – are this government. We have always been at the forefront, nation leading. In fact when you look at the measure of some of our targets and what we are on track to achieve with our renewable energy targets as well as our net zero emissions targets, we are absolutely global leading. That is something to be very, very proud of, make no mistake about it.

The minister was in here earlier today talking about our opposition to nuclear. I am very happy to say that I do not support nuclear energy. No-one in my community wants to see a reactor in Boronia, Wantirna or The Basin. It is just absurd. Let us stick to facts, and let us get real here. What we are debating here today will make a huge difference for Victorians. The Liberals of old, we know, loved privatisation. We know that, formerly, Jeff Kennett, as the member for Mordialloc said, was very proud of his work in privatising the SEC, when I was two years old. I do not remember it personally, although I have read and I have looked. Being two years of age, it would have been hard for me, although I am sure my parents were very concerned about it. We are not going to let the Liberals, if they are lucky enough to occupy the chairs of government, roll back and privatise what is government-owned energy – not run for profit, not \$23 billion of profits or thereabouts rolling back overseas.

We are going to run it for people, and it is not just an election slogan – mind you, a very good one. When I was out and about on the doors, I spoke to a number of people. For them this was the defining issue of the last election. It for them was why they voted Labor, why they voted for me and why they backed in a third-term Labor government in the state of Victoria. They know what we have delivered. We have absolute credibility when it comes to this. Our contemporaries in other jurisdictions understand what Victoria is about. When I was out there knocking on thousands and thousands of doors, this for them was a critical piece of policy.

That is exactly why we are going to get on with it, despite the noise and the protestations from those opposite, who of course, if they are lucky enough, may be here, as I discussed. We have heard from some. They are ready to start the privatisation talks, and then they ask, ‘Well, why do you want to put it in the constitution?’ Why? Because we are listening to you. We already know what a future Liberal government would do. I certainly hope that we are not going to see that any time soon. I absolutely support government-owned energy. I support these bills. I hope to see some voice and some reason from those opposite and maybe even a few alternatives. If you do not like it, then what are you suggesting?

**Tim READ** (Brunswick) (16:24): I rise to speak on behalf of the Greens on the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023, one of the two SEC bills being debated this afternoon. This bill proposes to entrench clauses relating to the SEC in the constitution by way of a special majority, which requires the bill to have three-fifths support of both houses. Should this be achieved, these clauses may only be amended or repealed in the future by way of the same special majority. Bringing back the SEC was the major Labor election announcement in 2022, but it has since become clear that, apart from the logo, this resurrected SEC bears no resemblance to the old SEC. It is not going to renationalise our energy generation, it is not going to directly sell power to Victorian households and, despite what was promised, it is not even going to ensure majority public ownership in the projects it invests in.

The first project, for example, a Big Battery, will still be majority owned by a private corporation, with a legal obligation to maximise their profits at the expense of Victorian consumers. It will not stop Labor from allowing new coal and gas projects. The Greens support efforts to bring in more renewables and genuine government ownership of essential services, but whether or not this new small SEC is the way to go about this is at best debatable. It is somewhat disturbing that not one independent energy expert from academia, industry or our peak climate agencies has called for this policy to speed



up the transition to renewables as Victoria phases out coal. It is more disturbing that the former Premier has since conceded the announcement was as much about good politics and positive focus group feedback for Labor's election campaign than anything beneficial for the climate or Victorian energy consumers.

Instead of an old logo, what energy experts in the renewables industry have been calling for is a clearer and more efficient planning process to get projects off the ground – a clearer plan for what Victoria's future electricity grid and renewable energy generation mix will look like, further industry and consumer regulations and incentives to electrify the state and a detailed jobs and housing plan to make sure that Victoria actually has the workers to build the renewable projects that have been approved. I might add that it would also be a good idea for the Victorian Labor government to start talking to the federal Labor government ministers so that they stop unexpectedly blocking major renewable projects at the last moment as well. But unlike the rest of Australia, Victoria is yet to do any of these things.

Victoria has reasonably good renewable energy targets, particularly for 2035, but instead of the clear plan on how they will be achieved, it has so far only achieved a retro logo on the Premier's jacket and some shiny brochures. In the short term the government's \$1 billion investment in the SEC may help patch over this absence of a long-term infrastructure plan for a few small renewable projects that would otherwise have failed to get off the ground, but the fact that the government has so far announced total statewide investment for the SEC at a scale of less than a 20th of the amount that it is spending on a single new toll road starkly illustrates the inadequacy of the SEC's financial resources for this purpose.

According to the Department of Transport and Planning website, excluding hydro Victoria has more megawatts of renewable energy facilities approved but not operational than it has projects awaiting planning approval or under construction or currently operational combined. Some 11.35 gigawatts worth of renewable projects on the website have planning approval but are not being built right now. We urgently need to find out what the key issues are stopping these projects from becoming operational and have a plan to fix them. If the best way to get these projects operational is indeed via direct public funding, then the government needs to allocate a lot more money to the SEC than the token amount it has to date.

But if the new SEC does not make a lot of sense from a policy point of view, it makes even less obvious sense to seek to put it in the state's constitution in the way that this bill proposes to do. The bill proposes to entrench the objectives of the SEC in the constitution along with requiring that the state always have a controlling interest in the SEC, and it prohibits the SEC from owning, operating or investing in a fossil fuel facility. We were informed by the minister's office that this is to futureproof the SEC from future governments, but it is apparent that all that is being futureproofed is the Victorian government owning and using the SEC logo and brand, not any of its tangible state-owned renewable energy assets or its investments. What is proposed will not prevent current or future governments from continuing to facilitate new fossil fuel projects outside of the SEC, such as the current coal-to-hydrogen project in the Latrobe Valley. Stranger still, the bill does not appear to explicitly prohibit a future government from selling off most or all of the new SEC's new assets to the private sector, just as the former Labor Kirner and Liberal Kennett governments did with the old SEC in the 1990s.

What good is it to have a constitutionally enshrined and government majority owned SEC that has no assets and does nothing, while permitting future Victorian governments to back as many new coal and gas projects as they like? The Greens struggle to support this bill if it has no purpose beyond its apparent clever election campaign politics, as doing so would only serve as a distraction from the very real challenges of climate change and the energy transition in Victoria like those I have already outlined.

We need to see that the bill is actually meaningful in addressing climate change, and that is why I have amendments circulating today. We certainly will not rule out producing further amendments as it moves to the other place, in particular something to make sure that any SEC-owned assets and investment – currently \$1 billion – cannot be privatised like the last SEC, which in my opinion is really

the only genuine reason for putting the public company in the constitution. But for now, under standing orders, I would like to advise the house of amendments to the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023 and kindly request that they be circulated.

#### **Amendments circulated under standing orders.**

**Tim READ:** In the first of the amendments, proposed new section 108 establishes in the constitution that the SEC must by 2035 own, operate or participate in the operation of generating systems that have a combined capacity to generate not less than 4.5 gigawatts of electricity by utilising renewable energy sources or converting renewable energy sources into electricity.

The Greens believe this amendment is necessary to ensure that future governments do not reduce or abandon the current government's stated commitment to the minimum amount of renewable electricity that will be generated from SEC projects or, to put it another way, to insert a constitutional requirement for the SEC to actually produce something tangible in terms of renewable energy generation. To further support this, the government will also be required to report each year to Parliament on how the SEC is tracking towards producing electricity and how this fits into the state's overall legislated renewable energy targets.

The second amendment proposes new section 109, that the SEC cannot be a leviable authority for the purposes of part C of the Financial Management Act 1994. A leviable authority under the FMA is a public authority such as a publicly owned company that can be charged what Treasury calls a 'financial accommodation levy' into the government's Consolidated Revenue Fund. The idea for this kind of levy or tax on public companies came about as part of the national competition policy in the 1990s, which stressed the need for competitive neutrality between public and private companies when private corporations increasingly started to take over the delivery of government services. The levy does this by taxing public companies at a level equal to any competitive advantage they may have over private companies in delivering the service, in particular public companies' access to lower borrowing costs.

The economic orthodoxy of the levy is highly questionable, because if public companies have to be taxed to make private companies competitive, it begs the question of why we need private companies in the market at all. There is also a strange irony if the government were to apply the same levy that helped state governments break up public monopolies like the old SEC in the 1990s to the new SEC in 2024. Moreover, we are concerned that the practical effect of any levy would be to divert profits from the SEC not into more renewable projects as promised but into consolidated revenue, where it will be used to fund a whole range of government activities – including those that may contribute to higher emissions and climate change – which are contrary to the aims of the SEC. The Greens also reject the idea of a tax on public ownership that will ultimately have to be paid for by consumers. We believe the public should enjoy the benefits of public ownership, not pay more for it.

I have already indicated that we are still looking at introducing future amendments to this bill as it moves to the other place, and we have appreciated the minister's office having open discussions with us about this. There still remains a rather large elephant in the room, and that is the broader picture of Victoria's energy emissions, because there is still the same minimum policy requirement in terms of whether we are aiming to avoid the catastrophic effects of global warming moving above 1.5 degrees, or even just meeting a less ambitious target, and this is that governments do not approve any new fossil fuel projects. This is a prohibition on all new fossil fuel energy projects, whether they are ultimately funded by the SEC, a government or by the private sector. The same carbon will be released into the atmosphere whether it is funded by the government or the private sector.

The math says that only prohibiting fossil fuel projects for the relatively small investments that will be made by the SEC, as this bill seeks to do, while simultaneously allowing the construction of bigger coal and gas projects by the private sector, would result in a net increase in Victoria's energy emissions. This is simply not an acceptable climate policy, and certainly not while the bush around Mount Cole outside Beaufort is still smouldering.

As the only party with a clear message that there can be no new coal and gas, it will be no surprise that the Greens will introduce further amendments to this bill in the Legislative Council to extend the proposed constitutional ban on the SEC investing in any fossil fuel facilities to a complete constitutional ban on the construction of any new fossil fuel facilities anywhere in Victoria. It is of course also an amendment that will be consistent with the repeated calls from the United Nations to governments across the world. But more importantly, it is an amendment which will mean Victoria will finally stop trying to pour even more fuel onto a fire it is supposedly trying to extinguish. For the Greens to support this bill in the Legislative Council we will need it to be more than just tokenistic. It must be amended so that it actually accelerates the state's transition to renewable energy and lowers Victoria's carbon emissions. It does not do this currently, but the Greens are prepared to work in good faith with the government to try and fix it.

**Josh BULL** (Sunbury) (16:36): Acting Speaker De Martino, I am delighted to see you and delighted to have the opportunity this afternoon to contribute to these historic pieces of legislation as this government builds upon our strong and proud record of investment in clean, cheap and renewable energy and of course the formation of the SEC. I do not propose this afternoon to spend too long speaking about those opposite and the contributions that they have made for some time this afternoon. However, as we deliver what is indeed a historic piece of legislation and deliver on our commitment to the Victorian community to what was a hallmark signature election commitment, those opposite today have spent their time playing cheap political games and waxing lyrical about jelly beans. What we know on this side of the house is that that strong, sustained investment in renewables, which we have had the opportunity to deliver in now nearly a decade of being in government in this great state of Victoria, has meant that we have achieved some significant and important commitments to the people of Victoria right across this state. That is something that is by no means by chance, and as a number of members on this side of the house have mentioned in their contributions, this has been through sustained investment, through budgets and through initiatives on the ground. And many, many people have taken part in important work to ensure that we are doing everything that we possibly can to drive down the price of energy in this state and of course ensure greater protections for the planet.

The choice could not be clearer, and that is to support that investment in cheaper renewable technology or in fact to do nothing – if not do worse than that, and that is to oppose and block every opportunity that we take on this side of the house to invest in renewables and of course the formation, the creation, or the bringing back, I should say, member for Footscray, of the SEC. We are getting on and putting the power back in the hands of Victorians, accelerating that transition to cheaper, more renewable energy. We know that construction has begun on the SEC's first project, the 1.6-gigawatt battery near Melton to power over 2000 homes. We know that by storing excess cheap energy in battery systems, homes and businesses will also benefit. By powering the state through renewables, more often than not we avoid that reliance on expensive coal and gas which causes those significant rises in bills. We know within our local community, as you move around your local community – and I know that other members have spoken about it this afternoon – that there is a real sense. We saw this through the campaign, but we have seen over the past decade that there is a strong commitment within local communities to see the delivery of renewable energy.

People know and understand that by investment in science and investment in technology and much of the framework that is within this piece of legislation but also through all of the investments that have been made – and I heard the member for Bayswater talk about many of these investments within his local community and others – that by sustained and strong investment within this portfolio area but working across other portfolio areas, whether that be transport, whether that be education or whether that be health, the benefits of all of this come together to form that critical network, that pathway to cheaper, more renewable, more reliable energy, something that this government is committed to.

Unfortunately what we saw for 10 years, if not more, from those in Canberra, the former LNP federal government, was just a policy vacuum. A decision that this government had to make was to go it alone, to step up and stand up and do the things that we needed to do as this state to show real leadership, not

a policy vacuum. But imagine what could have been done in this state and, critically, right across the country, if we had had strong, sound, sustained leadership in Canberra in this space. Unfortunately we did not get that. So we made decisions very early on in our term of government to get on and do the important things that we know Victorians support and need and of course our environment desperately needs.

The science has been incredibly clear, and we, sadly, in many ways have had to waste time, energy and effort in a debate about science that should not have happened. This is a position that we formed very early on, because it is startling when you put science above ideology, when you use fact instead of fiction, when you actually listen to people that have spent years in research and tech and science and doing the things that actually matter. Good governments will always be guided by the science. Good governments will always respond and listen to those in medicine that are doing work in medical fields – amazing work – and those in science that are doing incredible work in this space. We saw this through the pandemic. We see this with energy. Why is it that those opposite fail at each and every opportunity to respect those that are in science and to respect those that spend years and decades of their lives providing advice to government that is then simply ignored? That is not the show that we are, and that is not a show that we will ever be.

This framework sets out a critical pathway forward for the SEC. We know, and other members have mentioned them – I will not go through all of the commitments and financial contributions that have been mentioned, but I did just want to touch on our workforce. We know that with support for workforce development and attraction through new avenues both as an employer and through training and through advocacy, the transition to 95 per cent renewables is expected to create more than 59,000 jobs as well as 6000 apprenticeships and traineeships by 2035. We all can remember much of the doom and gloom and much of the rhetoric that is put out around job losses. But what we know, and I go back to that fundamental principle about investment in science and investment in strong and sustainable renewable energy, is it creates more investment, and we know that this is where the market is heading.

We are indeed as a state leading in this nation on climate action. We smashed our 2020 emissions targets of 15 to 20 per cent reduction by achieving 29.6 per cent.

**Lily D'Ambrosio** interjected.

**Josh BULL:** Absolutely, Minister, and in 2021 we achieved 32.3 per cent. That is not just talking about change when it comes to climate action, that is actually delivering it. We of course hear many contributions from the Greens political party in this space. What we know, member for Frankston, is that it is very easy to provide a running commentary on all the things that should have been, all the things that should be done and all the things that did not happen.

**Mathew Hilakari** interjected.

**Josh BULL:** Put it in the newsletter – absolutely, member for Point Cook. But what we know and understand is that when you do have the privilege, the profound and unique opportunity to be in government, you need to make decisions that are of course balanced and that work across all portfolio areas but most importantly that are practical.

One of the things that I know I am particularly proud of and I know the member for Footscray is very proud of as well – and indeed all members on this side of the house are – is that ability to be able to deliver in this space critically and importantly and practically but also to know and understand that we can deliver in this space and make transformative investment that is going to benefit our community not necessarily just today and throughout the course of 2024 but for generations to come. When we look at the smallest people within our community, the little tiny tots that are running around, the five- and six-year-olds, we know that this legislation that is before the house today will benefit those people.

I know that that is something for Ned, Tilly and Cleo and the whole range of little ones that are out there. I know that that is something I am very proud of, and I know that that is something members on this side of the house are very, very proud of, because we know that investments for the future are some of the most important investments that we will ever make. It is for those reasons and all of the other reasons mentioned by many of my colleagues in their stellar contributions this afternoon that I commend this bill to the house.

**Tim BULL** (Gippsland East) (16:46): It is a pleasure to rise and contribute to this cognate debate on the two SEC bills that are before us. It has been a rather interesting debate, sitting down in my office listening to some of the contributions. Some of those on the other side have labelled this as a vote on renewables. Personally speaking, and I am sure I am speaking for the majority of people on our side, I hold the view that, quite simply, policy should not be included in our state constitution. I do not often agree with the Greens – in fact I have been in here 13 years and I doubt I ever have – but the member speaking for the Greens made the comment along those lines: that policy should not be included in our constitution and also that we need to have more information on how this is going to be structured. It was a pre-election policy, and here we are, a significant amount of time on from that election, and we still know very little more than the basic framework – and we are talking about enshrining it in our constitution.

First of all, I want to make the point that this was something that pre-election those opposite wanted to talk about for a long, long time. It was labelled as the Holy Grail, and it was going to solve all of our energy problems – yet here we are having this go into the guillotine tonight with debate being very limited. One of the government speakers asked, if it is such an important thing, why we are only speaking for 4 or 5 minutes each. Well, you shake your head, because there are a lot of people who want to speak on this and want to make a contribution, and in the time frame that we have been allocated, members on this side of the chamber have had to reduce their contributions to allow as many people as possible to speak.

The thing I find a little ironic about this is that every effort has been made to enshrine the SEC in our constitution so a future government cannot alter it, and there have been points raised and commentary made from those opposite around privatisation, but this government itself has a long list of privatisations. It privatised the Port of Melbourne and it privatised the titles office, just to name two. There were more. This government privatised the licensing arm of VicRoads. It talks about concerns over privatisation when it suits, but when we have issues like this, it wants to put into the constitution that this cannot be changed and that the SEC cannot be privatised. It is a little bit hypocritical to be saying that.

I also want to talk about the privatisation of the power sector. I have heard some of the counter claims coming back and forth across the chamber around who started the privatisation of our power industry, so I thought I would do a bit of research while I was sitting there this arvo having a look. I dug up this media release from 11 June 1992 from the office of the Premier of Victoria of the day, Joan Kirner, and it actually quotes the Premier with this comment:

The Victorian Government's decision to involve private investment in this new project is essential to our energy future.

The Premier then also talked about it providing the framework for the future in Victoria's power industry generation. It then goes on to say:

Following a keenly-contested bidding process ...

So I think that this media release from the Premier, which I will provide to Hansard, finally puts this to bed once and for all, saying that half of Loy Yang is being privatised. There is no further argument to be had there. I have heard the member for Essendon say on occasion that this was more of a partnership. Well, it is here in black and white that the Premier was using the word 'privatisation'.

The member for Narracan touched on this earlier. He was a second-year apprentice fitter and turner in 1989, and he has said – I think it was in his maiden speech as well – that they were told that only four of the 40 apprentices would have a job when they finished at Loy Yang B because the industry was being privatised. The member for Sunbury went into the federal sphere, so I will touch on that for a moment. When we are talking about privatisation and the concerns on this side, I have mentioned some of the things that were privatised under this current government, but at the federal level we also look at things like Qantas, we look at the Commonwealth Bank, privatised by Labor governments of the day. But now we are seeing fit to try and enshrine in our constitution ‘No change here’.

I want to point out that we are very open to knowing more about how the SEC is going to function and how it is going to drive down energy costs, because all we have heard in the subsequent 14-odd months since the election – probably 15 months now – is the repeating of the slogan that it is going to drive down energy prices. That is very difficult to believe and have faith in when the Minister for Energy and Resources stood up here last sitting week in the chamber and said, ‘Energy prices have gone down, down, down.’ I am not sure what planet she has been on, but every Victorian’s energy prices have been going up, up, up, to the level of 25 per cent or higher, we hear being quoted by Victorians all around the countryside. So when we have our energy minister saying that energy prices have gone down, down, down for people when they have absolutely skyrocketed through the roof, it is very, very difficult to take at face value what she is saying about the SEC and how it is going to drive energy prices down. If it is going to, fantastic – but tell us how it is going to do that and how it is going to play out on the ground before we look at enshrining it in our state constitution. Give us the detail of this scheme and project that you are wishing to have enshrined in the constitution.

The Victorian community will obviously be monitoring this over time, and a lot of people have gone on the record saying this is going to be a fantastic thing. We have heard that it will revolutionise the Latrobe Valley. Well, the Latrobe Valley was promised an electric vehicle manufacturing plant by this government that was going to employ an extraordinary amount of people. It was going to be one of the major employers, or the major employer, in the Latrobe Valley, and it eventuated to duck eggs – absolute doughnuts. It fell over and nothing eventuated whatsoever. So the concern that we have here is that over two years on since we had the SEC announced and have all been told how great it is going to be, we know really nothing more than the slogan and the logo that came out. We do not know how it is going to drive down energy prices, how it is going to be a key player in the marketplace, how it will have an effect on household energy bills.

I also just want to reiterate before I finish: as far as we are concerned on this side of the chamber this is not a vote on this bill about renewables, this is a vote about whether we should be enshrining something that we do not know much about in our state constitution. I do not think that that is wise, and it has been called a stunt. Why would you enshrine state government policy in our constitution? There is no need for that to be done at all. This bill should be able to be debated and discussed when we have more detail on it, and that is why we will be opposing this bill.

**Katie HALL** (Footscray) (16:55): I am absolutely thrilled to be speaking on this bill and to be delivering on an election commitment that was so popular in my community in Melbourne’s inner west. I think sometimes nostalgia gets a bad rap. The reason people are nostalgic about the SEC is because it was good, so there is real pride in what the SEC was as an institution, as a publicly owned institution. I know on the other side of the chamber they are all a bit iffy about publicly owned institutions. I remember not all that long ago under the Abbott government that they sacked all the climate scientists at CSIRO. There is this absolute disbelief in the science of climate change on that side of the chamber. There is a complete disregard in the publicly owned institutions that do so much for the people of Victoria.

The SEC is back, and I am so happy that it is back. I know that what it will do is deliver real action on climate change, and it will be owned by the government. That is something that people in my community were so excited to talk to me about. Everyone had stories about the SEC, because it was a great place to work as well. We are delivering great jobs, renewable energy and a publicly owned

company. The reason it has to go into the constitution is because those opposite cannot be trusted with our great publicly owned institutions. When the Liberal Party sold off Victoria's energy supply to private multinationals, we saw what happened. The consumers of Victoria suffered.

If there is any bigger issue than climate action right now, you would not know about it when you listen to those opposite, because they are doing kite-flying exercises and talking about nuclear power. I look forward to having those conversations with residents in my community who have very strong views about these sorts of issues. The Liberal Party do not know where they stand on climate action. They do not know where they stand on nuclear energy.

**James Newbury** interjected.

**Katie HALL:** The member for Brighton is interjecting because he knows that I am speaking the truth. They are all over the shop. There are also some in the chamber – well, they are not in the chamber; they are never in the chamber – who like to speak about people power. This is putting power back in the hands of the Victorian people. This is something. This is real action from the Labor government on climate and also driving down the cost of power bills. We are going to be decarbonising faster than any jurisdiction in the world. Our climate targets are world leading, and the SEC is going to be a great pillar of our climate action.

I know that the nostalgia we have held for the SEC in the past will continue into the future, because we are going to make sure it can never be taken away. I know that in Melbourne's inner west, where we talk often about climate action and the importance of real action to tackle climate change, the SEC was an absolute no-brainer. It is something that people remember fondly because it delivered great outcomes. We know that it can do it and will do it again, and it has to be protected from the Liberal Party so that it is never taken away from the Victorian people. Our energy supply, having lower costs in energy and also taking decisive action on climate change, as we have done with the battery project that we have launched in Melton – this is an incredible start for the SEC. I am enormously proud to make a contribution on behalf of my community.

### **Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023**

#### *Second reading*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The time set down for consideration of an item on the government's business program has arrived, and I am required to interrupt business. The member for Footscray will have the call after the divisions. The house is considering the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023. The question is:

That this bill be now read a second time and government amendments 1 to 4 inclusive be agreed to.

#### **Assembly divided on question:**

*Ayes (58):* Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, 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, Tim Pallas, 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 (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, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Jess Wilson

**Question agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Third reading*

**The SPEAKER:** I advise the house that I am of the opinion that the third reading of the bill is required to be passed by a special majority. The question is:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Assembly divided on motion:**

*Ayes (58):* Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, 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, Tim Pallas, 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 (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, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Jess Wilson

**Motion agreed to by special majority.**

**Read third time.**

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

### **State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023**

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed on motion of Lily D'Ambrosio:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Katie HALL** (Footscray) (17:08): It feels like a really monumental thing to be here in the chamber to be making sure that the SEC is part of the constitution and never taken away by those opposite. Our targets, as I mentioned before, are delivering the most rapid reduction in emissions in Australia, unlocking billions of dollars in investment and creating thousands of jobs – thousands of green jobs and thousands of public jobs as well – under the SEC. We have a massively ambitious offshore wind target of at least 2 gigawatts by 2032 and energy storage targets. We are decarbonising through new renewable energy across the state – wind, solar and batteries – and of course our nation-leading plan for offshore wind generation in Australia. In 2022 over 35 per cent of our energy came from renewables, more than three times the 10 per cent we inherited from those opposite. Since 2014,



59 projects have come on line. There are nine projects currently under construction, and we have created over 5100 jobs in large-scale renewable energy since we were elected.

This agenda is saving households money at bill time, and in the 2022 calendar year more than 510,000 households and 49,000 businesses received discounted energy-efficient products and services through the Victorian energy upgrades program. On average, households and businesses that undertake energy efficiency upgrades under the program save \$110 and \$3700 respectively on their annual energy bills. Even those who do not participate will save on their bills, with households saving \$150 and businesses saving \$870 over the next 10 years due to lower network rates. Of course this Minister for Climate Action has worked so tirelessly to deliver cost-of-living savings for Victorians, and I reflect on the default offer that we introduced in our last term and the power saving bonus, which my electorate office has helped thousands of local residents apply for.

This is a transformative change. It is only going to be possible from a Labor government. Only Labor can deliver. We do not commentate on these issues; we actually deliver on them. Those opposite are in absolute chaos over this, but one thing I reflect on is that occasionally from time to time when they do have the great gift of being in government they are just the worst wreckers, the biggest climate deniers, and we have to protect Victoria and our decarbonisation, our green energy future, from their reckless and chaotic actions. The SEC of course will create 59,000 jobs, making power cheaper and making it better for the planet.

We believe in science on this side of the chamber. We believe in the science that climate change is real. We are not people who will sit by coming up with ideas like, 'Oh, maybe we could put some nuclear reactors around Victoria,' the uncertainty around whether climate change is real and of course this absolute desperation to privatise anything they can get their hands on. We know that that has led to terrible outcomes – higher costs and a worse outcome for the environment. Over on that side of the chamber they are probably thinking, 'Well, the environment has had it too good for too long.' But we know that taking real and decisive action by putting the SEC in the constitution, bringing in publicly owned power again, is something that was wholeheartedly endorsed at the last election and voted for, and I am so proud to be part of a government that is delivering it.

**Brad ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (17:13): I also rise to address the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023. Although I do have respect for the member for Footscray and in fact regard for her as well, she has been telling a few porky pies to the chamber, which I would like to clarify. I refer the chamber to –

**Katie Hall** interjected.

**Brad ROWSWELL**: Well, it is about to hurt, member for Footscray, so stand by. A media release from the office of the Premier on 11 June 1992 clarifies for the member for Footscray and other Labor members in the chamber, many of whom have smiles on their faces at the moment – we will just wait; it will not be much longer – that:

Legislation paving the way –

this is from the office of the Premier –

for an historic partnership between the Victorian Government and U.S. power company Mission Energy passed through State Parliament late last night.

I put to the house that if it looks like privatisation, if it smells like privatisation, chances are it is privatisation – at the hands of the former Labor government. I quote from the media release:

The Victorian Government's decision to involve private investment in this new project is essential to our energy future.

That side of the chamber time and time and time again, even though they have been in government for, this year, 10 years – 10 years in government – had an opportunity to deliver for Victorians cheaper renewable, efficient, reliable energy. No, no, they have not delivered that whatsoever, as witnessed

recently, with half a million Victorians out of power and without power for a ridiculous amount of time.

A couple of things: the Andrews and now Allan Labor government need to take responsibility for their actions over the last decade. For every year that Minister D'Ambrosio has been in the role of energy minister she has promised the Victorian people lower power prices. In every year that Minister D'Ambrosio has been in the role of energy minister, energy prices in this state have risen – in the last 12 months alone, 25 per cent for households and 26 per cent for businesses. That is having an impact on Victorian families like we have never seen before, because in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis it is not just power bills that are keeping families awake at night, it is the rising cost of education, as the member for Kew and Shadow Minister for Early Childhood and Education articulated in question time today, it is the cost of grocery bills, it is the cost of mortgages. There are families, there are singles and there are businesses right around this state at the moment that are being pushed and pulled, shoved in every which way, to try and make ends meet, and a large part of the cost pressures on those Victorians at the moment is the cost of power. The Allan Labor government, formerly the Andrews Labor government, have had a decade to get it right, and they simply have not – and Victorians know the truth of that, because they are paying the price. Victorians are paying the price for the decisions of the Labor government.

The way in which the Labor government have gone about bringing this bill to the chamber can only be described as an absolute and utter disgrace. They arguably have been seeking to avoid scrutiny on this bill. Just yesterday a briefing was held. The expectation of the opposition was that the briefing would include departmental officials, supposed experts in the field. No. The only person on the call was from the minister's office. Only after further pressure from the opposition was a formal briefing held with the opposition on this bill earlier today. That tells you everything you need to know about this government. Members of the government will claim today that this is a great victory, that this is a great piece of legislation. If they have nothing to hide, if it is so great, why hide from scrutiny? Why hide from the established practice of this place – and that is to provide a full and wholesome briefing including departmental officials and, sure, ministerial office staff to the opposition without the pressure that they have had to be put under in order to deliver that.

With this promise of the SEC, the government will have the Victorian people believe that 59,000 jobs will be created. That is their figure: 59,000 jobs will be created. How on earth, frankly, do the Labor government expect to deliver those 59,000 jobs when at the moment – after the last decade of Labor in this state – we have a very well-known skills shortage? Where is the plan to actually solve that skills crisis? I tell you what, if there is one thing that keeps me up at night in my role as Shadow Treasurer, it is not having the workforce in this state to grow our state's economy to a degree that will actually make a substantial difference to meeting our debt that has been delivered to us under the hands of the Labor government. Where will those 59,000 jobs come from? When will those 59,000 jobs come online? Not just when, but where will those jobs come online? Will the Allan Labor government be frank with the Victorian people and actually demonstrate to them a plan for the creation of these 59,000 jobs? If there is one thing we have learned about this government over the last –

**Natalie Hutchins** interjected.

**Brad ROWSWELL:** Minister at the table, I would be delighted to receive a briefing from you, your staff and your department on that, and I am hoping that there might be an opportunity – through you of course, Acting Speaker – to learn more about the government's skills plan, which to my knowledge at this point in time is severely lacking.

In relation to those 59,000 jobs that the Labor government say will be created, if there is one thing we have learned about this Labor government it is that they are all headline and no detail; they are all headline and no delivery. There is the housing statement, a pledge of 80,000 homes to be delivered year on year on year for the next 10 years. When we have got industry heads and think tanks and experts in the field saying it is a near impossibility for that to be delivered and when we have got

housing approvals which are down and not up, it is an impossibility for those 80,000 homes to be delivered. Again the Allan Labor government wants Victorians to be stuck on the headlines and not –

**Natalie Hutchins:** On a point of order, Acting Speaker, on relevance, I am not sure that the member is actually referring to the bill.

**Brad ROWSWELL:** On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I was using my opportunity to debate to demonstrate the point that the Allan Labor government is more about headlines and not details, and I think that there is an opportunity in this wideranging debate for me to draw upon examples.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Edbrooke):** Indeed it has been a wideranging debate, but I would draw the member back to the bill.

**Brad ROWSWELL:** Again, all headline, no delivery – and that is exactly what the Allan Labor government is becoming known for within the Victorian community. The Victorian people know it, and they are sick of being sold on great promises.

Finally, in the time that I have remaining I just want to address the furphy I have heard from members of the government, who have time and time again said that members on this side of the chamber do not believe in climate change and do not believe in a renewable future. That could not be further from the truth. Does climate change exist? Yes, absolutely it does. We believe that; they believe that. That is not a point of contention, that is not a point of argument; that is a point of fact. I would encourage those government members yet to speak on this bill not to tell those – I am trying to think of a word other than ‘lies’ because I know that is unparliamentary, but the sentiment is still there –

**Jess Wilson** interjected.

**Brad ROWSWELL:** ‘Mistruth’ – thank you, member for Kew. It is just simply a mistruth that the Labor government members should stop peddling. We do believe in climate change, but what we also believe in is a responsible transition from our current energy generation to future energy generation that delivers reliable, affordable and renewable energy. At the moment under the leadership of Minister D’Ambrosio we have got anything but that. We oppose this bill. We oppose this bill because it is not the right thing for Victorians and will not deliver them the affordable renewable power that they need.

**Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (17:23):** It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to rise and speak on the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023. Before we get into the crux of this debate I think it is important to correct some inaccuracies by the previous speaker, the member for Sandringham. At no point did the government refuse to give the opposition a briefing on this bill. In fact what the government did was tell the opposition that they would brief them closer to the debate, which is exactly what we tried to do this week, and then the opposition refused because they said that the briefing would be biased. So for them to sit there and say that we refused to brief the opposition on the bill is completely disingenuous. But we should not be surprised, because this opposition is always completely disingenuous. It is no surprise to any of us.

To talk about the bill and to talk about the SEC more broadly, I think we have to begin by looking at what we once had. Over a hundred years ago the famous World War I general John Monash agreed to head up the SEC. At the time he wrote to a friend about his new role and stated that it might just be the most important job in Australia. A lot of people were surprised at the time that such an eminent figure as Monash, at the height of his powers and of his fame, would dedicate over a decade of his life to the SEC. But Monash knew how important cheap and reliable electricity was to Victoria and to Victorians, and he knew what was good for Victoria was indeed good for the nation. He knew that his new job was highly political. The McPherson Nationalist ministry of 1928 and 1929 was one conservative government who tried to undermine the SEC. Menzies was a junior minister of that government at the time and later recalled Monash invading the cabinet room. ‘I gather the cabinet has rejected my proposal,’ Monash said. The Premier confirmed this, and Monash said it could only be

because they had utterly failed to understand it. Monash patiently explained the proposal to cabinet, convinced them, presented them with an order in council, had it signed and left.

So from the early days there was the vision and leadership required to make the SEC the rarest of beasts: a state instrumentality that engendered public pride. One of the reasons for that pride was the pivotal role that the SEC played in skills development. If we take one snapshot from 1959, we can see that the SEC provided leadership training for gifted apprentices, they provided a correspondence course for 700 staff members and they awarded 17 scholarships for engineering degrees and for diploma courses. The impact of that investment is felt even now. Visiting factories and worksites over the last decade, I have lost count of the number of tradespeople who I met that did their apprenticeship with the SEC – not just sparkies but all of the maintenance trades as well – and a significant portion of them are in my community of Hoppers Crossing. So that is a brief look at what we had.

Then what happened? Political vandalism. Let us be clear: the axing of the SEC was not an act of political conservatism. In fact it was the exact opposite. This was an example of aggressive and radical market economics. A conservative would have looked at the SEC, seen what needed to be protected and preserved, and identified that which needed to be reformed and improved.

The decision to sell the SEC to private multinational interests will go down as one of the greatest policy disasters in Victorian history and one that we continue to pay for. The reasons why this was such a bad decision have been widely canvassed. The \$23 billion in profits that have gone to overseas private interests rather than being reinvested in Victoria are probably at the top of that list.

There are two more impacts that I would like to mention. With regard to skills development, it was reprehensible to abolish the SEC without putting in place appropriate alternative strategies for skills development. The SEC's legacy of training such a skilled workforce was not properly understood and has never been fully replaced. It was left to the market to train the apprentices and engineers that the Victorian economy needs, but somebody forgot to tell the market.

The other factor is climate change. In circumstances where we were going to have to question everything about our economy and infrastructure, decision-makers needed the broadest possible scope to respond to the incredibly difficult challenge. Paul Keating referred to this as having as many levers as possible to pull. But instead of having the SEC in public hands and being able to make monumental and life-changing decisions for the public good, the assets were now in private hands, and every decision needed to be considered solely in the context of shareholder profit. From a strategic perspective, it was the worst possible decision at the worst possible time. Victorians not only are still paying the price in higher electricity bills but are also bearing the cost of all of those lost opportunities. The Kennett government drove us straight into a policy cul-de-sac.

The bill before us is part of the road map out. It is not about going back to the past of brown coal and briquette plants, but it is about learning from the past, from times when public institutions served the public and the collective good, when we invested in skills development for the future. The public good today requires that we take real impactful steps to combat climate change – action, not words. The new, modern SEC is doing exactly that, accelerating our transition to a more affordable, reliable, renewable energy future. In Melton, not far from my electorate of Tarneit, construction has begun on a 1.6-gigawatt battery with Equis Australia. It will power over 200,000 homes, and with over 100 companies lining up to partner with the SEC, there is plenty more to come.

There are still voices out there – so-called economic rationalists – who want to argue that the government should not be leading in this space, that we should wait for the market. There are a few things I would like to say to that. Firstly, we did that; we waited for the market. We have been waiting for the market for decades, and not enough has happened. Secondly, it is vital that profits that may be able to be achieved by the new SEC are available for the government to reinvest to accelerate the decarbonisation of our economy and to bring down energy prices. Thirdly, we need to recognise that government is a major user of electricity. We want our schools – 14 of which we have opened this

year, by the way – we want our hospitals and we want our trains to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Let us be clear: in 1994 Jeff Kennett sold the SEC after putting it in front of a privatisation firing squad during the 1992 election, and since then energy prices have gone up. At the time he falsely claimed that the SEC was laden with debt and needed to be sold. This was despite the fact that in the last year of its operation it paid \$995 million in interest and a \$191 million dividend to the state government and also had a profit of \$207 million. But it is not just financial; we also lost the capacity to develop the skills of Victorians and the next generation of Victoria's energy workers.

In my first speech in this place I said two things which I want to restate today. First, I said voters like governments who say what they mean and mean what they say. We promised to re-establish the SEC and we promised to enshrine it in the constitution, and I am proud that that is what we are doing here today. The second thing I said was that I was excited about the rebirth of the SEC because of what the policy says about the apparatus of government. It says that we can all come together under this umbrella called government to make things right. That is exactly what we are doing here today, passing this legislation. That is exactly what we are doing by re-establishing the SEC, and I absolutely stand by that. I commend the bill to the house.

**Jess WILSON (Kew) (17:33):** I rise to speak on the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023. To pick up on the member for Tarneit's comments regarding the fact that the market has no role to play here, I look back at what the minister said last year to industry, when she in fact called on industry to do the heavy lifting when it comes to meeting the state's renewable energy targets. In fact she told them that the SEC will actually only meet less than a quarter of the amount of renewable energy needed when it comes to meeting our renewable energy targets and that the market and industry would need to come to the table to provide the 20.5 gigawatts that are needed beyond the SEC's commitment. Those on the other side like to demonise the market and demonise the industry that has put billions of dollars of investment into renewable energy in this country over the past few decades – in fact Australia has led in the development of renewable energy thanks to the amount of money that industry has put in place – but when it comes down to it, they are happy to go to industry and say, 'But we actually need you guys to do the lion's share.'

Today, now, we are looking at one part of this bill, given that before we had to guillotine debate to have an urgent division despite the fact that we have had these bills listed for over 100 days – on the paper for 100 days, yet we only had 2 hours of debate on putting the State Electricity Commission into our constitution. Those on the other side do not want to have the opportunity to actually debate the merits of putting this policy into our constitution and are seeking to put in place a policy of today into a document that should be for the long term and should be able to be flexible when it comes to our governance structure. Yet here we are putting a partisan policy from this government into our constitution and rushing that process, despite the fact that we could not do it before now. It was pulled from debate previously, and then suddenly there are 2 hours of debate allowed today.

We on this side of the house understand the importance of transitioning to a clean energy future. We understand the importance of putting in place ambitious emissions targets, and we have taken those policies to previous elections. But we also understand the importance of having reliable and affordable energy, and the SEC does nothing to actually make sure that power prices will be brought down. Victorians are struggling under a cost-of-living crisis, and at this time we have seen electricity prices go up by more than 25 per cent for individuals, families, households and Victorian businesses. Yet from this government, talking about their signature back-to-the-future SEC policy, there is no sense of detail as to how this policy will actually bring down energy prices. It simply defies belief that we would seek to enshrine the SEC into the constitution of this state when there is no detailed plan as to how it will deliver affordable and reliable energy. In fact what we have seen so far from the SEC is one investment, \$245 million of taxpayers money here in Victoria, go into a project that was at final investment decision – that was already going to be paid for and invested in by the private sector. This is a piece of legislation that seeks to enshrine that into the constitution at a time when it is spending

taxpayers money on projects that were going to be funded by the private sector. We hear from those opposite that it is going to create 59,000 jobs, but that project alone was going to create 155 jobs just during the construction phase.

As I said, the good news is that in Australia via the market we are actually installing renewable energy more than at any time in history, and that is without the help of the SEC. We must continue this momentum, and we must continue it to be able to meet our net zero targets. But the investment to be able to meet those targets and achieve net zero will need to be maintained every year to 2030, and then we are going to need to double that again to get to 2040 and then double that again to get to 2050. The risk here with the SEC is that it will crowd out this private investment, and if we look at crowding out that private investment – as we have heard from the minister herself, calling on industry at an industry event to meet the lion's share of this renewable energy commitment with 20.5 gigawatts of energy investment – we are putting at risk those investments being made. The transition to net zero is not going to be easy. We need to be able to balance reliability and affordability with the installation of green, clean energy. It will be a bumpy road if we do not get this right, and as we are seeing right now, Victorians are experiencing power prices increasing by more than 25 per cent.

We just have to look to the experts in the electricity space. Tony Wood, who is known for his understanding of the electricity market, when he talks about the SEC has pointed out that the outcomes hoped to be achieved from the SEC would not be delivered through the current market with this policy. If we look at the government's own appointment to the SEC board, Dr Alan Finkel, this concern was echoed by him when he was sitting on the SEC's advisory panel. He is no longer sitting on the advisory panel, but he shared his own concerns:

You don't want to crowd out private sector funding as we make this important but complex transition ...

The Grattan Institute has joined in calls pointing out the risk when it comes to the installation of the SEC here in Victoria and this government enshrining that in the constitution for decades to come. The Grattan Institute has pointed out that no sane investor, industry super fund or otherwise, is going to go into partnership with an organisation whose decisions are made on a political whim. We just have to look at the first SEC investment, into a battery project – a \$245 million project – that was already going to go ahead. It is a complete waste of taxpayer dollars on a project that industry was fully prepared to fund and get underway.

We have heard a lot throughout this debate about privatisation and the blame from those opposite pointed at the Kennett government. But as the member for Sandringham pointed out, we do have a press release here from 11 June 1992 about the legislation passed by the Parliament:

Legislation paving the way for an historic partnership between the Victorian Government and U.S. power company Mission Energy passed through State Parliament late last night.

...

The Premier, Ms. Joan Kirner, said the successful passage of the Bill provided the framework for an exciting future in Victoria's power generation industry.

And here is the kicker:

The Victorian Government's decision to involve private investment in this new project is essential to our energy future.

The privatisation of energy in this state was started by the Kirner government. In fact it was the Kirner government that sold 51 per cent of Loy Yang B in 1992. At the very time that this happened, the then SECV chairman Mr Jim Smith said:

... the rapid introduction of competition is the best way to quickly reform the electricity supply industry ...

... That is a key reason why SECV board and general management want to sell Loy Yang B power station and have it privately operated ...

Now, I know this is an inconvenient truth for those opposite – they like to place the blame all the way over here – but just as they have managed the state of our finances, they are managing our investment in electricity into the ground. Victorians are paying the price.

I will finish on a quote from the Grattan Institute about the SEC. Those opposite like to paint a very nostalgic picture of the SEC, but in the words of the Grattan Institute:

Just booting up the old SEC will be about as successful as trying to use Tik-Tok on a Nokia.

And we have just put that into the constitution.

**Matt FREGON** (Ashwood) (17:43): I would also like to make a small contribution to our State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023. I have been listening to what is a wideranging debate. If I go back to 1989 – I probably was not paying a power bill back in 1989, but I was using it – I can understand the argument from the other side that the government of the day started to sell part of the power industry. Yes, yes, okay – fair enough. But I think it is still fair that there is a difference between having a private–public partnership in power – where the government of the day can effect, for the betterment of the people of Victoria, prices, management, regulation et cetera, et cetera – and selling it all off. It is not the same. In my mind there is no huge point in trying to rewrite history one way or the other – we are where we are. But when we went to the people in Ashwood 18 months ago now, or thereabouts, and said to them that our intention was to reimagine, reinvent, publicly owned power – and it is not 100 per cent, but publicly owned power – this was overwhelmingly supported.

If the argument that I have heard seems to be that a government 30-odd years ago was putting forward the argument that 50 per cent of power was okay, and we are now putting forward the argument that 50 per cent of government-owned power is okay, that is the same. So, fair cop, that is what we took to the people. I would say, for the most part, of those people that I have spoken to in the Ashwood district, they are supporters. They are not so much supporters of nuclear energy.

Again, to be fair, I know there are many members on the other side as well as on this side – for all I know, they might be exclusively on the other side – who do not like the idea of nuclear energy and nuclear power stations in Victoria. Certainly on this side, under our watch, I am pretty safe to say that is not going to happen. But there has been some noise in the federal sphere that this is something that is on the table from some. I would question the wisdom of that, but when your opponent is making a mistake, do not interrupt them. The idea that someone is going to spend a bucketload of money over decades on something that people do not want, which will require storage of nuclear waste that will drive through suburbs – and which suburbs and where – it boggles the mind that this is in the media and in the conversation, but, sure. We are here to debate these things. I would argue most people do not think that is the way to go.

They do think that the SEC and having 51 per cent ownership of projects is a good way to go. Now, I admit that the first project, obviously, is not quite 51 per cent, and I take on board some of the arguments from the other side that us investing in a project that was already going ahead – let us just take that, okay, sure, I will take your word for it – that somehow this is a bad thing, that the state, the SEC, would somehow invest in a worthwhile project is a bad thing. I am not sure if that means the opposite of that is that we should be investing in projects that are not a working thing; that would not make any sense. I think we have to be prudent with people's money, and the fact that this was a project that was going ahead and was worth money seems like a good investment to me, on the face of it, so I commend the minister on that and look forward to it. And there will be many more projects as we move to establishing the new SEC.

I go back to – and I have mentioned this story before in this house – a cousin's husband who used to work for the SEC when it was publicly owned, then still worked with whoever the private company was that took over. I cannot remember the name, but it does not really matter. He was working for them and his first job as one of the electrical operators for that company was to remove all the redundancies from poles and wires and substations and put them in a storage cupboard or a warehouse,

whatever it was, because they were going to be replacement parts for the next decade or so. Because one of the first decisions that that private company made was how to cut costs. Fair enough, they are a private company, they have got duties to their shareholders. The Victorian people are not their shareholders; they do not have a duty to the Victorian people. So AGL, Origin, it does not really matter who, they do not have a duty to the Victorian people as shareholders – we are clients. Now, good business should look after clients, you would hope.

I think, credit where it is due, over the last couple of weeks we have seen huge outages in our electrical network because of the winds and the storms, and to go from the amount of outages we had to a very small number within a week was amazing. Credit to those companies – United Energy around my patch, AusNet and whoever else it is. Yes, they did their job and they got things back up and running as quickly as they could. That is good. But none of the investment that we are making – or that clients, as we are, are making – necessarily comes back to the state or necessarily gets used to make the system better or cheaper in the long run. As we reinvent our SEC I would expect that that is the difference here: you know, we went from a period of post-war Victoria where we had public assets that – I get it – multiple sides of governments over the last 30–40 years have privatised, have sold off. It was a good day in this house last term when we brought the Mildura hospital back into public hands.

**A member** interjected.

**Matt FREGON:** Well, it is debatable, and we are here to debate – there you go.

It was a good day, because it brought something that had been private back into public hands, where in my opinion health should be. So it is good to know that we are working towards the SEC for Victorians, not necessarily to make the highest return on investment for shareholders. There is nothing wrong with that. I got rid of all my shares, but, you know, if they kick me out of this place, sure, I will go back in and invest in them. That is how you do it. You take capital and you make more capital. But we need to bring Victoria with us. So when we took this idea to the people of Victoria 18 months ago they said yes, and they did not say yes because, in my mind, ‘Oh, we all hate the big private energy companies.’ Whether it be AGL or whether it be Coles or Woolies, companies are companies; they do what they do. But the idea that we could own some of the investment in our own power – that is an essential service; everything we use these days runs on energy – and the fact that we can stipulate by that ownership that the investment has to be renewable and has to help our future generations with climate action are why Victorians voted overwhelmingly to bring back the SEC. This is why I commend this bill.

**Kim O’KEEFFE** (Shepparton) (17:53): I rise today to make a contribution and speak on the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023. This bill aims to amend the Constitution Act 1975 and is for other purposes. However, the primary purposes of this bill are to require that the state has a controlling interest in the SEC, to provide for the objects of the SEC and to constrain the power of the Parliament to make laws repealing, altering or varying the provisions of the Constitution Act 1975. As has been mentioned, the government failed to provide a briefing until today – today, the day we are about to debate the bill – which is appalling. Why are they ramming this bill through this place, cutting short the time allowed to enable members to make a contribution?

The cost of living is having a significant impact on people’s lives. Victorian families are facing another tough year, all because Labor does not have a plan to tackle the cost-of-living crisis. There has been a 25 per cent increase in power costs this last year. Prices are not going down, as has been suggested – down, down, down. Ask anyone who has had a recent power bill. Perhaps look at your own bill. We hear stories of where people choose to have their air conditioners on or put food on their table. My office is inundated with people needing assistance, whether it be for food relief or financial assistance, as they are not keeping up with paying their bills. I feel we are going backwards fast.

As Victorians struggled to pay record power bills the Allan government wasted nearly \$400,000 on SEC-branded merchandise. There is no justification for this frivolous spending when the state has a



skyrocketing record debt. It just shows how out of touch this government is when it comes to responsible spending rather than putting that money where it actually helps the people of this state.

Businesses are paying the price of Labor's soaring energy prices, with thousands of businesses fleeing the state. Industry representatives have voiced concern over the impact of increasing energy prices as well as the state taxes and the impact the state taxes are having on the viability of starting or operating a business in Victoria. The main promise of the SEC is that the SEC will drive down power prices. This promise has already been exposed as false after its former CEO confirmed prices would in fact rise. Restricting Victorian households' use of gas for cooking, heating and hot water will only drive up demand for electricity at a time when Labor has failed to shore up the state's generation capacity.

We have also witnessed wild weather battering all parts of the state which left more than 500,000 homes and businesses without power, some of them for days with no power. We need reliable, affordable and dependable energy. Victorians are already enduring a cost-of-living crisis under this government and their refusal to support Victorians. The cost of energy bills, as I have mentioned, has soared by 25 per cent, even though the other side of the house campaigned on and continue to spruik that the SEC will drive down Victorians' energy bills. The simple answer is that Labor are wrong and Victorians are paying the price. This side of the house supports a sensible, considered transition to renewables, but Labor's plan is neither sensible nor considered. The fact is shutting down coal-fired power stations without a plan to keep the lights on is a recipe for disaster. Enshrining the State Electricity Commission into the constitution should be of major concern to all Victorians. This is not just another change of law – this is something that will effectively change things for years and years to come. Policies should not be included in our state constitution. To rush this through in this manner and not provide the detail only strengthens the concerns around this bill, and I oppose this bill before the house.

**Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (17:57):** I am so pleased to rise and speak about the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023. I certainly speak strongly in favour of this work because it is part of bringing back a publicly owned SEC as we move towards our renewable energy target, which we discussed last time we were here. It is going to increase energy production and competition in investment in renewable energy, working towards that 95 per cent renewable energy target by 2035.

I have been listening to the debate on the other side, and I have to say I think that they are short-sighted. I think that all that they are targeting is 2026. All that is really renewable about them is their leader – their leader position. I think some of those opposite actually have set a target to replace a renewed leader – before 2025 is my guess.

**Roma Britnell:** On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I think the member knows that she has strayed from the bill, and it is not her position to make comments about the opposition, please.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Edbrooke):** I draw the member back to the bill.

**Lauren KATHAGE:** Thank you, Acting Speaker Edbrooke. It always seems to be you for some reason, so I thank you for your guidance. Yes, I know I should not speak so much about the opposition, and to be honest, I do not want to. But as we are moving towards the new future of renewable energy in this state, we are being hampered by those opposite who are seeking to put out the scares, to put out the fears and to make our progress hampered. But the fact is that we are moving towards a clean and green future, and I hope that they will get on board, because at the moment they are really missing the target. This is really what the Victorian people want. They have shown us that this is what they want, and it is what we are delivering for them.

So 95 per cent renewable energy by 2035 under our target through the SEC – and I think about my daughter who is in year 1 now, and by the time we get to 2035 what a different world it will be for her. She will be around 18 years old. She is at school learning about biomes and climate change, but when I was her age at school, we were taken to a production of magic minerals, which was put on by the

mineral council. We watched somebody dressed up as coal dancing. They were teaching us all about the wonders of coal. My how the world has changed between my childhood and my daughter's. Dancing coal is great, but renewable energy is better. We heard from a member opposite that they do not believe that the SEC is real, but we can definitely say what is real are the jobs that are going to be created. My daughter could have a job that we do not even know exists yet in this new world we are living in, where there are whole new professions to come about.

We see that with this transition we also have opportunities. I think about the students at Mernda Central College who study environmental science and what they could end up doing. So it is only right that we have invested in the business case for the SEC centre of training excellence, because we need to understand what we should be training people to do in this renewable energy future. I do have an inkling that it will be a more female-friendly profession potentially or attract more women to the profession than other energy production sectors have, and that is where our eyes are. That is where the eyes of this government are; they are on the horizon. We are looking far into the future and we are shaping the future of this state. We are not just looking at 2026, we are not obsessed with 2026; we are obsessed with making Victoria the best place in the world, and we are certainly getting there.

Those opposite, as I said, when my children get to that point, will be derided for their lack of action on climate change, for their fearmongering, for their short-sightedness and for their foray or folly into nuclear it seems. Nuclear seems to have become the de rigueur energy source for those opposite. To be honest it scares me, and I will tell you why it scares me that we are hearing that they want nuclear reactors in Victoria. I lived in Kakadu National Park, which has the Ranger uranium mine, which I am sure you would remember was very strongly and actively opposed by the Mirarr people and by many environmentalists who joined them to protest that mine. The assurances were that it was safe, that it was fine, that it was good – a uranium mine in Kakadu National Park. Well, what the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation and the Mirarr people have experienced over the period of the mine's operation is more than 200 leaks, spills and other incidents documented.

Sometimes when we think about the risk of nuclear, we think about grainy black-and-white images of Chernobyl, and we assume that our science and our technology has advanced so much that that risk does not really exist anymore, that we are much smarter than that now. I can tell you for a fact that in 2013 we were so smart that at the uranium mine the acid leach tank collapsed and 1 million litres of radioactive ore slurry spilled. This is within Kakadu National Park, and they had to evacuate the area. In 2004 somehow the process water was connected to drinking water, leading to water uranium levels 400 times Australian standards. When those opposite talk about a nuclear future for Victoria, I am scared, because I know that even with just uranium mines in Kakadu we have uranium and radioactive ore leaking into the park. So if there are those opposite who want to put up their hand for their community to host such dangerous technology, I think they should definitely discuss it with their community members first, because I think that they would be shocked and horrified at the prospect of a nuclear reactor in their area.

When we hear from those opposite, sometimes it is a bit confusing to follow the argument. We heard from the member for Kew that the SEC is tiny and is not going to do anything – it is not going to have any real impact. Then we heard from her that it is too big and it is going to crowd out the market. Well, I suggest that they figure out which line they are going to stick with and follow it. We heard from the member for Shepparton that in this move to renewable energy we are driving up the cost of energy bills, but we know that the most expensive energy to produce is nuclear because of the establishment cost, and we have seen over the last year that renewable energy has produced the cheapest power in Australia.

**A member** interjected.

**Lauren KATHAGE:** Yes, absolutely. When you are seeking to move away from a societal change as important as this, which is so comprehensively supported by the Victorian people, which has been so thoroughly thought through by an excellent minister and her team, and when business is on board,

when the people are on board and when environmentalists are on board, if you want to be opposing that, you need to be very sure that you are clear on the facts.

We are marching towards a renewable energy future so that my daughter in her future job, in her future life and with her future power bills will be benefiting from the decisions that we make here today. Our decisions here today will be improving the lives of generations of Victorians to come, and so I commend this bill to the house.

**Nicole WERNER** (Warrandyte) (18:06): Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023 – that is a mouthful – and to be able to speak on a bill that will have such a wide range of effects on our state and community. I rise to oppose in the strongest possible fashion the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023. This bill aims to overhaul the existing framework established by the State Electricity Commission Act 1958. Its primary objectives include the transfer of its functions and powers to the minister and the renaming of the act to the Former SEC (Residual Provisions) Act 1958, among other consequential amendments. In essence it takes the longstanding structure of the SEC and shifts its responsibilities to different entities.

The significance of the bill lies not only in its technical amendments but also in its symbolic implications. It represents a pivotal moment in the history of energy regulation in Victoria, signifying a departure from the established SEC framework to newer structures introduced by its counterpart bill. While those opposite argue for the necessity of this transition, it cannot be denied that the bill carries a weight of irrelevance in light of its pairing with the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023. But far be it for me to be surprised at the Labor Party's bureaucratic reshuffling. As this is the pair bill of the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023, I will speak more broadly about the issues facing the SEC.

According to RedBridge, Victorians are not confident about their state's energy grid. Thirty-two per cent think it is very likely that the state will experience blackouts from energy shortages in the next five to 10 years, while another 38 per cent say it is somewhat likely. Just 5 per cent think it is very unlikely this will occur. When told that recently Australia's energy market operator has reported that Victoria faces an increased risk of rolling blackouts this summer and its electricity grid will breach the interim reliability measure for the next decade, 33 per cent of Victorians reported being very concerned, with another 47 per cent somewhat concerned – and didn't we get a taste of that recently? Just a few weeks ago one in five Victorian homes were left without electricity while the main transmission system came close to collapse. To quote one of the people who suffered from this outage:

A couple of days is alright ... but after 17 days it really gets to you. If we had to go another week, I probably would have snapped.

Despite having installed rooftop solar panels, they do not work during outages when his home is disconnected from the grid.

To quote AEMO, what are the reasons these blackouts are more likely? Firstly, more than 4 gigawatts of coal and gas generation – about a seventh of typical demand – has been withdrawn from the national electricity market in the past seven years. Secondly, increased adoption of electric vehicles by 8 per cent to 21 per cent and the electrification of gas households in Victoria are sufficient to drive winter peak demand above summer peaks – and who was it that told us to get rid of our gas stoves? That is right, Minister for Energy and Resources D'Ambrosio, who wants all new developments to be banned from connecting to gas.

It is coming up to International Women's Day on Friday, and I had the privilege with the member for Mulgrave to sit in this place as part of a panel speaking to 90 students from 17 different schools across Victoria, where I was able to tell them that I am the first Asian woman elected to the Legislative Assembly in the state Parliament of Victoria. That is a great thing to be able to say, and I think it is great for our representation and diversity, and I say this to say that when we speak about the lack of gas, when we speak about gas stoves, the impact on my community, the Chinese community, to be

able to cook with woks – that is genuinely a concern. I have heard from our people. I have heard from our community. I am putting it on the record today that you cannot cook with a wok without gas. Anyway, that aside, under their plan –

**Juliana Addison:** I think you can.

**Nicole WERNER:** Well, okay – apparently. Under their plan new dwellings will have to be fitted with electric or induction stovetops instead of gas stoves. I appreciate the member for Wendouree’s interjections. I share a committee where she is the chair, and I would like to take note that it is wonderful to hear that she is the authority on woks over the people in the Chinese community that have been complaining about it to me. Wonderful.

Under their plan – back to the matters at hand – new dwellings will have to be fitted with electric or induction stovetops instead of gas stoves. Truly Minister D’Ambrosio’s climate revenge on Victorians was a dish best served cold.

The surge in electricity prices for households and small businesses increasing by 25 per cent in the last year stands as a stark contradiction to the government’s promises to reduce electricity costs. Despite these pledges, no clear mechanism has been provided to demonstrate how the establishment of a publicly owned and entrenched SEC will alleviate these escalating costs or enhance the security and reliability of the electricity supply. The argument that those opposite like to make, that privatisation increases electricity bills, is simply not true. To quote the ABC Fact Check, their favourite news outlet, the claim that electricity privatisation pushes up power prices is, according to them, ‘spin’:

Tony Wood, energy director at the Grattan Institute, said the AER sets network prices regardless of whether they are publicly or privately owned, and doesn’t take into consideration how much a company paid for the business.

When comparing the power prices of South Australia and Victoria, Mr Wood said:

Victoria’s electricity comes from brown coal, which generally speaking is the cheapest, whereas South Australia has a lot more of its electricity coming from gas and wind, so South Australia has always had slightly higher prices on that basis.

Reports from the Australian Energy Regulator have shown no consistent correlation between higher bills and privatisation. Experts say that the biggest influence on what people pay for electricity is cost of transmission and distribution. They say these costs have risen in recent years irrespective of whether the owners of the transmission and distribution networks are privatised or publicly owned.

Moreover, I have concerns regarding the SEC’s adherence to competitive neutrality policies outlined by the Victorian government. The SEC’s strategic plan indicates its compliance with these policies. The plan’s transition road map suggests the SEC’s monopolisation as the supplier of electricity to state government and its agencies, thereby undermining the Labor government’s competitive neutrality claims. Additionally, the government’s pursuit of higher renewable energy targets is overshadowed by doubts about its ability to ensure reliability and affordability of electricity. The Australian Energy Market Operator, AEMO, expressed their apprehension regarding potential electricity shortages in Victoria, especially during periods of high demand coinciding with reduced power generation from wind farms. The proposed structure of the SEC as a company limited by guarantee gives me further concerns surrounding its transparency and accountability. With the registration of two shell companies, I fear that the SEC may operate beyond the scrutiny of the Victorian people or Parliament.

Furthermore, stakeholders in the renewable sector have expressed reservations about the SEC’s potential to stall the energy market and impede the growth of renewable energy sources. These concerns, although voiced cautiously, underscore the need for careful consideration of the SEC’s operational framework to ensure fair competition and market integrity. Transparent governance, adherence to competitive neutrality principles and strategic planning to ensure reliable and affordable electricity supply are paramount to instilling confidence in Victoria’s energy landscape.

In conclusion, the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023 represents a pivotal moment in our Parliament's decision on energy regulation which will implement drastic changes to the existing framework. However, the objectives of the bill before us today remain obscured by a lack of clarity on how it will address pressing issues such as the risk of blackouts and rising electricity prices. While those opposite have enjoyed speaking about privatisation's correlation with higher prices, the facts simply do not show this. We on this side of the house have serious questions regarding the SEC's adherence to competitive neutrality policies and its potential to distort the energy market, particularly in the context of renewable energy growth. The uncertainty surrounding the SEC's operational framework and governance structure underscores the need for a thorough and deliberative approach to policymaking, prioritising transparency, accountability and long-term sustainability of Victoria's energy landscape. Only through careful consideration and robust policymaking can we achieve a sustainable and resilient energy future for all Victorians, ensuring fairness, reliability and affordability in our local energy sector.

**Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (18:17):** My, oh my, oh my, what a contribution to follow there. There is so much to pick up on. The member for Warrandyte commenced with quoting polling from RedBridge – a very credible polling organisation of course – but on this side of the house it is not polling that we are worried about; it is actually election results. I refer the member not to RedBridge's polling but to the result in Dunkley on the weekend. They did not vote for a nuclear reactor by Peter Dutton in Dunkley, and they did not vote for a non-existent opposition leader in John Pesutto not showing up in Dunkley. They voted for an Albanese Labor government, which is taking real action on climate change.

**Roma Britnell:** On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I think the member knows without me saying that he has crossed the line.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (John Mullahy):** I will bring the member back to the bill before the house.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** I meant to refer to the member for Hawthorn; my apologies. To quote somebody here – I mean, we have really seen it all now, to be honest – Frank Costanza: 'serenity now'. We have seen the show about nothing. We have got the opposition about nothing when it comes to climate change, we really do – an opposition about nothing; an opposition about nuclear reactors; Tony Abbott standing on what he stands against, not for, repealing the CPRS; Kennett selling the SEC; and Prime Minister Scott Morrison walking with the lump of coal into the federal Parliament, mind you. They frankly do not believe in climate change.

**Roma Britnell:** On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I think he is defying your ruling.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (John Mullahy):** I will bring the member for Pascoe Vale back to the bill, please.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** In that respect I do rise to speak in support of the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023, and I am proud to support and acknowledge the passage earlier on in this chamber of the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023, which this chamber considered earlier this evening. When combined, these two bills help give effect to the Victorian Labor government's election commitments to revive the State Electricity Commission, the SEC, and to enshrine the new SEC into the Victorian constitution so we can ensure that this important institution is protected into the future and, importantly, protected from the Liberals wanting to sell it off again. Alongside the provision of good jobs, kinder, schools, transport infrastructure, health and community services and keeping downward pressures on the cost of living, there is, frankly, no more important issue for government than taking real action on climate change to protect our environment, because without a sustainable, hospitable and livable environment, life on earth, frankly, would be very, very different.

I want to take a bit of a different route here, but it is very much relevant. Nearly 10 years ago NASA launched the Kepler space telescope on a revolutionary mission to expand our scientific understanding of the cosmos. Over its time it observed 530,000 stars and confirmed the existence of at least 2600 new planets. However, Kepler, combined with the myriad of other land and space-based telescopes, radio antennas and people with tinfoil hats – even on the other side of the chamber – around the globe, is yet to find any sign of another habitable planet like Earth that is capable of hosting any form of life, let alone intelligent life. If we need a demonstration of why our planet is so precious and why we all have a duty as lawmakers to protect it, to reduce our emissions and to move towards a renewable and more sustainable future, I just ask members to reflect on our planet's place in the vastness of the universe. Situated as we are here on Earth in the Goldilocks zone in our solar system – that is, not too close and not too far from the sun, accompanied by a rich and dense atmosphere – life has been able to evolve over many millions of years due to the general stable nature of our environment.

However, this is something we cannot simply take for granted, because as scientists have been telling us, human-induced activity, particularly following the Industrial Revolution – the proliferation of fossil fuel use, deforestation and pollution – has been impacting the state of our climate and environment for many years. As stated by the United Nations – the opposition might want to learn this definition – climate change refers to:

... a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.

As set out in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2021, each of the last four decades has been warmer than any decade that preceded it since 1850. The IPCC's report states:

... human influence has warmed the climate at a rate that is unprecedented in ... 2,000 years.

The IPCC has stated that:

The *likely* range of total human-caused global surface temperature increase from 1850–1900 to 2010–2019 is 0.8°C to 1.3°C ...

According to the Bureau of Meteorology and the CSIRO, Australia's climate has also warmed by an average of 1.47 degrees Celsius since national records began in 1910, with a decline of rainfall between 15 per cent and 19 per cent since 1970 in the south-west area of Australia. The fact is that these temperature rises have correlated with significant increases of human-generated greenhouse gas emissions over these periods around the world, with some of the highest carbon dioxide levels on earth having been recently recorded in the atmosphere for at least 2 million years. In Victoria, for example, the electricity sector currently generates around 50 per cent of our state's total carbon emissions, and we have a responsibility and a duty to reduce these, to play our role in global efforts to combat climate change. As stated by the World Economic Forum – if the opposition will not listen to the scientists, they can listen to the economists – the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow was the first time the international community agreed explicitly to mention the burning of fossil fuels as the primary cause of climate change, with the IPCC report published recently explicitly highlighting the need to rapidly phase out fossil fuel supply and demand, including coal by 95 per cent, oil by 60 per cent and gas by 45 per cent by 2050. Furthermore, the 2021 IPCC report shows that we must be collectively working to keep warming well below 2 degrees Celsius and ideally below 1.5 degrees to avoid and mitigate the worst economic environmental extreme weather events and societal degeneration impacts that are associated with rising emissions and the changing of our climate.

That is why I am so proud to be part of a Victorian Labor government which is very much leading the nation – indeed many jurisdictions around the world – when it comes to taking that real action to combat climate change. Last sitting week we passed the bill that would legislate the most ambitious and realistic carbon emissions and renewable energy targets in the world. We have legislated interim emission targets of 28 to 33 per cent below 2005 levels by 2025, 45 to 50 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 and 75 to 80 per cent below 2005 levels by 2035. Of course we are working and striving

towards that net zero by 2045. Along with \$3 billion invested into renewable energy infrastructure, we have also amended the Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Act 2017 to set forward some of the most ambitious renewable energy targets, including 65 per cent renewable electricity by 2030. We have set a new target of 95 per cent renewable electricity by 2035, and we have set new energy storage targets of at least 2.6 gigawatts of energy storage capacity by 2030 and at least 6.3 gigawatts by 2035. We have set new offshore wind energy targets of at least 2 gigawatts by 2032, 4 gigawatts by 2035 and 9 gigawatts by 2040. Additionally, we have embedded our climate goals as part of the state's planning framework to ensure councils take into consideration the impacts of climate change.

This bill builds on that work that we have been doing, amending the constitution to embed the SEC so it cannot be sold off again. But we are also abolishing the pre-existing State Electricity Commission, SECV, which is constituted under the State Electricity Commission Act 1958, to avoid confusion with the new SEC entity. These measures do help build on the previous actions we have been taking. Between 2005 and 2021, our nation-leading climate agenda has helped drive a 32.3 per cent reduction in statewide emissions. Over this time our economy has grown – it has grown, I repeat – 42.8 per cent.

These bills, the bill before us and the one earlier, do build on so many of the other landmark initiatives we have continued to pursue: bringing back the SEC, ending old-growth forest logging, ending native forest logging, the roll-out of rooftop solar electrification on homes, the introduction of the *Gas Substitution Roadmap* and the roll-out of the container deposit scheme – which the opposition criticised only a few weeks ago, but it is as of the other day 250 million containers. They cannot be wrong. Victorians have called for it, it is rolling out and it is working. There is our record investment in local parks, creeks, waterways and biodiversity, and all of these things mean jobs. The SEC training centre of excellence is a key component of that to help us reach the target of 59,000 new jobs. We are undertaking a business case to pursue that, which my community is very, very interested in.

There is the container deposit scheme. In my local community we have got four vending machine sites and 12 over-the-counter sites. The vending machine sites are at 10 Moreland Road, Brunswick; 59 Sydney Road, Coburg; and 801 Sydney Road, Brunswick. I had the pleasure on 12 February 2024 of opening at Dairy Drive in Coburg North a facility which is operated by Green Collect, recognised as the Australian social enterprise of the year in 2019. The depot is employing dozens of disadvantaged jobseekers from the north-west, and it has already received 90,000 containers and counting as of December. I commend Tony Circelli from Tomra, Tony Catania from Recycling Victoria and Sally Quinn and Darren Andrews, who are the co-founders of Green Collect.

It is also in our creeks that we are making record investments to take action on climate, biodiversity and recreational outcomes. We have invested \$10 million to upgrade the Moonee Ponds Creek corridor, to renaturalise the corridor. Just last week I announced a record \$605,000 more for our local creeks, including \$460,000 for Merri Creek to create biodiversity and refuge habitats, with the members for Preston and Northcote; \$115,900 for the Edgars Creek corridor, to revegetate that; and \$25,400 further for the Moonee Ponds Creek. In that respect I commend this bill.

**Annabelle CLEELAND** (Euroa) (18:27): It is a pleasure to rise today to finally have the opportunity to speak on these bills, including the Constitution Amendment (SEC) Bill 2023.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (John Mullahy)**: I will just remind members that we are only debating the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023.

**Annabelle CLEELAND**: Yes, that is exactly what I was meant to refer to. I will continue on, referring to the correct bill. While Labor continues to fumble its SEC roll-out, energy prices, reliability and security are all going backwards at a time when Victorians can least afford it. Victoria is the worst state in Australia for energy security, and Labor's revival of the State Electricity Commission is not a viable solution. Nearly 18 months since the government announced it would revive the SEC it has done next to nothing to shore up our energy supply. At the same time we have seen the energy upgrades program, central to Victoria's net zero emissions ambitions, fail as well.

The Victorian energy upgrade scheme and green schemes have been a widely publicised disaster. Fridges dumped on doorsteps, underperformance on carbon credit targets, poor quality installations and inappropriate marketing have all been associated with this program. Not only that but we are also seeing the green schemes have a disproportionate impact on the regional communities that are already struggling with massive energy concerns. Green schemes are allocated on cost per megawatt, meaning they are entirely consumption based. Regional communities like those in my electorate of Euroa do much of the heavy lifting when it comes to this, due to a lack of alternatives. While high-consumption households will pay more for the green schemes, these households also typically have more options and incentives to alter usage. Low-consumption households on the other hand typically have fewer appliances to start with and are likely to have smaller dwellings with limited improvement options. These households simply have to pay for the additional charges without being able to reduce their costs. At the same time these households' contribution to the emissions released by household energy consumption is lower. Our regional households are having to pay more while having less reliable supply and an array of other disadvantages compared to city-based households.

For almost a decade now Labor has mismanaged nearly every aspect of our energy supply and failed to ensure the resilience of our network. It is unfortunate that everyday Victorians are quite literally paying the price for this mismanagement. From June 2022 to June 2023 electricity prices increased by 28 per cent in Victoria, more than the rest of the country. There also remains a significant disparity between the cost, reliability and resilience of energy supply between regional and metro areas.

Total energy cost increases for dual-fuel households in my region have amounted to \$70 for average consumption levels, with the average annual combined energy bills in the area currently close to \$4200. In comparison, metro regions and inner-city Melbourne saw rises of just \$15 or \$20, with total bills around \$3600. This is enormous pressure during a cost-of-living crisis. It simply is not fair when residents in some of the worst-hit towns in my region say they experience up to 80 hours of power outages in January and December, with cuts ranging from hours to several days. It is clear that many of the issues in my region are due to there being a single line of supply running from Benalla to Violet Town through to Euroa and spreading out across the surrounding localities. Even though this supply line has been known as the most problematic in the state since the 1970s, nothing has been done to correct the problem. What is known for sure is the SEC will not fix this problem.

Many constituents in my electorate continue to suffer. I have received countless stories of how their lives continue to be inadvertently interrupted by this government's failing power grid. I have some of these stories here with me today to share with you. Melisa told me:

We rely on power to keep our young kids and older generations safe and well in hot weather ... So much wasted food due to power outages and most families cannot afford the extra cost of losing food.

Simon said to the government:

This is not a high socio economic area. People cannot afford to throw whole fridges of food away. They cannot afford batteries, solar and generators. They need a functioning grid, and it's their right to have one. In the heat people will die because of the outages. Fix it.

Valentine said:

My partner lives in Euroa and was in an online job interview for a serious position that could now be jeopardised due to the power going out mid interview leaving her with no way to contact her interviewers.

Another respondent said, with comments from the Euroa chamber of commerce, representing so many businesses:

Businesses cannot trade efficiently, we often cannot take Eftpos payments due to reception being lost ... We cannot close powered roller doors to our warehouse full of stock, turn on business alarms at the close of businesses, security systems don't work, tills don't open, atm machine does not work ... businesses cannot even ask customers to pay in cash. Food cannot be kept cool or warm or be made ... Due to a number of these factors occurring with an outage, we and other businesses have stay and watch the business or warehouse until we can securely lock up. We have seen at least a dozen customers over the last 2 months in store who



have had to replace appliances due to the power going ... off so suddenly and frequently. But also appliances that have been newly purchased are coming back to store faulty or with error codes because of the power outages. This has a huge impact on our business, dealing with frustrated customers and the time it takes to claim products and process service calls. For a small business these factors take a huge toll on staff and owners, something needs to be done now we have been dealing with this for too long!

Another respondent said:

The multiple power outages have delayed works on several property builds. Therefore putting us behind on our building schedule which effects other trades, materials delivers, bank finance staging.

After power outages around Christmas last year left 13,000 customers off supply in the north-east of the state, which covers most of my electorate, AusNet decided to do some research. From 500 people surveyed, 70 per cent said that energy reliability will become more important in the future, with only 1 per cent saying it will become less important. The research found some significant differences between the costs that customers experienced, depending on whether they had an all-electric connection or were using both electricity and gas connections. You might see where these comments are going now. Electricity-only customers spent on average \$1100 to respond to that outage, whereas if they had a gas connection too that amount was reduced to just \$360. This includes replacing foods, repairing damaged items and more ways in which these outages have impacted my community. As the electrification of our state continues, more customers are expected to use a network and test the bounds of our current supply levels. How is it going to get better? Rushing to get Victorians off gas when 60 per cent of households are reliant on it will only drive up demand for electricity at a time when Labor has failed to shore up the state's generation capacity. We know that many regional communities are only fitted with gas options for heating, cooking and their water.

The lack of gas options in these houses will only put further pressure on our electricity supply that has already crumbled under the slightest bit of pressure over summer. Without a reliable electricity supply, removing these options is going to hurt our regional households. As gas appliances and connections continue to be removed from regional homes, more costs will be transferred onto residents. I am all for the responsible transition to renewables, but how are our already struggling communities meant to survive when there are no alternatives? The energy costs are astronomical and rising at a concerning rate. The reality is that people are having to choose between feeding their families or powering their homes, and that is a decision no-one should have to make. With rising interest rates and rental costs and the cost of keeping cars on the road and kids in school, it is clear that the Labor government is not doing enough to provide real relief for everyday Victorians. I have listened to the distress of my community and many more regional communities just like it, and the answer is not performances and stunts like adding the SEC to our constitution.

**Paul EDBROOKE** (Frankston) (18:36): Thank you, Acting Speaker Mullahy. It is great to see you in the chair. Unlike quite a few people in this chamber, I actually grew up in the valley. My family worked in the coal mines – very proudly too. I think my first billycart was built by a sheet metal trades assistant at Hazelwood power station, which –

**A member** interjected.

**Paul EDBROOKE**: It was a cracker. It was bloody fast, let me tell you. It had SEC bearings in it, I think. But I am also at the epicentre of Liberal–National power policy as well, being the member for Frankston. In a state election not so long ago we had the former candidate Michael Lamb telling us about coal-fired power and how it can be privatised and how we could use coal – which is great for the future, isn't it – and we could make prices cheaper. It was only on Saturday that I was just stunned to find another candidate in the beautiful seat of Dunkley telling people that he could not rule out –

**Vicki Ward** interjected.

**Paul EDBROOKE**: Why don't I like fish with three eyes, Minister? Because I just do not. He could not rule out nuclear reactors and energy in Dunkley. I am not sure he consulted with anybody.

He has gone back to being the mayor today. I am sure there are some big questions about whether, as I heard on the radio today, people are not sure it is the truth that people sleep with baseball bats under their pillows. But I am not sure that the consultation has been done in my community for nuclear energy. I think there was about as much consultation done there for this by-election as there was in a previous state election around coal. I am not going to give a commentary on the Sky News David Speers YouTube clip, but if you have not seen it, they are using it right now to show what not to do and how not to act arrogant with David Speers before he totally eviscerates you on TV.

As I said, I grew up with the SEC. I was actually given by my father the other day a little key ring that says 'SECV HPS', Hazelwood power station. Those guys were given that somewhere along the line. It was a trinket that he found in his drawer. I was the poor kid that went to school with the green furry jacket with the yellow sunrise on it with an SEC logo that I picked off, but you could still see the glue on there. Apparently that is trendy now with the kids at Trades Hall, so I need to find mine. But my point is that I think there have been some mischaracterisations and some mistruths – or maybe even misunderstandings, if I can be so lenient – about what the SEC means for Victorians.

We obviously put this up at an election. It was voted on, and people wanted to see this change. They wanted to see people with a vision for the future, and that vision involves renewables. Again, going back to the failed Liberal candidate for Dunkley, he said that 100 per cent renewables is a joke. I will say that again: 100 per cent renewables, kids – it is a joke. Your future is on the line with people like this.

*Members interjecting.*

**Paul EDBROOKE:** Well, if you go to Europe or if you look at Scotland, they are actually exporting their renewable energy. Even in South Australia at the moment there are days when they are fully 100 per cent renewable. We can actually do that. It involves different types of renewables. It involves storage systems like the Big Battery, which we are a bit jealous of in Frankston. The member for Tarneit, I think, has got it. We would love that.

But I think the people in our communities, in our electorates, see that this government actually has a vision for the future, and that is why we here today – we are putting the power back in the hands of Victorians. My SEC jacket will be trendy again. Construction has already begun on the SEC's first project, a 1.6-gigawatt-hour battery in Melton – sorry, it was Melton; we are jealous of you, Mr McGhie – that will power over 200,000 homes. That is storing energy that is produced at a time when I guess you could say nature is off peak, and we can use that at night or when that energy is not running or the sun is down.

We are seeing what the people across the aisle are saying. I am not going to get into an argument about people not believing in climate change and flat-earthers. I mean, you have still got some, that is for sure, but I am not going to get into that argument. What I will say is that I think if you went overseas and you talked to most progressive governments and most governments, especially in Europe, that have already made the change from coal and dirty fuels, they would laugh in the face of anyone that said 'Renewables aren't the way of the future' and 'Renewables aren't what we're using now'.

The bigger issue I take with bringing media releases and whatnot into the Parliament and quoting from them is context. Yes, for sure, it looks like there is a media release that members of the opposite side of the chamber have been quoting, and that is great, but it was my lived experience – in my anecdotal experience, you could say – that in 1994 Kennett was actually the Premier that dissolved the SEC, which led to essentially –

*Members interjecting.*

**Paul EDBROOKE:** I am not saying no-one started privatising or putting things up for sale, if you want to use that word; what I am saying is Kennett went the whole hog, and the effect on that community was felt overnight.

The member for Tarneit raised some really good points about the fact that the SEC was – and will be once again – a breeding ground for trades. Whether that be trade assistants that built really fast go-karts or whatever or sparkies, linesmen or firefighters and rescuers, they had the skills to pay the bills, let us say. I remember driving into Hazelwood, Loy Yang B, Loy Yang A and Yallourn when I was a kid, and they were hives of activity – and they needed to be, because they were producing the majority of the power for Victoria and other parts of the nation as well. But those hives of activity were a lot of kids getting skills that they would use in their job at the SEC and that they would propagate out to other areas of our nation as well.

I have heard many folks on the other side of the chamber talking about the fact that they are afraid that we will not have people with the skills to keep our economy moving forward.

**Vicki Ward:** That's because they want to close our TAFEs.

**Paul EDBROOKE:** And that is, I guess, a fair assessment of their past. Indeed, member for Eltham, closing down TAFEs certainly did not help that. But, as I said, the SEC was a hotbed of people learning skills and people becoming engineers and all sorts of things with skills that they could carry on. What we are seeing now, though, is a centre of excellence being developed for the SEC, where once again we will actually have young people who will be able to learn new skills. It might not be sheet metal, it might not be boilermaking or it might not be as a sparky or a turner and fitter; it might be creating fixtures for renewables, it might be in battery production, it might be in wind or it might be in solar.

You can just see in any community in Victoria the amount of interest there is in solar at the moment. I do not have the figures on me and I would not go so far as to say my memory is amazing these days, but the uptake of solar in my community has been massive – not as massive as the Liberal candidate for Dunkley's announcement that he cannot guarantee that we will not have nuclear in Dunkley. But almost every house in some suburbs of Frankston and in Dunkley has solar on its roof. Some of these people have not been able to apply for the government rebate. They might simply earn more than \$180,000 a year together in their household income, but they have gone ahead and have actually fitted them and paid for them themselves, and from what I hear, these set-ups, even without the government subsidy, are paying for themselves every time.

Again one thing I think people on this side of the chamber can see that resonates in their communities is a bunch of people in a government that have a vision for the future, a vision that is embraced by people in other nations and has been for years. An example of that would be the rhetoric that we closed down Hazelwood power station. Nothing could be further from the truth: the multinational company Engie, a French company, or one that is based in France, decided that they were getting out of coal. You know why they were getting out of coal? Because most banks and most funding resources that they would get do not actually buy into oil or coal anymore, and we need to move forward. Engie pulled the pin on Hazelwood because of that. They were moving into clean energy and they have done that in Europe for a long, long time. It is time for some people to pull their heads out of the sand and realise that we might live on an island, but we do not live in a galaxy far, far away. We do not have to reinvent the wheel – there are people doing this worldwide. What we are doing might be revolutionary for us, but it is not internationally. We need to get on with it. The SEC is the way we will do that.

**Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (18:46):** At this point of the evening, having listened to this debate for the past few hours, I find myself befuddled once again – befuddled, bemused, perplexed. As the member for Frankston stated before, there have been some mistruths and misconceptions about all sorts of things, including the fact – and we have been thrown this all day – that we are climate deniers, that we are anti-renewables, which is simply not true.

*Members interjecting.*

**Jade BENHAM:** Two ears, one mouth, use them in that order. That is what I was taught as a kid. When we say we are pragmatists and we are all for renewable, clean energy, we just need to have a

bit of common sense and be a bit pragmatic about it. We need to be technologically agnostic, because we know that the technology of 2024 is not going to be the technology of 2050, probably not even 2030. We have seen how far we have come even in the last five years, the last 10 years. I have got a solar system on my roof in fact that is 10 years old. Could we upgrade that now and do all sorts of things? Well, yes, we could, but this is what I mean: we are not anti-renewables, we are actually part of that process. For context, 11 June 1992 is when that media release went out, where:

The Premier, Ms. Joan Kirner, said the successful passage of the Bill provided the framework for an exciting future in Victoria's power generation industry.

"Loy Yang B will be a state-of-the-art power station ... It is required for the energy requirements of Victoria in 1993."

So, it is there in black and white, and yet we get called climate deniers who take things out of context. It is there in black and white. It is readily available.

Then when we talk about – I mean, how dare we, the only G20 country that has a moratorium on nuclear energy. How can that not be – if we are going to talk about common sense and pragmatism in moving forward with clean energy, how can that not be simply a part of the conversation rather than just based in ideology that goes, 'The sun and the wind will do it all.' It will not. It will not keep our coolrooms on –

**Michaela Settle** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (John Mullahy):** There is too much volume or noise.

**Jade BENHAM:** It will not keep our manufacturing going, with wind and sun. I live in a part of the world that has more sunshine than Queensland, more sunny days per year than the Gold Coast, and we cannot generate enough as yet with just that solar power. If we are going to talk about a clean energy future and energy reliability, it has to be part of the conversation, rather than – and I know that those on the other side have a habit of putting blinkers on and just saying, 'We're going this way because that's what we are told to do,' putting the blinkers on and saying we cannot even have a conversation about nuclear –

*Members interjecting.*

**Jade BENHAM:** Well, okay, so what do we do, then? In 20 years we will still be having this conversation, when we know, like I said, if we are technologically agnostic, that there is at least the basis here to have a sensible conversation about small, modular nuclear reactors – not the big old ones that they scaremonger about, about Chernobyl and Japan.

We are the only G20 country that does have a moratorium on nuclear. We just go, 'Nup, we're not doing that. We're not doing that at all.' We look at the rest of the world and go, 'You're all doing it wrong. We'll survive with offshore wind and we'll survive with sun.' Well then, how are we going to produce food? How are we going to keep it cold? The simple processes that are involved, which we need energy reliability for, mean that we actually need to make it part of the conversation. That is all we are saying. We are not saying go and put a nuclear reactor in Dunkley. No-one is saying that. What we are saying is it just needs to be part of the conversation – simple common sense.

**A member** interjected.

**Jade BENHAM:** Happy to have one in Mildura. We have got loads of solar farms already. For small, modular nuclear reactors, who knows? We do not know what the future holds. It needs to be part of the conversation. We are not talking about running out and building them now. We are talking about including it as part of an energy reliability conversation and not shutting the door on other alternatives. It is simple as that. And that is all I am going to say about that. Well, maybe it is not; I am not going to make any promises, because who knows?

I have sat here all afternoon and listened to how – and I mentioned the former Premier in Ms Kirner and the media release of June 1992. We are always demonised for privatising things. Let us have a look at a few other things that Labor have privatised, just quickly. There is a long list.

**A member** interjected.

**Jade BENHAM:** No, no. It is okay when Labor does it, but when we do it, we are all about looking –

So what else have they privatised? There is the State Bank; they sold it to Keating then flogged it off as the Commonwealth Bank. Gillard sold the last of Telstra. And recently there has been VicRoads – here, very recently, the partial sell-off and privatisation of VicRoads. There is the port of Melbourne. So, again, it is one of those things that those on the other side like to have a dig at us about, but there is a long list that seems to be conveniently ignored every time we have this conversation.

We could talk about that again, but what I am saying is when we talk about nuclear, when we talk about the SEC – and I said it before – two ears, one mouth, use them in that order. We need to be listening to the people who actually know, not listening to mates you want to give jobs to. The member for Narracan sat here earlier today and he explained how in 1989 he became an apprentice of the SEC as a fitter and turner. Did he finish that apprenticeship? No, he did not. He transferred out of the SEC to become a builder because he knew that he was not going to have a job; he had been told.

The member for Morwell, again, had valid arguments about the SEC, and the people in Narracan and Morwell have voted; we have members for Morwell and Narracan on this side of the chamber. So what I am saying is that we need to listen to the people with experience, and this goes for everything. Start listening to the right people, start talking to the right people and start having a commonsense approach to this rather than just a virtue-signalling, ideological solution to moving forward and bringing back the SEC.

**Gary MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (18:54): I too rise to make a contribution to the State Electricity Commission Amendment Bill 2023. When I think about ideology and I think of a woman who knows ideology, I think of the late, great Joan Kirner. Joan was a Labor icon who understood what it meant to get clever people into Parliament, to get clever women into Parliament, and she used her legacy to ensure that there were women on this side of the chamber. I can see, as most of the women in the chamber at the moment are in fact from the opposition, that you could certainly take a leaf out of her book in the sort of advocacy that she did.

I am really happy to hear that the member for Mildura also has gone nuclear by drinking the radioactive Kool Aid. Today I read on ABC online –

**A member** interjected.

**Gary MAAS:** Well, it was interesting actually. There was some fellow by the name of Mr Dutton who was speaking on Channel 7. Peter Dutton, the leader of the federal opposition, confirmed that:

... the party was “interested” in replacing retiring coal plants with nuclear because the sites came ready with poles and wires to distribute power.

In looking at those sites around the country, yes, there are a couple in New South Wales, there are a couple in Queensland and there are a couple in Western Australia, but of course, as we all know, the coal plant in Yallourn is being retired in 2028. I just wonder how the member for Morwell in this place will go with constituents in his electorate to say that nuclear power is going to be a real option.

When they lost the Dunkley election over the weekend – a greater celebration I have never seen by the opposition in fact; it was an extraordinarily happy time, for losing an election – the political commentators at the election coverage from both sides of the political fence were saying, ‘You know what, the federal opposition really needs to go back to the policy drawing board. They really need to go back to the policy drawing board and have something that they can market to their electorate –

something they can market electorally and something that their state compatriots will be able to market as well.' And what do we get some three days later? We get nuclear as an option. This is something which will not go down with the Victorian people, and we know it will not go down with the Victorian people. It does not constitute the energy mix that is being put together by this government.

This government understands that at the root of it this is a cost-of-living issue, an issue where members of my electorate – and I know for every other member on this side of the chamber as well – are experiencing difficulties with paying their bills. That is what is at the nub of it. This government has been helping – we know it has been helping – with many different initiatives, including the power saving bonus, to get money into the hands of people to be able to pay their bills. But it has also been doing it by looking at the mix of energy that will be needed in this state to get us through to the future, whether it is batteries out in the seat of Sydenham, I think, where we are starting, and then moving that through some 19 other electorates as well, and of course a mix of solar and wind energy.

I am wholly supportive of this because the SEC, to quote Frank Costanza, is back, baby, and the Labor government is following through.

*Members interjecting.*

**Gary MAAS:** Hey, come on, Frank Costanza has already been mentioned once before. Thank you, member for Pascoe Vale.

This Labor government is following through on its commitment to reviving the SEC as a publicly owned, 100 per cent renewable, active energy market participant as pledged at the 2022 election. It is not about a crowded energy market. What it is is actually having a government player in that market to be able to influence how quickly we move to renewables. This bill helps to achieve that end. Power is truly being put back in the hands of Victorians, by freeing Victoria from its reliance on emissions-intensive coal and accelerating the delivery of affordable, reliable, renewable energy. I commend this bill to the house.

**Business interrupted under sessional orders.**

### *Adjournment*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

### **Warrnambool Airport**

**Roma BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (19:00): (551) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Regional Development in the other place, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide support for necessary upgrades at Warrnambool Airport to ensure that it can be used by commercial aviation operators. It has been raised with me that the passenger airline Bonza is interested in servicing Warrnambool Airport, but I have been told that these flights cannot occur due to the current level of infrastructure at the airport, which needs to be upgraded to accommodate Bonza's 737 aircraft.

Warrnambool is the gateway to the South-West Coast, and the South-West Coast is home to many of our Victorian tourism icons. To name just a few highlights from our region, they include Tower Hill, Middle Island, Budj Bim, Port Fairy, Cheese World, the Glenelg River, Tyrendarra's Indigenous Protected Area and Mount Noorat. Importantly Warrnambool Airport is the gateway to the Great Ocean Road, which starts right here in South-West Coast. Rather than tour buses travelling down from Melbourne and turning back at Port Campbell, Bonza's commercial passenger flights into Warrnambool would allow time-pressed travellers to be able to view the attractions of the road in its entirety. Plus, as any local would say, the true gems of the trip are the Bay of Islands, the Bay of Martyrs and Bridgewater beach right here in South-West Coast.

Yet just like with our new trains, which were promised in 2017 but are still yet to arrive, regional Victoria has been forgotten when it comes to government infrastructure funding. Regional Victorians

make up more than 25 per cent of our state, yet we receive far less than that in funding – a measly 13 per cent. From social housing to health to education, we are not getting our fair share, and Warrnambool Airport is another example. Here is a chance to give our region a shot in the arm and really get the tourism sector kicking. And it is time too, considering the sacrifices our region is making for the government's net zero goals.

Brunswick or Burwood are not getting any large-scale renewable projects, but they are getting plenty of government funding for infrastructure. Moyne shire, which is within my South-West Coast electorate, will see over 12 per cent of the entire local government area covered with wind farms. This includes right by the Warrnambool Airport, resulting in the minimum safe operating height of the airport needing to be adjusted and reducing the commercial viability of the airport, with it becoming harder for planes to land and take off thanks to Labor's skyscraper-sized wind turbines. I know the government is determined to build wind turbines no matter what the environmental cost. Take their persistence over the Hastings area where federal Labor has had to lay down the law and say, 'Stop your plans. You'll destroy the environment,' to the state Labor government. Ultimately, regional Victoria is being burdened with these towers, but they should not be allowed to restrict our capacity to grow and develop as a region. Warrnambool Airport should not have its viability hindered. The state Labor government should get serious about regional development, starting with the upgrades at the Warrnambool Airport.

#### **Tarneit electorate early childhood centres**

**Dylan WIGHT** (Tarneit) (19:03): (552) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Children, and the action that I seek is for the minister to come to my electorate to visit the new Wimba Primary School Kindergarten and the new Hoppers Crossing Family Centre. Over the previous 10 years this government has ensured that we have turned Victoria into the Education State. Our Best Start, Best Life reforms are going to play a significant role in that, making sure that every child, irrespective of their parent's pay cheques or their location, will have free access to early childhood learning. But what we have also done is invested in the infrastructure to make sure that we can deliver those incredibly important programs.

My electorate of Tarneit has been incredibly lucky to receive a decent portion of that infrastructure. Take Wimba Primary School Kindergarten for instance – a brand new kindergarten that has opened this year at the new Wimba Primary School making it easier for little preppies to transition from kindergarten to primary school because they are doing so on the same site. It is also easing the burden of drop-off and pick-up times for local families.

There is also the Hoppers Crossing Family Centre which is located in Hoppers Crossing at the site of the old Mossfiel kindergarten. It will include three kindergarten rooms, a large outdoor play space, two maternal and child health and allied health services consulting rooms and other early service amenities. As I said before, it will replace the existing Mossfiel kindergarten. As I said at the start of my contribution, we have as a government spent the last 10 years transforming Victoria into the Education State, and I cannot wait to host the minister in my electorate.

#### **Gippsland South electorate schools**

**Danny O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (19:05): (553) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide funding to three critical Gippsland school projects in the Gippsland South electorate, most particularly funding for the Sale College redevelopment. This, as the minister will be aware from briefings he has no doubt had from his department, has been an issue for a number of years now. I have been campaigning on it with the school since at least 2017. The Sale College has two separate campuses, both of which are getting pretty old. The senior campus in MacAlister Street is landlocked and does not have great outdoor facilities. In fact the physical buildings themselves are also in pretty poor shape, requiring the school to spend a lot of money on fixing roofs and leaks and things like that.

The school has for some time been seeking to consolidate onto a single new site, and I thanked the former minister, now retired, for his contribution of \$3 million in the 2021 budget for master planning and initial scoping of the new school. We have confirmed that a site has been secured through the Wellington shire for the new school at Cobains Road directly opposite the Gippsland Regional Sports Complex, so it is a perfect location right on the edge of town – opportunity for growth. It has all progressed down to the fact that the Victorian School Building Authority has actually been working with the council about who is going to pay for a new roundabout and various road improvements that need to be done for a new school. However, we do not have any money to actually build the new school, so that is the first item that I am seeking of this troika.

The second is to finalise the Foster Primary School rebuild. There was some funding provided for what you might term the drop-in facilities that were made offsite and rebuilt a couple of years ago, but the main building, which stems from the mid-1960s, is still a very ordinary school facility and does need replacing, so I am seeking funding for that.

Finally, a matter that I raised with the minister personally a couple weeks ago after the Mirboo North storm event went through is that Mirboo North has but one stadium. It is on the site of the schools, which is a joint primary-secondary school site. It is well beyond and past time that it should have been replaced. It does not meet current standards. The flooring is terrible. It does not have the appropriate run-off areas. The toilets are disgusting. It does need replacing. This is an issue that I think the minister should work on with the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events to jointly fund a new facility, because it is used by the entire community of Mirboo North, not just the schools. I seek the minister's assistance to get all three of these very important projects funded in the upcoming state budget.

#### **Disability inclusion package**

**Emma VULIN** (Pakenham) (19:08): (554) My adjournment is for the Minister for Education, and the action that I seek is for the minister to update me on the rollout of disability inclusion in the Pakenham district. I would like to learn more about how this change will help students living with a disability at state schools in Pakenham. I have had several families reach out to my office whose children need additional support in the classroom, and they are aware the program is being rolled out. I am aware disability inclusion involves an investment by this government of approximately \$1.6 billion into our supports in schools to ensure every student can thrive and learn. I am keen to learn more about the benefits of the new approach, the funding model and the benefits which will flow to young people living with a disability in my electorate through the initiative.

#### **Glen Iris planning**

**Michael O'BRIEN** (Malvern) (19:09): (555) My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Planning. The action that I seek is for the minister to listen to and act on local community concerns regarding Woolworths's development proposal for 173 Burke Road in Glen Iris. First some history. A few years ago Woolworths purchased 173 Burke Road, a site just down from Sacre Coeur, Korowa and Caulfield Grammar's Malvern campus. It is directly opposite the Glen Iris medical centre and next to a local shopping strip. In short, it is a very busy area.

Woolworths applied to Stonnington council to develop the site into a full-line supermarket, liquor store and 85 apartments, with no affordable housing. In October 2021 council refused the permit, finding that the proposal was 'an overdevelopment of the site'. A record 198 objections were received. At this point can I say that while some in the Labor government seek to dismiss all local objectors as NIMBYs, that is unfair when it comes to those who objected to this Woolworths proposal. In fact every objector I have spoken to acknowledges that development of the site will occur but rightly expects sensitive development not inappropriate overdevelopment. Having been refused by Stonnington council, Woolworths challenged the decision at VCAT, and there, over an arduous 12-day hearing before two experienced VCAT members, something magical happened. Do you know what happened? David



defeated Goliath. Woolworths went down to committed local residents who were fighting to protect the amenity of their homes and their streets. Here is what VCAT found:

... we are not persuaded that the scale ... of the proposed development achieve an outcome that respects ... either the site's activity centre or residential contexts.

...

... we are not satisfied that the traffic implications, and consequential amenity impacts, of the permit application are acceptable.

...

... we find the loss of on-street car spaces is unacceptable.

...

... the development would create unacceptable visual bulk ...

It was a comprehensive victory by the locals, which Woolies did not appeal. Instead they met with local residents in July last year, stating that they would submit a revised proposal to Stonnington council, but that never happened. Because contrary to Woolworth's assurances, they have now sought to bypass residents and bypass council and gone straight to the Minister for Planning. You might have thought that after the recent *Four Corners* report outlining Woolworths's questionable behaviour those executives might be seeking to rebuild community trust, but no, Woolworths has broken its commitment to my community in favour of seeking to have the Minister for Planning rubberstamp its latest plans. It makes you ask: what does Woolworths have to hide?

So I am imploring the minister to ensure that the legitimate concerns of my community and Stonnington council are heard and acted on. My local residents and small businesses do not have the deep pockets and political contacts of Woolworths, but they have a right to be heard and they have a right to protect the amenity of where they live and where they work.

#### **Truganina North education precinct**

**Sarah CONNOLLY** (Laverton) (19:12): (556) My adjournment is for the Minister for Children in the other place, and the action I seek is that the minister join me to visit the new onsite kinder that we have just built at Warreen Primary School in Truganina. Now, I have spoken a lot in this place lately about the work that we have done with the Truganina North education precinct, and just recently two brand new schools have opened up on this site – Warreen Primary School and the junior campus of Bemim Secondary College. Of course it is not just these schools that are on this site. We have also built a brand new kindergarten right next door to the primary school, allowing families in this area to avoid the dreaded double drop-off. It is yet another example of the significant investments that our government has made into early childhood education, ensuring that our kids no matter where they live can get the best start to their education.

Now, this is of course in addition to our government rolling out three-year-old kinder across the state and then providing free kinder for families. It sounds like a pretty good deal to me. That is something that kids at this site will be able to receive as well, and we know that this year of kinder is absolutely vital to getting that play learning at as early a stage as possible, because every family deserves to have access to local kinder services. And that is why I would like to invite the minister to come and see firsthand how this kinder service at Warreen Primary School is giving kids in Truganina their very best start to life.

#### **Supermarket prices**

**Sam HIBBINS** (Prahran) (19:13): (557) My adjournment is for the Minister for Planning, and the action I seek is for the minister to investigate anti-competitive behaviour by the supermarket duopoly Woolworths and Coles, including land banking tactics, and whether state planning laws are restricting competition in the supermarket industry, which ultimately results in higher prices for consumers at the check-out. People continue to struggle with the cost of living and the ever-rising cost of groceries and essential items, leaving many unable to put food on the table. With almost 70 per cent of market share,

Coles and Woolworths are dominating the supermarket retail industry, allowing them to basically set the prices as high as they like. They are posting billions of dollars of profit while everyday Victorians are struggling to feed their families. Their market share and their profit margins are much higher than overseas counterparts. Greater competition would force the supermarket duopoly to offer more competitive prices, but experts are highlighting practices that the duopoly use to prevent would-be competitors from entering the supermarket industry here in Victoria and across Australia.

One of these barriers is the practice of land banking, a strategy used to reduce competition by hoarding land, where the supermarkets purchase large strategic areas of land even if they do not have plans or permission to build a supermarket there, to purposely exclude and deter would-be competitors from entering the market.

The supermarket duopoly also have advantages over smaller or would-be competitors when it comes to planning laws. Those advantages include planning regulations favouring established companies, financial position and brand recognition, reinforcing the duopoly that Coles and Woolworths have. They have been able to maintain their dominance over the supermarket industry by exploiting anti-competitive planning regulations that prevent competition from emerging retailers. This has resulted in consumers having no choice but to cop unfair price hikes at the check-out and suppliers having to accept lower costs for their products while Coles and Woolworths post those billion-dollar profits. The government has a responsibility to ensure Victorians are not being ripped off, so I call on the minister to investigate and put in place measures to prevent anti-competitive behaviour by the big two supermarkets.

#### **Alstom, Ballarat, site visit**

**Juliana ADDISON** (Wendouree) (19:16): (558) I wish to raise an adjournment matter for the Minister for Public and Active Transport regarding the manufacture of X'trapolis 2.0 trains at the Alstom rail workshop in Ballarat. The action that I seek is for the minister to come to my electorate of Wendouree to visit the Alstom site, to see firsthand how our record investment of nearly \$1 billion is creating manufacturing jobs in my community, supporting the local economy and delivering world-class trains made in regional Victoria. I am so proud that the Ballarat-made Alstom X'trapolis 2.0 trains will include a minimum of 60 per cent local content, supporting Victorian jobs across the supply chain and in the minister's own electorate of Dandenong.

The new X'trapolis 2.0 trains will replace the longest serving Comeng trains and provide more reliable journeys, better passenger information and improved accessibility, energy efficiency and comfort for passengers. The X'trapolis 2.0 trains are designed with wider doors to make boarding and alighting easier, helping maintain on-time running, and will have space for about 1225 passengers. Importantly, the interior designs improve accessibility for hearing-, vision- and mobility-impaired passengers, including 20 wheelchair spaces. I wish to acknowledge and thank chief accessibility advocate Tricia Malowney OAM for her contribution to the X'trapolis 2.0 design process and her commitment to accessibility and inclusion for Victoria's public transport system.

The X'trapolis 2.0 trains will also have enhanced accessibility features, including semi-automated boarding ramps, hearing loops, a continuous walkway throughout the train and clearer, more informative passenger displays. But there is more. The new X'trapolis 2.0 will have advanced air suspension systems enabling a smoother ride and advanced passenger information systems that provide more detail about the journey in real time. The trains will also be more energy-efficient and include designated mixed-use onboard spaces for bicycle and pram storage.

Long may we continue to support manufacturing in regional Victoria and delivering world-class trains that are made in Ballarat. I thank the minister for her commitment to my community of Ballarat and look forward to the minister's visit to my electorate of Wendouree.

### Sixteenth Street–Deakin Avenue, Mildura

**Jade BENHAM** (Mildura) (19:18): (559) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is for the minister to visit Mildura to inspect the Sixteenth Street–Deakin Avenue intersection. This intersection has so far claimed two lives, while many others have suffered serious injury. State accident data shows that over a dozen crashes have been reported there between 2012 and February this year. All but two of these were cross-traffic collisions. Since 2009 there have been two fatalities in fact. One of those was in December. One of these collisions led to serious injuries. Fourteen other people had lesser injuries. So 16 people since 2012 have suffered injuries at this intersection.

As part of its master plan for fast-growing Mildura South, the Mildura Rural City Council has identified the intersection of Deakin Avenue and Sixteenth Street as needing traffic lights and has made requests to the government previously, but the community is swiftly running out of patience. The Mildura sporting precinct has seen an incredible amount of increased traffic movements. Trying to cross that intersection from Sixteenth Street when the footy is on, when the basketball is on, when there is a musical event on or when there is a seminar or conference at that precinct – honestly, you have to have the patience of a saint, and it is really easy to see how these collisions occur.

Traffic lights are vital, and they are urgently needed as a matter of public safety at this intersection. They should have been installed as part of the Mildura Sporting Precinct plan when that was built, because everyone knew – how could you not know – how busy that intersection would become, because the sporting precinct is right there. These are families taking kids to sport, to grand finals and to all the other events that occur there every day. We are not talking just about Saturdays here. There is currently a petition running on Change.org that has over 1100 signatures. I quote from that petition:

The frequency of these incidents is alarming – nearly one every quarter.

In fact we are almost at one a month.

This is not just a statistic but a grim reality for those living in proximity to this intersection, like my neighbour who is still shaken up from dealing with one such fatality.

...

The current design does not allow for roundabouts which could potentially reduce these risks; therefore, installing traffic lights becomes an urgent necessity. Traffic lights would ensure regulated vehicular movement and significantly reduce the risk of accidents ...

and further fatalities. The action that I seek this evening is urgent action from the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to visit Mildura with me and to sit at that intersection to see firsthand how dangerous it is and how urgently we need traffic lights.

### North East Link

**Jackson TAYLOR** (Bayswater) (19:21): (560) The North East Link is a huge project, in fact the single largest roads project in Victoria's history, and for the eastern Knox residents there is absolutely a lot to love about it. We have got twin tunnels from the Eastern Freeway at Bulleen Road, closing the loop on the ring road to get us through to the north and the west without having to go through Alexandra Parade and past the zoo. I love that trip, but I will tell you right now I will not miss it. It will also mean more lanes on the Eastern Freeway, 45 kilometres to be exact, and trip-time savings of up to 35 minutes.

So I wish to raise the matter for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. The action I seek is for the minister to provide my community with an update on the project on when we can expect to see major works begin on the Eastern Freeway. In a nutshell, it is massive project, a huge investment in the east, slashing travel times. It stacks up. It is creating lots and lots of jobs. Construction is well and truly underway, and I am looking forward to my community being updated on the Eastern Freeway expansion, which is indeed a very welcome part of the project.

### Responses

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (19:22): There were several matters, including one from the member for South-West Coast to the Minister for Regional Development seeking support for Warrnambool Airport infrastructure for commercial operations. The member for Tarneit raised a matter for the Minister for Children seeking action to visit Wimba Primary School and family centres in his electorate, where there has been significant investment. The member for Gippsland South raised a matter for the Minister for Education, in particular seeking action around capital funding at schools in his electorate, including Sale College and Foster Primary School, and at Mirboo North stadium. I will be visiting Mirboo North next week and look forward to catching up.

The member for Pakenham raised a matter for the Minister for Education to provide an update on the rollout of disability inclusion at state schools in the Pakenham electorate. The member for Malvern has raised a matter for the Minister for Planning, and the action the honourable member for Malvern seeks is that the minister listen and act – remember that phrase? Some on this side of the house may remember ‘listen and act’ a little bit – with regard to the residents’ concerns.

**Michael O’Brien:** I’m glad somebody else picked up the reference.

**Anthony CARBINES:** Indeed. How could we forget? They want action on the Woolworths development at 173 Burke Road, Glen Iris, to make sure that the residents’ concerns are affirmed and followed up on. I will pass that on to the Minister for Planning. The member for Laverton raised a matter for the Minister for Children seeking a visit and some action there on the Truganina North education precinct, particularly around the preschool and early learning in that suburb and across her electorate. The member for Prahran raised a Minister for Planning matter regarding the minister investigating anti-competitive practices between supermarkets – Coles and Woolworths I think were mentioned.

The member for Wendouree raised a matter for the Minister for Public and Active Transport to visit the Alstom site in Ballarat to see the X’tropolis 2.0 trains and the \$1 billion investment from the government and not only the significant work that that is providing by having those trains made in Ballarat, with 60 per cent local content, but also the great opportunities that is providing for those in the electorate of Wendouree. The member for Mildura raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to visit the intersection at Sixteenth Street and Deakin Avenue with her, where there have been some dozen crashes between 2012 and this year. I think the Mildura South Primary School is there, but I will leave that for the member and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety.

The member for Bayswater raised a matter for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure regarding the fantastic North East Link Program – we could go on about that north of the Yarra, across Ivanhoe and Bundoora, but certainly to the south there along the Eastern Freeway – seeking action and an update with regard to the works that are now happening across the Eastern Freeway component of the project, which will help connect parts of Bayswater and the broader eastern suburbs with the great northern suburbs of Melbourne.

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

**House adjourned 7:26 pm.**